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Americanized Chinese Dishes as Heritage Food and Bridging Identities

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THE COLLEGE OF
WOOSTER

中国菜是什么？：AMERICANIZED CHINESE DISHES AS HERITAGE FOOD AND
BRIDGING IDENTITIES

by Meg Itoh

An Independent Study Thesis
Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Course Requirements for
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Advisors: Dr. Ahmet Atay, Ph.D. and Dr. Ziyang You, Ph.D.

Abstract

Chinese food has become ingrained in the lives of everyday Americans. But while ordering Chinese takeout is now an ordinary occurrence, Chinese food culture still experiences the lasting consequences of discrimination in the United States. First viewed as the uncivilized other and later as the exotic other, the status of Chinese food has shifted overtime. Chinese food has also experienced changes in its actual form, adapting to the American palate by adjusting flavor and presentation. My research explores the ways in which this Americanized Chinese food has impacted the identities of Chinese restaurant workers, and continues to manifest change within its markers of heritage food.

To carry out my study, I used the two interrelated methods of ethnography and visual ethnography, with the purpose to observe and record the individual experiences of Chinese restaurant workers. I incorporated a visual component by filming my interviews with the intent of giving a voice to Chinese restaurant workers, whose stories have been historically marginalized. I found that Chinese food represents a mode through which Chinese restaurant workers claim the agency with which to communicate their identity. While Chinese food has been commoditized to be marketable for American consumers, participants suggested that Chinese food in the United States is likely to return to authentic forms in the near future.

Keywords: Chinese food, Americanized Chinese food, cultural identity

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第一章：绪论

我希望研究美国化的中国菜,因为 2016 年我在伍斯特去 Hibachi 餐馆的时候,看到美国人用东亚人为自己提供娱乐。这个经历让我考虑东亚人在美国的社会地位。因为我的专业是传播研究跟中文,所以我决定研究美国里的中餐和它与中国餐馆服务员的关系。我的研究目标是了解中国菜对中国餐馆服务员身份有什么影响。我的研究很重要,因为与之前关于美籍华裔身份的研究相比,我的研究会从个人经历的角度,通过分析看中国餐馆服务员对美国化中国菜的态度和感受。最后,我希望我的研究会让更多人了解到中国餐馆服务员的故事。美国人通常忽视中国餐馆服务员的经历,但是我的研究关注中国餐馆服务员复杂并有意思的经历。他们的故事值得分享。

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

My perspective on Asian food in the United States has been shaped through two experiences. One is simply my time spent in East Asia, specifically growing up in Japan and studying abroad in China during my third year of college. The Japanese food I had been raised on existed differently in the United States. My first encounter with Americanized sushi was prefaced by a family friend with, “Just so you know, sushi here is probably different than it is back home.” They were indeed correct. Sushi in the United States existed primarily as rolls, included cream cheese, and was drenched in thick sauces. My first encounter with Americanized sushi also became the first time I witnessed displacement of my culture. But when I studied abroad in China, I saw myself not as a victim of culture displacement but as a co-conspirator. The Japanese had adapted Chinese flavors to match the Japanese palette. Such a realization led me to also reevaluate the differences in flavor between authentic Chinese food and Americanized Chinese food.

My second experience was eating Hibachi at a restaurant in Wooster, Ohio. The performance presented by the chef made me uncomfortable in ways I still struggle to express. Perhaps it was re-experiencing the displacement of Japanese food culture. Or perhaps it was the use of East Asian bodies as an unintended circus act, catering to fulfill the exotic fantasies of Americans. It also could have been that I was witnessing customers easily discarding the East Asian bodies that cooked for them, in a manner that also discarded the worth attached to those bodies. This experience forced me to reconsider how East Asian bodies are valued in the American restaurant industry.

The way East Asian bodies are valued in the United States, specifically the value given to Chinese food and Chinese bodies associated with preparing and serving the dishes, is dependent

on the sociocultural context of the times. Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans have struggled for centuries to present and preserve their food culture. Their efforts found varying degrees of success in the United States overtime – from general acceptance to nation-wide hostility, and from a niche crowd of customers wanting a taste of the orient to becoming an American food staple, Chinese food has experienced great change. Accompanying this change was a shift in the way Chinese food culture exists in the United States, specifically the ways in which Chinese food has adapted to the American palate. The relationship between Americanized Chinese food and identities of Chinese restaurant workers will be explored within my study. This introductory chapter will explain the purpose of this project, its rationales, and the chosen method.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between Chinese food and the identities of Chinese bodies associated with cooking and serving both authentic and Americanized dishes in the United States. When discussing Chinese food, one must acknowledge the changes that Chinese dishes have experienced as it crossed national borders, creating major points of difference in the way Chinese food culture exists in China compared to the United States. Thus this study will investigate the Americanization of Chinese food, specifically the ways in which Chinese food culture has acculturated with the intention of adapting to the American palate, and the ways in which such Americanization has impacted the identities of Chinese restaurant workers.

Rationales

I will conduct this study for three main reasons. First, my approach serves to fill several gaps in the existing body of research. Although a number of scholars have examined Chinese

American identity, very few have focused the scope of their research on the effect food has on developing Chinese American identity. Previous research on Chinese American identities has been focused on different eras either of immigration (e.g., Chun, Wong and Chan) or of the socioeconomic climate (e.g., Song), different generations of Chinese American families (e.g., Tung), or both (e.g., Kibria, Hsu). Such sources do not place research value on the individual experiences of Chinese immigrant and Chinese American restaurant workers, and their complex relationship with the way Chinese food exists in the United States. Thus in my study, I will extend research by analyzing the stories of Chinese restaurant workers in Ohio, to gain valuable insight of their personal relationship with Americanized Chinese food.

Secondly, this project will add to the scholarship by adding a different perspective than has been previously studied, specifically how Chinese restaurant workers in the United States perceive Americanized Chinese food. The sources that exist focus on the food, such as the success of Chinese food in the United States (e.g., Lu and Fine), or the Americanization of Chinese food in its visible and edible elements (e.g., Roberts, Liu, Chen, Mendelson). However, such sources do not leave room to explore the complex relationship between Chinese restaurant workers who struggle to maintain and develop cultural identity, while promoting the consumption of Americanized Chinese food. I find this relationship worthy of exploration and thus choose to incorporate the perspective of those who serve Americanized Chinese food.

Finally, this project amplifies the voices of people whose stories are often untold. As a Japanese international student on a college campus that is populated primarily by white domestic students, I have found that Americans find it easier to ignore my cultural identity than engage in active conversation. My experiences speaking with Chinese restaurant owners have paralleled this finding. American patrons of Chinese restaurants will purchase food, but will not seek out

the stories of Chinese restaurant workers who cook and serve the dishes. However, my study does actively seek out the untold and often ignored stories of Chinese restaurant workers, which gives their lived experiences the opportunity to be heard.

Methodology

In this ethnographic study, I employ aspects of critical and visual ethnographies to give a face and voice to Chinese restaurant workers in the United States, and gain insight of their experiences. Visual ethnographies reject “the idea that the written word is essentially a superior medium of ethnographic representation” (Pink 6). Thus visual ethnographies use moving and still images, and consider these images not as the dominant mode of research, but as an equally meaningful element of ethnographic work (Pink 6).

My study uses visual ethnography to intentionally amplify the voices of Chinese restaurant workers and give their narratives a face. I received Copeland Funding from The College of Wooster to fund my research conducted in Chinese restaurants in Ohio, specifically in the Columbus and Cleveland areas. I conducted a filmed structured interview with participants, in which I asked questions about their experience working at a Chinese restaurant in the United States, and their thoughts on Chinese food culture.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained this study’s purpose, provided rationales, and a brief description of my methodology. Chapter II provides a foundation of knowledge by reviewing past scholarship relevant to the form Chinese food takes in the United States today. Chapter III explains my use of ethnographic methodologies, and justifies my decision to employ aspects of critical and visual ethnographies. Chapter IV is written in Chinese to fulfill my requirements for my Chinese major. The chapter will detail my fieldwork and my reflections upon conducting

interviews and listening to the stories of Chinese restaurant workers. Chapter V will contain my analysis, in which I identified three major themes from my interviews. Chapter VI is my concluding chapter that includes a consideration of my study's limitations and directions for future research. Chapter summaries written in Chinese will also be visible throughout my project. These passages written in the Chinese language allude to contributions Chinese people have made toward the success of my project and completion of this document. Finally, my documentary will be attached to this document as a disk.

Chapter I offered an overview of the crucial thought and background information. With this in mind, I will now turn toward a review of scholarly research related to my study. The following chapter summarizes literature pertaining to concepts relevant to my study, including the history of Chinese immigration, Chinese immigrant culture and the social context under which Chinese food culture has developed, and the Americanization of Chinese food in the United States.

第二章：文献评论

我阅读并概述了与我研究有关系的论文。第一部分说明中国移民的历史。第一波移民是劳动者。他们来美国的时候受到种族主义歧视。第二波移民也是劳动者但是他们经历了更艰难的环境，因为这是“排斥时代”。在美国，很多中国人得放弃熟悉的工作。他们通常参与洗衣业和餐饮业。第三波移民更博学，他们当中有的会获得白领工作。第二部分说明唐人街的重要性。住在唐人街的中国人有意将中国文化商品化，因为他们知道美国人享受异国情调的环境。第三部分说明纯正中国菜跟美国化中国菜的差别。纯正的中国菜考虑热跟凉的平衡，也考虑饭跟菜的平衡。美国化中国菜的口味改变了，因为美国人更喜欢糖、盐跟脂肪。除了饭菜的变化，我还阐述美国人历史上低估中国人的劳动。这个趋势还在当前美国社会存在。

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter, I explore major concepts that are important for understanding this project. The first section will give a general overview of the history of Chinese immigration into the United States in three parts: first-wave (1820-1882), second-wave (1882-1943), and third-wave immigrants (1943-present). The second section will explore the relationship between the creation of Chinatowns and the perception of Chinese culture in the United States. The third section deals with the introduction and subsequent popularity of Chinese food in the United States. Finally, I will examine Chinese food, specifically the cooking methods and characteristics of the dishes, and the assimilation of Chinese food that caters to the American palate. The following sections provide a foundation of knowledge of what is being conducted in my study, and develops understanding of the previous scholarly research within the field.

Chinese Immigration into the United States

The history of Chinese immigration into the United States can be divided into separate categories relative to the political legislation and social and racial climate of the times. I have grouped Chinese immigration into three eras: 1820-1882, characterized by the first Chinese immigrants to enter the United States up to when the Chinese Exclusion Act was placed in effect, including the surge in Chinese immigrants during the California Gold Rush and the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad; 1882-1943, often called the “Exclusion Era” in which the Chinese battled fierce legislation operating against them, as well as an increasingly hostile racial climate; 1943-present, in which improved diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. led to reopening the doors to Chinese immigration.

First-Wave Immigrants: Demographics. The first-wave Chinese immigrants were primarily male laborers. Many came from the Pearl River Delta of Guangdong Province in

southeastern China, located in a coastal region (Yung et al. 1). This led local Chinese to have early contact with many foreign traders, allowing them access to news of the gold rush and other labor contractors who were actively seeking young, able-bodied men to work in the United States (Liu 25; Yung et al. 1). Another factor for increased emigration was the political and economic instability in southern China brought about by “the Taiping Rebellion, the Opium Wars, and the inability of the Chinese government to maintain peace and order” (Holland 150). Population pressure, peasant uprisings, failure of the traditional self-sufficient rural economy, and internal decay of the Qing dynasty also affected Chinese migration patterns (Liu 24).

Chinese immigrants in the United States were primarily male. The high number of males can be attributed to “cultural mores against women traveling abroad, limited economic resources, and the harsh living conditions in the frontier West” (Yung et al. 2). Many families came to the conclusion that it was cheaper and safer to maintain a split household, having the men find economic success in the United States while the women support the remaining family in China (Yung et al. 2).

The socioeconomic status of first-wave Chinese immigrants who entered the United States remains contested. Catalina Velázquez Morales, author of “The Chinese Immigrants in Baja California: From the Cotton Fields to the City, 1920-1940),” argues that the Chinese immigrants’ situation was very difficult due to the harsh conditions in China at the beginning of the twentieth century, and these workers who left Guangdong Province were forced to emigrate as a means of improving their low economic condition (399). However, Haiming Liu, author of “The Social Origins of Early Chinese Immigrants: A Revisionist Perspective,” argues against the public assumption that the first-wave immigrants were of the lowest laboring classes in China. Liu asserts that these first-wave immigrants probably belonged to the middle- and lower-middle

class ranks of Chinese society, because the emigration region in Guangdong had a “tradition of migration, diversified commercial activities, prevalent lineage organizations, and a competitive environment” which led to a highly motivated people with considerable literacy having lived in the region for generations (Liu 24).

The public perception of first-wave Chinese immigrants as members of the lower class is stems from two factors. First, China’s official imperial policy outlawed emigration from the 1370s to 1893, resulting in the Chinese who migrated across national borders to be considered vagabonds, outlaws, and fugitives, unless their leave was formally approved (Cassel 3). Second, the first-wave immigrants – mostly male bachelors – worked in some of the only industries available at the time, which included jobs as miners, railroad workers, and farmers, which reinforced the idea of Chinese as peasants and opportunists (Cassel 4).

First-Wave Immigrants: Jobs and Public Perception. The first wave of immigrants from China arrived in the United States in the 1820s (Holland 150). These immigrants were mostly men and their numbers were relatively small, but in the 1850s the number of Chinese immigrants increased due to the discovery of gold in California in 1849 (Holland 150). These immigrants were attracted by stories of the California gold rush (Yung et al. 1). From 1852 until 1882 – at which point the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed – over 300,000 Chinese entered the United States (Yung et al. 1). During 1852, there were more than 200,000 Chinese immigrants arriving in California, the estimated Chinese population of the United States in 1860 was close to 35,000, and the number rose to 63,200 in 1870, which led to widespread cries for Chinese exclusion by 1880 (Mendelson 63).

Chinese workers were also instrumental in building the Transcontinental Railroad through hard and dangerous labor (Yung et al. 3). When carving a roadbed out of the granite

promontory of Cape Horn, which towered 14,000 feet above the American River, Chinese workers would “lower themselves from the top of the cliff in wicker baskets to drill holes and light explosives pulling themselves up before, hopefully, the gunpowder exploded beneath them (Yung et al. 3). Chinese immigrants had no legal protection – the international treaties between China and more politically powerful Western countries did not include provisions to protect the Chinese workers from exploitation (Velázquez Morales 399-400). Despite the crucial role Chinese workers played in building the Transcontinental Railroad, they were excluded from the photograph that memorialized completion of the railroad at promontory point, Utah, which is “representative of their continued debarment and dismissal in the American workplace” (Cassel 8).

The completion of railroad construction signaled a change for the worse for Chinese immigrants. As railroad construction was finished, the demand for cheap Chinese labor dropped (Holland 151). The Chinese were willing to work for a fraction of the wages usually paid to white workers, consequently creating competition, which resulted in the public opinion of western states shifting against the presence of the Chinese (Holland 151). Thus the Chinese were only tolerated if their labor was needed to develop economic infrastructure of the West (Yung et al. 4).

Furthermore, this era was marked with a downturn in the national economy that followed the end of the Civil War, and unemployment rose in all western states (Holland 151-152). The increased arrival of large numbers of Chinese immigrants also caused white Americans to express alarm. Politicians found that “promising to deport Chinese immigrants or barring new immigrants from China was popular with voters” (Holland 151-152). Consequent racism and discrimination severely restricted job access for Chinese immigrants, as labor unions and

legislative bodies exiled them from an array of employment opportunities (Cassel 8). The Chinese were increasingly forced into self-contained industries, “often in service to other Chinese, in local Chinatowns, or via export to China” (Cassel 8).

Public perception of the first-wave Chinese immigrants was negative from the start. Most Americans conceived the Chinese as “swarming, malefic little enemies to the honest workingman,” and cheap yellow labor quickly became a convenient symbol for capitalist greed (Mendelson 61). The Chinese were considered cheap disposable laborers and faced hostility in California’s mining districts and fledgling towns, which only increased as California experienced an economic decline in the late 1860s (Baxter and Allen 383). Americans also held preconceived notions about the Chinese based on false images and assumptions about China, which they viewed as “backward, heathen, and degenerate country” (Yung et al. 2). Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States when European Americans were expanding in the American West equipped with the ideas of manifest destiny and white supremacy (Yung et al. 2). Many in the country saw the Chinese as “cultural threats, labor competition, and racial inferiors” (Yung et al. 2). Americans were also unable to see past racial and ethnic differences, which led to perception of the Chinese as a separate people, equal to the lower status on which Africans, Mexicans, and Native Americans were placed (Yung et al. 2).

Second-wave Immigration: Demographics. While the first-wave Chinese immigrants were characterized as young male laborers, the second-wave Chinese immigrants were not. As Anti-Chinese sentiment reached its height in the 1870s-1880s, the Chinese Exclusion Act was signed. Beyond affirming the ineligibility of Chinese for naturalized citizenship, the enforcement of the Exclusion Act also signaled a shift into second-wave immigration, lasting approximately until WWII during the 1940s (Baxter and Allen 383-384). The law suspended virtually all

Chinese, particularly immigrant laborers, from entering the United States (Baxter and Allen 383-384; Holland 152). However, exceptions were made for merchants, scholars, diplomats, and American-born Chinese and their families (Baxter and Allen 383-384). Thus while first-wave Chinese immigrants were characterized primarily as laborers, the signing of the Exclusion Act led to a drastic shift in the demographics of Chinese immigrants during the following decades.

Second-wave Immigration: Jobs and Public Perception. Second-wave Chinese immigrants were impacted by discriminatory legislation and experienced racial prejudice, which was shaped by the sociopolitical contexts of the time. Chinese immigrants faced consequent resentment from non-Chinese, as shopkeepers and restaurateurs frequently noted anti-Chinese hostility (Yeh 330). During the Exclusion period from 1882 to 1943, the racial environment forced Chinese immigrants out of higher-paying skilled occupations and into menial service jobs (Liu and Lin 136). The Chinese principally lived in urban areas, their own Chinese communities, and concentrated in noncompetitive fields such as operating small laundries, restaurants, and grocery stores (Yung et al. 104).

Second-generation Chinese Americans, who were coming of age in the 1920s and 1930s, experienced cultural conflict as they attempted to follow both Chinese and American values (Yung et al. 105-106). The increased assimilation of second-generation Chinese Americans led them to discard the queue and other features of Chinese dress, but also take advantage of education with the purpose of achieving social mobility (Roberts 148). However, while Chinese Americans had the ability to speak English, high educational attainment, and a Western outlook, they were still receiving the same public treatment as Chinese immigrants and were “confined to living in segregated quarters, working at low-paying jobs, and excluded from participation in mainstream society” (Yung et al. 105-106). They often resorted to working in Chinese-owned

businesses or set up professional practices in Chinatown communities to avoid job discrimination (Yung et al. 105-106).

Conditions for the Chinese improved during World War II, as this era incited a complete revision of American attitudes toward China (Roberts 152). This was when China and the United States became allies and “Chinese Americans were encouraged to participate in an all-American effort to defend democracy and defeat fascism” (Yung et al. 103). Chinese Americans were provided with unprecedented opportunities to improve their socioeconomic and political status, as American attitudes toward the Chinese became favorable and the labor shortage allowed Chinese Americans to find jobs in professional fields outside Chinatowns (Yung et al. 106). The United States then repealed their Chinese Exclusion Act in 1943 (Holland 153), which signaled the arrival of a new era of Chinese immigration.

Third-wave Immigration: Demographics. Third-wave Chinese immigrants may have been the most diverse, particularly observed in the rise of female Chinese immigrants entering the United States. Congress passed the War Brides Act of 1945 and the Alien Wives Act of 1946 after World War II, which allowed over seven thousand Chinese women to enter as non-quota immigrants and join their husbands in the United States (Yung et al. 225).

Furthermore, third-wave immigrants also consisted of more educated professionals. As the United States entered the Cold War era, a series of refugee acts were passed which admitted approximately 30,000 “professionals, entrepreneurs, intellectuals, and ex-government officials escaping unstable political conditions in China” (Yung et al. 225). In 1977, the People’s Republic of China also began allowing emigration from China, which resulted in large numbers of Chinese professionals emigrating to the United States (Holland 155). This led the Chinese population in the United States to increase from 117,269 in 1950 to 237,292 in 1960 (Yung et al.

225). These immigrants, unlike earlier Cantonese immigrants, were well-educated professionals who spoke the Mandarin dialect, and often came from central and northern China (Holland 155; Yung et al. 225). After the Tiananmen Square incident in 1989 – mass protest of college students advocating political reform in China was suppressed by armed troops – another 60,000 students and scholars from China were allowed to become permanent residents in the United States (Yung et al. 229).

Migration flows in the first decade of the twenty-first century continue to reflect how the immigration selection processes favor the educated and technologically adept (Hsu 236). The United States has always been interested in attracting Chinese immigrants with certain skills. During era of the Transcontinental Railroad construction, the United States was interested in attracting Chinese workers who were “industrious, disciplined, docile, and willing to work for low wages,” while in the 21st century, the post-industrial and high technology economy demands “professional and technical workers with masters and doctoral degrees” (Holland 158).

Third-wave Immigration: Jobs and Public Perception. The well-educated and cosmopolitan third-wave Chinese immigrants were arriving in the United States during a time when conditions were becoming more favorable for Chinese Americans, and their scientific and technical skills were in high demand by America’s military-industrial complex (Yung et al. 225-226). These immigrants, as well as second and third generation American-born Chinese who grew up during this time, were able to successfully integrate into mainstream society based on their social acceptance in middle-class circles, suburban residence, and social lifestyle (Yung et al. 225-226, 230).

However, Chinese immigrants continued to battle racial discrimination. Public perception of Chinese immigrants took a sharp downwards turn when Chinese-U.S. relations declined the

1950s. Communist control of China in 1949 and the anti-Communist hysteria that swept the United States forced many Chinese in America to sever ties with their homeland, and the Chinese government's decision to fight against the United States during the Korean War negatively affected the Chinese population in the United States (Yeh 330; Yung et al. 225).

Although 1960 U.S. census data shows that larger proportions of Chinese Americans graduated from college and moved up the occupational ladder, but their earning power was still not commensurate with their level of education, especially in comparison to their white counterparts (Yung et al. 226-227). Chinese Americans were segregated into the lower paying, non-managerial sectors of the labor market due to "racial discrimination, cultural barriers, media stereotypes, and lack of paying, non-managerial sectors of the primary labor market" (Yung et al. 226-227). Nevertheless, the relatively positive public attitudes toward Chinese immigrants of the 1990s were a stark contrast to the hostile attitudes toward first-wave Chinese immigrants in the 1870s (Holland 157).

One reason for this change in public perception is the demographic change in immigrants from China, as first-wave Chinese immigrants were largely illiterate, single, male laborers, while those arriving in response to new immigration laws in the late 1970s onward were largely highly educated professionals with marketable skillsets (Holland 157). Positive public attitudes toward recent immigrants have contributed to viewing the Chinese immigrants as the model minority, which refers to a "minority ethnic group whose members achieve a higher degree of success than the population average" (Holland 157). The model minority myth labels people of Asian descent as hardworking, intelligent, and reserved (Thompson and Kiang 119). Historically, the model minority myth is thought to have emerged during the Civil Rights era, during which positive traits of Asian Americans were used to critique other minority groups, namely African

Americans (Thompson and Kiang 119). Popular European American discourse consequently characterized Asians as being “hardworking, directed by success, educationally driven, non-confrontational, conforming and compliant or uncomplaining” (Ung et al. 272). Thus the educational and economic backgrounds of third-wave Chinese immigrants, and the social climate of the United States during the time of their immigration marked a drastic change in the public perception of Chinese immigrants.

Long-standing Assumptions About Chinese Immigrants. Americans assume that the first-wave Chinese immigrants came from the lowest social class, and that Chinese emigration was “a desperate escape from poverty and hunger...bound to the United States for mere survival” (Liu 21). This assumption is rooted in the idea of Chinese civilization as isolationist and conservative, and Chinese society as backward and poor (Liu 22). China is framed as static and conservative in comparison to a modern, dynamic Western society (Liu 22). This framing is responsible in part for the disdainful American public opinion toward Chinese immigrants that has continued for centuries.

Americans also frequently assume that the Chinese are a homogeneous group, evident in their being lumped together for analytical purposes (Zhang 241). However, it should be acknowledged that China has great diversity in terms of language, cuisine, and customs (Zhang 241). The differences are also reflected in Chinese immigrants in the United States. Their differences stem from “history, geographical origin, area of settlement, time and circumstances of entry into the United States, and level of acculturation” (Zhang 241).

The assumptions Americans held of Chinese people were influenced by the images of Chinese culture permeating society, specifically the display of Chinese culture found in Chinatowns. These Chinatowns, which would eventually be found throughout the nation, tended

to choose similar decorative styles that resulted in the perception of Chinese people as all belonging to the same exotic and otherworldly culture.

Creation and Significance of Chinatowns

Non-Chinese Americans commonly view Chinatowns as tourist attractions. They are a source of entertainment, existing outside of everyday reality as a place where one “can wander about to escape from the boredom of their routine work, treat themselves to a special meal, and have some fun bargaining with the aliens” (Zhou and Portes 7-8). But for Chinese immigrants, Chinatown is a sort of safe haven where they can speak their own language among others of the same background, and share their pleasure, pain, and nostalgia (Zhou and Portes 7-8). Thus Chinatowns battle between the comfort of home versus being perceived as a foreign exotic affair. The creation and significance of these complex areas across the nation are rich in history, dating back to the first immigrants that arrived in the United States.

Building Chinatowns. Chinese immigrants often lived in enclaves, later called Chinatowns, because non-Chinese Americans viewed them as unable to assimilate to the majority society (wong 419). Enclaves are defined as geographically tightly woven places where “the dominant group is isolated from the peer society” (wong 416). Members of Chinatown enclaves shared common origins and language, experienced the same discrimination, and participated in the same organizational affiliations that allowed for survival (wong 416). The majority of new immigrants usually settle in less-desirable areas and take whatever jobs necessary, even if they were overqualified for the labor, in order to survive in their new countries (Zhou and Portes 2; Yeh 333-334). Emphasis should be placed on uses of the word “survival,” as most Chinese immigrants lived in Chinatowns because they lacked other options that would

allow assimilation into mainstream society. Thus immigrants lived in enclaves not by choice, but as a consequence of segregation (Zhou and Portes 1-2).

Chinatowns served as the source of social network within the community of Chinese laborers in the early 1850s (wong 417). Many first-wave immigrants who later became U.S. citizens were primarily non-English-speaking and lacked marketable job skills, and so were their immediate families who arrived later in the United States as non-quota immigrants (Yung et al. 227). These Chinese immigrants were deemed as perpetual foreigners and failed to find social acceptance because of their race, dress, food, and language – all of which differed significantly from the Western and eastern European backgrounds that formed the dominant white American society (wong 419). Thus Chinatowns provided the social support that the Chinese were unable to receive from majority members of society.

As anti-Chinese hostility gained momentum, the Chinese increasingly sought comfort in their enclaves. Chinese immigrants had endured years of hard work and were scarred by unjust treatment in the West with no fruits of success (Zhou and Portes 6). They clung to each other with the hopes of achieving their dreams of going home with “lots of gold to honor their ancestors and families” (Zhou and Portes 6).

Characterizing Chinatowns. Enclaves inhabited by Chinese immigrants were physically marked by signs written in Chinese characters, ornaments such as Chinese flags and statues, the use of colors to depict meaning such as red and gold for festivities, and open markets such as vegetable standards and vendor carts (wong 416-417; Zhou and Portes1). Both peer society and other ethnic communities came to recognize the symbolic cultural artifacts and concrete boundaries that marked Chinatowns across the nation (wong 416-417). However, recognition by peer society did not equate to successful assimilation. Chinatowns remained spaces of racial

Otherness, and the symbolic and concrete boundaries of Chinatowns worked to contain Chinese bodies in a controllable space (Wilson 18). Although non-Chinese Americans would venture into Chinatowns for themselves overtime, their experiences have not led to complete assimilation of Chinese Americans and Chinese immigrants in dominant society, evident in the continued existence of Chinatowns across the nation.

Non-Chinese American ventures into Chinatowns became more popular as they became less concerned with removing the Chinese as a threat – which the Exclusion Act took care of – and instead discovered the pleasure of experiencing exotic foreign culture. Two factors primarily influenced the rise of tourism trips into Chinatowns. First, the arrival of the immediate families of the first Chinese immigrants to enter the United States injected new life into Chinatown communities by creating new demands for food, goods, and services (Yung et al. 227-228). Second, the improved diplomatic relations between the United States and China observed in later waves of Chinese immigration led to greater proliferation and acceptance of Chinese cultural practices in America (Yung et al. 230). However, Chinatowns began losing non-Chinese traffic when U.S.-Chinese relations declined during the Cold War (Yeh 330).

Chinatown leaders would attempt to boost businesses by transforming Chinatowns into tourist centers, effectively capitalizing upon and commercializing the non-Chinese fascination of their culture (Yeh 330, 334). After the San Francisco earthquake, San Francisco Chinatown deliberately built a new “Oriental City” specifically designed to attract tourists (Roberts 145). Chinatown leaders would also use events such as the Chinese New Year festival and Miss Chinatown U.S.A. to “construct an assimilated, law-abiding, submissive, and middle-class American identity” (Yeh 323-333). Although white visitors of Chinatowns would have condescending and patronizing attitudes, Chinatown establishment would keep silent in fear of

offending these tourists and driving off business (Yeh 335). Furthermore, Chinatowns were ethnic ghettos and had characteristics of a slum, but Chinatown establishment would downplay the economic, social, and racial problems faced by the enclave in order to continue attracting white visitors (Yeh 333-335). Thus Chinese immigrants intentionally turned their neighborhoods into commercial hubs, catered to satisfy the white American desire to experience the Orient.

Integrating Chinese Food in a Foreign Western Nation

Chinese food is, by name, a cuisine that is foreign to the U.S. However, Chinese food has become deeply integrated in the daily lives of American people. The introduction and expansion of Chinese food throughout the U.S. is attributed to the Chinese immigrants – a group that has historically experienced economic marginalization, political persecution, and cultural prejudice (Chen 15). The experiences of Chinese immigrants are largely reflected in their food, specifically in the Americanization of their dishes to match the American palate.

Defining Authentic Chinese Food. Discussing the Americanization of Chinese food brings forth the necessary discussion of defining Chinese food. The term “Chinese food” itself includes Chinese dishes but can also be extended to include habits related to cooking, serving, and eating food (Roberts 25). These culinary habits are characterized by the emphasis on balance, methods of cooking, the use of meat, and eating practices.

First, Chinese food emphasizes balance. The Chinese view bodily function as following yin-yang principles, and one way to maintain this equilibrium is the consumption of proper amounts of specific food (Chang 10; Roberts 26). The consumption of specific food is related to eating balanced portions of *fan*, which literally means cooked rice but includes all starchy foods, and *cai*, which directly translates to vegetables but also includes meat dishes (Roberts 25; Chang 7). *Fan* has mistakenly been equated to rice, which for Americans means “white grains cooked to

a fluffy consistency,” but to the Chinese *fan* also means cooked “corn, millet, and glutinous millet” (V. Hsu and F. Hsu 300). Thus the basic definition of the term *fan* differs between China and the United States. Furthermore, for the Chinese, the balance of *fan* and *cai* is considered at each meal (Roberts 25). When one is eating, appropriate amounts of both *fan* and *cai* should be taken, but on a foundational level, *fan* is called *chu shih* which translates to “the main or primary food,” while *cai* is called *fu shih* which is called the “supplementary of secondary food” (Chang 10). Between the two, *fan* is more fundamental and indispensable (Chang 10).

The Chinese also value the balance between hot and cold foods (Roberts 26). On the continuum of hot to cold foods, rice falls on the middle (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 368). Food is also balanced among five flavors that are “salty, bitter, sour, acrid, and sweet” (Roberts 25-26). The balance between such foods is also crucial to maintaining and influencing one’s health condition, which reinforces the notion of food being viewed as a type of medicine in China (Chang 9).

Second, the methods of cooking Chinese food also make the category unique. Just in terms of utensils, there are *fan* utensils and *tsai* utensils, such as the *fan kuo* or rice cooker, and the *tsai kuo* or wok (Chang 8). The broadest division in methods is between cooking with water and cooking with oil (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 358). When using water to cook, one can either boil food or steam it, but boiling is the most important process within the Chinese kitchen (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 358). Meanwhile, cooking with oil means stir-frying your food, but deep-fried food in China is relatively common (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 358-359). The stir-frying process entails “heating the oil till it smokes, then tossing thin-sliced vegetables and meat into it and stirring very quickly for a few seconds while the food sears,” while deep-frying entails “plunging items rapidly into boiling, or at least hot, oil, again searing

them, but in a thicker, crisper, oilier coat” (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 358-359).

Uncooked Chinese food is not common – only fruit is eaten plain, but the other cold dishes have also been heated in the past and have been cooled since (E. Anderson Jr. and M. Anderson 360).

Third, the uses of meat in Chinese dishes are distinct, especially when compared to how they are used in the West. Large quantities of meat have never been part of the Chinese diet due to economic conditions and cultural influences, such as the Buddhist aversion to harming animals (Roberts 19). In 1931-1937, the annual per capita consumption of meat in the United States was approximately 150 kilograms, while consumption in China was less than 13 kilograms (Roberts 19). However, as the standard of living in China has increased, meat became more common in most people’s everyday meals (Oxfeld 18).

Finally, Chinese eating practices are different from those in the United States. Westerners usually entertain guests at home, while the Chinese usually entertain guests in restaurants or private rooms within restaurants (Roberts 25-26). The presentation of food is incredibly important in Chinese culture, and thus a variety of foods are selected (Roberts 25-26).

The Chinese are food-oriented, which is observed in the eating habits they practice in daily lives. The large variety of foods and drinks they have for different contexts, the elaborate food rituals, and detailed utensils demonstrate the value of food-culture in China (Chang 12). Furthermore, the nation’s complicated history of starvation and famine also influence the importance of food in China today (Oxfeld 3). Although the Chinese have imported many fruits and vegetables from western and central Asia throughout the Han, Tang, and Ming periods, food shortage swept the nation during the Great Leap (Oxfeld 10). However, the reform and opening initiated in 1978 opened China to the world market, which de-collectivized the country’s agricultural structure and also improved the diets of the Chinese people (Oxfeld 3-11).

American Attitudes Toward Chinese Food. The consumption of Chinese food is now ingrained within the lives of everyday Americans but this was not always the case. Chinese food has traditionally been regarded as the antithesis of Western food because of the contrasting methods of cooking and serving the dishes (Roberts 25). However, the changing attitudes of the West toward Chinese food have led to the opening of Chinese restaurants in almost every American city or town (Roberts 9).

Historically, Americans did not actively seek out Chinese food, which they perceived to be full of repulsive foods such as rats (Chen 27). The general American public had gained such perceptions from the accounts of Americans who had traveled to China (Chen 27). One such account was from S. Wells Williams, an American missionary, who noted that cooking in China had not reached a degree of sophistication, and used too much onion and garlic to satisfy the European palate (Roberts 57-59). A. H. Smith, an American missionary, left a more negative account as he claimed that the Chinese were not gifted with the same fastidiousness as is developed in the West (Roberts 59).

However, not all accounts from the 19th century demeaned Chinese cooking in a manner that elevated the West. In 1872, W. H. Medhurst, the British Consul in Shanghai, wrote that it was erroneous to assume that Chinese food consisted of animals such as dogs, cats, and rats (Roberts 60). Medhurst pointed out that the Chinese masses barely included meat in their diet – the only meat was pork – and the higher classes were consuming delicacies that were yet to be experienced by European tongues, such as jelly-fish and ducks' tongues (Roberts 60).

The negative perceptions of Chinese food were not only influenced by the accounts of Americans who had traveled to China, but also by the anti-Chinese sentiment that overtook the nation during the Chinese Exclusion era, between 1882-1943. When white Americans felt

economic anxiety, they took their frustrations out on the Chinese through the acts of shootings, arson, and lynchings (Lee 55). As racist attitudes toward the Chinese were heightened, Chinese food tradition was stereotyped as “rice became a racial symbol of Asian inferiority; beef consumption represented white American superiority” (Liu, “From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express” 2). These stereotypes were iterated in popular magazines, which communicated the widely held view that the Chinese were unable to assimilate due to their eating habits, which consisted of only eating rice, rats, and snakes, and having national dishes like chop suey and chow mein (Roberts 147; Chen 27). Throughout the 1950s, American descriptions of Chinese food were decidedly negative, including frequent gibes about “rat pies” (Mendelson 56). Centuries of hearing second-hand accounts about the horrors of Chinese food and continued exposure to negative stereotypes made white American suspicious of Chinese cooking, which created an environment in which eating at a Chinese restaurant was “culturally embarrassing or socially awkward for a middle-class white family” (Liu, “From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express” 2). However, World War II influenced public perception of Chinese restaurants, as American military deployment overseas led some Americans to realize that the Chinese had developed methods to cook tasty nutritious meals (Roberts 152).

American public attitudes toward Chinese food began to change when President Nixon visited China in 1972, which “sparked a trend of all things Chinese” (*The Search for General Tso*). When the publication of the menu for the banquet Zhou Enlai hosted for President Nixon in 1972 was released, many Americans became curious about Chinese things and wanted to try their regional cuisines (Roberts 166). Chinese restaurants in the United States received phone calls from people requesting duplicates of dishes Nixon ate (*The Search for General Tso*). Many Americans also simply became curious about Chinese things, and gained a curiosity for trying

Chinese cuisines (Roberts 166). Thus it can be argued that Nixon's visit prompted the Golden Age of fine Chinese cooking in the United States (*The Search for General Tso*).

However, others will argue that Nixon's visit only revealed the development that had been taking place for decades. Anne Mendelson, author of *Chow Chop Suey: Food and the Chinese American Journey*, has argued that Nixon's 1972 diplomatic visit merely "reinforced an exploratory vogue that had been underway for decades" (178). The large influx of Chinese immigrants post-Exclusion Act combined with improved U.S.-China relations led to a wider acceptance of Chinese cultural practices in the United States (Yung et al. 230). Although Chinese food was once one of the most hated cuisines in the United States, Chinese food is now one of the country's most popular ethnic cuisines (Chen 15). The story of Chinese food goes beyond one of marginalization and exploitation, but also speaks to the resistance and perseverance of Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans (Chen 17).

Promoting Chinese Food in a Foreign Country. Although the Chinese immigrants faced hostility in the United States, experiencing attacks against their ethnicity and food, they persisted in "transplanting, preserving, and promoting their cuisine" (Chen 15). The nature of Chinese *cai* dishes allowed them to prepare their cultural cuisines both in times of scarcity and abundance, and even in a foreign country without traditional ingredients (Chang 8-9). The flexibility and adaptability of *cai* dishes is made possible by the lack of reliance on an exact number of ingredients or a single item (Chang 8-9). Thus Chinese immigrants in the United States were able to continue cooking Chinese food, even without access to familiar ingredients or materials.

Methods of promoting Chinese food included long hours of labor, conducting effective public-relations campaign, adopting business styles like open kitchen and home delivery, and packaging Chinese dishes into easily-recognizable product lines (Chen 18). Chinese food was

spread through the opening of Chinese restaurants and takeaways, but also through the attempts of Westerners to cook Chinese food for themselves (Roberts 187). To satisfy this Western need, Chinese Americans published a multitude of Chinese-food cookbooks, such as *Chinese Recipes* by A. Moore published in 1923, and the *Mandarin Chop Suey Cookbook* by an unknown author published in 1928 (Roberts 187-188). Chinese Americans were also involved in the broadcast of radio and television programs which gave them a platform to instruct mainstream audiences about China's cooking, culture, history, and their own personal experiences (Chen 19-20; Roberts 187).

The Chinese immigrants' successful promotion of Chinese food revolutionized the consumption style of the U.S. market. They played a vital role in democratizing consumption by turning the luxury of enjoying meals prepared by others into a universally affordable experience (Chen 34). Chinese restaurants worked to attract as many customers as possible, which led to creating dishes with prices as low as 50 cents (Liu 133).

Chinese food can now be considered to be an American staple, but the road to success was not an easy one. The roots of their struggles can be traced to the Anti-Chinese sentiment addressed earlier in this section, which forced Chinese immigrants into an unthreatening role: cooking for white Americans.

Cooking for White Americans. Some Chinese had opened restaurants prior to the Exclusion era, but the anti-Chinese hostility that erupted during this time caused Chinese restaurants to lose Western clientele (Roberts 136, 144). Furthermore, the racial environment during the Exclusion era forced Chinese immigrants, who were in higher-paying skilled occupations, to turn to menial service jobs (Liu and Lin 136). These service jobs were primarily restaurant businesses based in Chinatowns catering to Chinese customers, or laundry businesses (Barbas 674; Roberts 137).

However, white laundrymen campaigned against Chinese laundries in 1922, claiming that the Chinese were cutting their prices unfairly (Roberts 146). Thus by 1940, restaurant jobs were one of the main lines of work for the Chinese (Chen 96).

White Americans would not accept Chinese immigrants as skilled workers, but had no trouble accepting them as their cooks. This white acceptance stems from traditional attitudes toward non-Western cultures and the longstanding image of subordinate peoples as preparers and servers of food (Barbas 682). White Americans were able to adopt Chinese dishes into their diet, despite hostility toward Asian immigrants, by “distancing foods of Chinese origin from people of Chinese origin, and by reaffirming Chinese immigrants’ subordinate status through the repeated invocation of racial stereotypes” (Barbas 683). Furthermore, operating restaurants required long hours and hard labor but did not pose a direct competition to white laborers (Liu and Lin 137). Thus despite the anti-Chinese hysteria, White Americans maintained their conviction that “nobody made a more gifted and reliable cook than a Chinaman” (Mendelson 67). However, their years in restaurant work prepared the North American Chinese community with a unique opportunity: when the anti-Chinese sentiment finally ceded, they would be equipped to enter the restaurant business across the U.S. and Canada, with white people rather than Chinese as their target clientele (Mendelson 71).

Experiencing the Exotic. Many Americans found themselves drawn to Chinese restaurants run by Chinese immigrants, wanting to satisfy their curiosity of the East. These restaurants were often small family businesses where staff would work long hours for low wages (Roberts 169). While Chinese immigrants and Chinese Americans often struggled as subjects of racial violence and legal discrimination, the food they cooked continued to be consumed by thousands of Americans

who were willing to “briefly suspend their hostilities and journey into Chinatown for an evening’s entertainment” (Barbas 675).

During the second half of the nineteenth century, white American “labor union members, public health officials, politicians, and reporters” labeled the Chinese as a threat to American society, but as the nineteenth century drew to a close, white Americans felt comforted by the various exclusion measures enacted upon the Chinese, which allowed hostility to be exchanged for curiosity (Chen 96). As the Chinese population began its downturn and their communities were safely confined to a few blocks in major cities, Chinatowns became a tourist destination for those hoping to “taste the Orient” (Chen 96). On Sundays, one would see white Americans and Chinese Americans converged on the Chinatowns of New York and San Francisco, looking for Chinese food, purchases, and sociability (Roberts 163). Thus the American public transitioned from viewing the Chinese as a hostile threat to perceiving the Chinese as curious exotic beings. The change in attitude also led to Chinese spaces being perceived not as a site of danger, but rather as a site of pleasure (Chen 96). The Chinese in the United States were then faced with a new challenge. Would they capitalize by emphasizing their exotic characteristics, or would they maintain an unobtrusive existence? Some restaurants chose to sell an experience beyond food, and thus catered to American expectations of the exotic by serving dishes such as Beijing duck, having chopsticks as utensils, and created a brand of authenticity by having pictures and music that fit the theme of Chinese (Roberts 223). Other restaurants chose to downplay their exoticism, partly because they self-regulated their function to being cheap and convenient provider of food, and partly also because they wanted to minimize intrusion in the surrounding neighborhood (Roberts 223).

Chinese immigrants used food as an effective tool to navigate anti-Chinese sentiment. They promoted Chinatown and their food by “appropriating attempts to exoticize their culture” (Chen 118). Chinese restaurateurs appealed to non-Chinese Americans as a survival strategy, marketing their food as exotic and adventurous, although it was actually “safely welded to a middlebrow, white American cultural-culinary frame of reference” (Mendelson 71). Although the public viewed them with disdain, the Chinese maintained pride in their culture, as they highlighted their cultural differences in an effort to cater to tourist trends, turning “theaters, restaurants, and temples, into visually impressive cultural artifacts” (Chen 118). Chinese immigrants deliberately adapted their menus and décor to suit white preferences, enabling tourists to use Chinatowns as a temporary release from daily routine (Barbas 675). Several restaurants even offered menus to non-Chinese customers with advice on how to order Chinese food (Roberts 151).

One category of patrons frequenting restaurants was working-class men. While many working-class men were lured to Chinatown by gambling and prostitution houses, they were also “attracted to the possibility of finding cheap and filling meals” (Barbas 670). These working-class men had a history of eating meals prepared for them by Chinese cooks, who had worked with them on mines and railroads (Barbas 670). A second category of patrons frequenting Chinese restaurants were the wealthy urbanites, who would venture into upscale Chinese restaurants which were “elegant establishments appointed with white tablecloths and gleaming silverware for the upper-class visitor trade” (Barbas 672). An increasing number of white middle-class Americans made up the third category of patrons, who were motivated to frequent Chinese restaurants through a growing fascination with non-Western cultures, which was reflected in Orientalist art and literature of the period (Barbas 672).

While the exotic nature of the Orient attracted Americans to Chinatown, the widespread popular interest in Chinese food must also be attributed to the transformation in lifestyle marking this time (Chen 100). Chinese restaurants expanded outside of Chinatowns, successfully creating business for themselves in non-Chinese communities, which signals national shifts in attitudes toward food consumption (Chen 100). Americans began valuing and coveting the “convenience and luxury of having their meals cooked and served by others,” which stimulated restaurant businesses across the country (Chen 100). There was a clear increase in the development of restaurants catering to tourists, but older restaurants in Chinatowns that remained “only served banquets and old-world dishes to a discerning Chinese clientele” (Roberts 163).

Chinese food is rich in culture and history, which leads one to easily assume that the popularity of Chinese food in America comes from its “gastronomical superiority.” However, the popularity of Chinese food is really grounded in its origins as a tool for Americans to experience the Orient, and as a way for Americans to cheaply experience the comfort of cooked-meals being brought to their tables. As Yong Chen argues in her book *Chop Suey, USA: The Story of Chinese Food in America*, “it would be easier to believe that American consumers fell in love with Chinese food merely or mainly because of its gastronomical superiority if they had accorded it more esteem – the kind of admiration they accorded French and now Italian food” (16). The idea of Chinese food as second-class accompanied the anti-Chinese sentiment that swept across the nation and still remains today, to a certain degree, in American society.

Catering Chinese Food to the American Palate

The most localized forms of Chinese food in the United States are likely to bring white cardboard takeout containers to mind. This version of Chinese food does not exist in China. In fact, the various forms that Chinese food takes in the United States do not exist in China, nor are

they consistent in appearance throughout the West (Roberts 218). While Chinese immigrants in the United States were proud of their heritage and found ways to preserve their cultural identity, they capitalized upon the restaurant business – their main source of income – by allowing their creations to adapt to the Western tongue. However, successfully satisfying American stomachs did not directly translate to Chinese food being held in high esteem.

Chinese Food in the American Restaurant Hierarchy. Extensive labor following a rich culinary history goes behind cooking Chinese cuisine. Chinese restaurant operators have argued that food preparation is incredibly complicated in Chinese cooking because they must deal with more ingredients and equipment than those making non-Chinese dishes, and also commit to following a thousand years of tradition (Liu and Lin 155). However, food culture in the United States seems to designate Chinese food to occupying one of the lowest rungs on the restaurant hierarchy.

Two factors influencing the status of Chinese food in the United States, besides the anti-Chinese hostility influenced by racist stereotypes, have been health and hygiene concerns. One health concern associated with eating Chinese food has been the use of MSG, monosodium glutamate, or a type of flavoring powder (Roberts 212). However, Chinese food in its non-Americanized form includes lots of vegetables and seafood, is low in sodium, and has few deep-fried ingredients (Lee 75).

The hygiene of Chinese restaurants has also been a point of concern for many non-Chinese American patrons. Complaints have been raised regarding the low standards of hygiene (Roberts 213). Many Chinese restaurants historically had mediocre furniture and filthy restrooms, as well as low food quality resulting from cutthroat competition, which prevented attraction of American upper- or middle-class patrons (Liu 133). Chinese restaurateurs and

workers also made attempts to demonstrate cleanliness of their restaurants to overcome the public perception that the Chinese were filthy (Chen 119).

The low position that Chinese food occupies in mainstream America's restaurant hierarchy "has mirrored the inferior status of China both as a culture and as a supplier of cheap labor in the economy" (Chen 17). Popular consumption of Chinese food takes advantage of the convenience and service that Chinese laborers provide in restaurants (Chen 17). For American consumers, Chinese immigrants were valued for their "utility as lowly providers of cheap labor" (Chen 128). Therefore the food cooked by these laborers could not have been accepted as high-class cuisine.

"Cheap" has historically been synonymous with Chinese food. The affordability of Chinese food was a hallmark since the beginning, observed in San Francisco, where Chinese restaurants enjoyed brief increases in non-Chinese customers because of their low prices, long hours of operation, and fast delivery (Chen 122). The low prices were a critical selling point, especially as Chinese food spread to non-Chinese markets in the 1880s and needed to keep up with competition (Chen 122). Chinese cuisine had to be cheap bargain ethnic food because the racial environment of American society did not allow Chinese dishes to occupy a high-class standard (Liu, "Chop Suey as Imagined Authentic Chinese Food" 2). Customers took these lower prices at Chinese restaurants for granted, even though Chinese restaurant owners were paying the same price as other restaurants for their ingredients (Liu 130). As Chinese food rose in popularity by being cheap and convenient, these characteristics set the bar for what Americans would expect from Chinese restaurants (Chen 121).

The American public largely rejected Chinese haute cuisines. Chop suey embodies the way Chinese food became characterized as simple and inexpensive, which led to rejection of its

upscale dishes like shark's fin soup (Chen 17). Chinese food in America was perceived to have one overarching and all-inclusive Chinese theme. This American attitude simplified the diverse regional dialects and cultures of Chinese immigrants that stemmed from the various geographic ecologies, farming traditions, and cultures of their homeland (Liu and Lin 151). The contradictory notion of simple Chinese food fit the general American attitude toward food consumption at the time. Americans "had plenty of food but did not seem to care so much about its preparation" (Chen 125). Thus only a very limited number of Chinese-food buffs developed an appetite for China's haute cuisine (Chen 125).

The low position of Chinese food in the restaurant hierarchy is reflected in the lives of Chinese restaurant workers. As Jennifer Lee states in her book *Fortune Cookie Chronicles*, "death is only the lowest point in what is almost universally the miserable existence of a Chinese restaurant worker" (156). Cooking for non-Chinese was a role taken on by Chinese immigrants in a desperate time of Exclusion-era hostility and was a profitable career for later-wave Chinese immigrants (Mendelson 234). Many workers in the Chinese restaurant sector are treated like farm animals or machines with the sole purpose of feeding Americans, as they are "frying, delivering, waiting tables, stirring, bussing, chopping" (Lee 156). These Chinese restaurant workers might be individuals in their personal lives, but when in front of American customers, they become "an anonymous, all-purpose Chinese restaurant worker" (Lee 156). While first generation Chinese immigrants faced discrimination because of their immigrant status, second generation Chinese Americans still experienced racial and cultural prejudice because their birthright citizenship was, in fact, second-class citizenship (Mendelson 143).

But despite its creators being hated by the American population, within one hundred years, Chinese food has become the country's most popular ethnic cuisine (Chen 15). The

current successful operations of Chinese restaurants are the culminated efforts of generations of Chinese immigrants.

The Symbolic Rise of Chop Suey. Although Americans – turning a blind eye to their role in creating and perpetuating strenuous working conditions of Chinese American laborers – enjoyed cheapness and simplicity as markers of Chinese food, they also held expectations of authenticity. American customers wanted Chinese dishes to be genuine, while Chinese restaurant operators wanted to accommodate American tastes (Liu 2). Chop suey has a successful history in the U.S. because the flavor caters to American tastes but retains its authenticity, despite the fact that the dish does not exist in China (Liu 2). What Americans had believed to be the Chinese national dish merely translates to “odds and ends” in Cantonese (Lee 49).

Li Hongzhang’s visit to the United States contributed to the rise in recognition of the Chinese dish commonly called chop suey. Li visited New York and Vancouver in 1896, and he supposedly invented chop suey at this time (Roberts 138). One version of this story claims that Li was staying at the New York Waldorf Astoria but rejected invitations to banquets and instead preferred to eat the Chinese food prepared by his own cooks, but when his cooks were unable to obtain genuine Chinese ingredients, they invented a dish of bits and pieces which later became known in the United States as chop suey (Roberts 138). Others claim that the dish was invented in California at the time of the Gold Rush, when white workers were eating at Chinese places and were handed dishes made of scraps of meat and vegetables (Roberts 138). Regardless of its origin story, chop suey has been traditionally defined as a dish that was invented in the United States as an adaptation of Chinese food to make up for the shortage of ingredients or to cater to the Western tongue (Roberts 139).

Chop suey characterized early Chinese food in the United States. The dish was gradually accepted “as a major American ethnic food” which led its cooking technique to become more standardized, particularly through Chinese restaurateurs attempting to develop a kind of familiarity with which to promote their businesses (Liu 12). Chop suey was the “first purposefully synthesized cooking style ever presented to American eaters,” which was shaped between the mid-1890s and 1910s (Mendelson 100). Most Chinese restaurants in the 1960s were known as cheap chop suey joints, and these Westernized Chinese restaurants were popular, which led to many first and second generation Chinese Americans opening Americanized Chinese food restaurants catering to white customers in urban and suburban neighborhoods (Roberts 166; Barbas 676). Such chop suey houses did not offer traditional delicacies such as sea slug, bird’s nest, or shark fins to American customers because the Chinese restaurateurs understood that these dishes had plain tastes and would not sell well in the American restaurant markets (Liu 14).

Adapting Chinese Food for the American Palate. Chinese food culture has been compromised in the United States. The food itself has become Americanized to the point that they no longer resemble dishes that exist in China, because real Chinese food had no market in the United States (Liu 135). Individual Chinese restaurants struggled with selling real Chinese dishes, and only managed to gain success after mainstream American food critics had endorsed them, exemplifying the way in which Chinese American restaurateurs “were not in control of their own culture in the American food market” (Liu 135).

Chinese restaurants have adapted to American eating habits. In China, restaurants only serve tea to their customers but in America they also provide soft drinks, ice, and cold water (Roberts 167). However, Chinese restaurants in the United States maintained their food culture

by having tea offered as a free drink (Liu and Lin 150). American ideas also influenced the order in which dishes were served in Chinese restaurants. At first, Chinese restaurants in Chinatowns “set out little dishes of fruits, sweet preserves, and salted seeds or nuts as a starting course,” which was a gesture echoing the beginning of Chinese formal banquets (Mendelson 117). However, the practice faded in meals created for non-Chinese, and it became more usual to greet Westerners with soups, which are traditionally the last course in Chinese meals (Mendelson 117; Liu and Lin 150). Restaurant cooks also served dishes that fused American tastes with a few Asian ingredients, in order to create a less intimidating menu (Barbas 674). Such efforts culminated in the way Chinese restaurants would incorporate American comfort foods such as baked beans and steak into their menu, as well as their creation of hybrid Chinese American dishes such as egg foo yung, rice casseroles, and fried noodles (Mendelson 123; Barbas 671).

Food in Chinese American restaurants differ so much from food in China, to the point that Chinese immigrants and students have been warned to not be shocked by the food dishes (Lee 74). The workers in American Chinese restaurants eat food that is different from what they serve to their customers, such as thin and simple soup usually with seafood, pork bones, or melon, and a variety of dishes with single vegetables (Lee 74-75). The difference in food can also be attributed to the simple generalization with which Americans treat Chinese food. In the United States, Chinese food is treated as the product of a single homogeneous nation, effectively glossing over the regional differences that strongly characterize Chinese food (Roberts 225). Thus Chinese food in the United States has not maintained the regional flavors that are distinctive of dishes in China.

While the first Chinese restaurants attracted a handful of non-Chinese patrons without seriously compromising principles of Cantonese cuisine, the 1890s experienced a purposeful

creation of Chinese American cuisine (Mendelson 134). The adaptation was necessary because most white Americans shunned authentic Chinese cuisine, but accepted hybrid dishes like chop suey and chow mein (Barbas 670). Adaptation processes included changing ingredients, namely the elimination or decreased use of hot spices, because Americans were not accustomed to such strong flavors (Roberts 167). Thus Chinese food in the United States has developed a few overarching characteristics specifically related to the presentation of food (Lee 75).

One way presentation of Chinese food in the United States differs from presentation of food in China is the purposeful deconstruction of animal parts. Every part of the animal has traditionally been eaten in China, because much of China was historically poor (Lee 77). Every part of the swine would be used, even the coagulated blood, and various portions of the body would be “commingled with nauseous seasonings, pique the curiosity as much as they offend the nostrils of the American observer” (Peabody 178). However, such dishes were removed from Chinese American restaurants because mainstream Americans do not like being reminded “the food on their plate once lived, breathed, swam, or walked,” which eliminated the presentation of food with eyeballs, appendages, and extremities such as tongues or feet (Lee 75). Furthermore, black and white foods such as seaweed and steamed white buns, which were deemed to look too distasteful and undone for the non-Chinese eye (Lee 75).

Finally, the largest presentational difference in stems from the American idea that “what goes into the mouth should never come out,” meaning there should be no dishes that require chewing on something then spitting an inedible portion out (Lee 75-76). Thus Chinese restaurateurs excluded items like chicken feet, fish with bones, and shrimp with shells (Lee 75-76). Such dishes are extremely popular in China because of the Chinese love for seafood and understanding that the meat nearest the bone is most tender and flavorful (Lee 76).

Chinese food Americanized its texture and flavors. Dishes with a rubbery consistency such as jellyfish or sea cucumber were removed from the table because such textures were not familiar to mainstream American tongues (Lee 77). Furthermore, Chinese restaurateurs learned that the key to serving the American public was to crispy-coat things (Lee 81). New menus emphasized the “sweet and sour” meat or seafood dishes, and incorporated the necessities of “boneless, bite-sized chunks of the main ingredient; an eggy batter; enough fat for deep-frying the coated morsels; and a sauce sweet and sour enough to overpower other flavors” (Mendelson 121).

The shift away from the stir-frying technique toward deep-frying in Chinese American restaurants was to accommodate American tastes, but also because the cooks did not experience economic or resource related restraints. In China, food was dried or pickled to make it through the winter, because refrigeration did not exist for much of Chinese culinary history (Lee 77). With cooking fuel being a scarce commodity, the Chinese often used the stir-frying technique because it required very little oil and consumed energy efficiently (Lee 77). However, refrigeration was widely available by the time Chinese food made its way to the United States, as was oil, refined sugar, and meat (Lee 77).

The popularity of General Tso’s chicken demonstrates the success of Americanized Chinese food in the United States. Chef Peng, the original creator of the General Tso’s dish, was aghast when he discovered how General Tso’s chicken existed in modern Chinese American restaurants. He said, “The dish can’t be sweet. This isn’t the taste of Hunan cuisine” (Lee 83). And Chef Peng is indeed correct. Hunan Province is known for producing spicy dishes, but no dishes that include an element of sweetness (Lee 68). The original General Tso’s chicken was slightly tart and laced with vinegar (Mendelson 188). However, the Americanized commoditized

version marketed to Americans is a “crunchy creation, usually set on a bed of broccoli and incorporating ever-increasing amounts of sugar” (Mendelson 188). The dish came from New York, has spread throughout the nation, and is now available at almost all Chinese restaurants (Mendelson 188). General Tso’s chicken embodies the three things that Americans enjoy most in Chinese food, which are chicken, sweetness, and deep-frying (Lee 77). The dish’s popularity shows how catering to the American palate was necessary for survival in the American restaurant industry. “Chinese cuisine took on an American influence in order to make a business out of it. If you give them real authentic Chinese cuisine, Americans can’t accept it,” said Chef Peng (Lee 83).

第三章：研究方法

我的研究是做民族志。我去了四个中国餐馆（三个在克利夫兰，一个在哥伦布），访谈了七个服务员。我问服务员他们对真正中国菜、美国化中国菜和他们对中国菜的社会地位有什么感觉。我选择通过视觉的方式准确表现中国饮食文化。我认为通过结合视频记录跟服务员的访谈与在餐馆吃的中国菜会帮助我讲述他们的故事。

CHAPTER III: METHODS

In order to complete my project, I used two interrelated methods, ethnography and visual ethnography, with the purpose to observe and record the individual experiences of Chinese restaurant workers. The purpose of my study was to examine the relationship between Americanized Chinese food and its influence on the identities of Chinese restaurant workers. While focusing on the cultural identity that Chinese restaurant workers create through food, I examined the ways in which Chinese restaurant workers communicated their experiences. In this chapter, I provide justification for the use of ethnography and visual ethnography, describe the study's participants, and explain the methodological steps of conducting ethnographic interviews.

Justification of Method

Ethnography, by definition, is a research and personal process “of learning about people by learning from them” (Cruz and Higginbottom 37). Ethnographic researchers use qualitative interviews and participant observation to gain a deeper insight into a culture (Dharamsi and Charles 379). Thus the practice of ethnographic research allows researchers to understand a culture by immersing themselves within that culture. One distinction that must be made about ethnography is that the data collected is based on the ethnographers' own experiences, and does not claim to produce an objective or truthful account of reality, but instead produces a version of the ethnographers' experiences of reality (Pink 22). By spending a period of time dining in and speaking with the restaurant workers at Chinese restaurants, I was able to gain honest insight about the complex relationship that exists between Chinese people and Chinese food in the United States. I also gained insight on the experiences of restaurant workers by conducting ethnographic interviews.

The flexibility of ethnographic interviews allowed me to speak with participants about topics they wished to address. Ethnographic interviews fall on a continuum between highly structured interviews and informal everyday conversations (Frey et al. 286). Interview questions are custom-tailored to particular respondents, rather than being consistent for everyone (Frey et al. 286). The goal of ethnographic interviews is to “discover natural categories of meaning in the interviewee’s mind,” and begins with an open-ended question that allows the interviewee’s cultural themes to emerge (Bateman 320). Because my research is so focused on the individual experiences of Chinese restaurant workers, a crucial component of my study was to use a method that would allow participants to speak freely without constraints. I was able to listen to their experiences and ask follow-up questions specifically related to their stories.

As I continued to envision my project, I realized the value of incorporating a visual component. Being exposed to the deliberate restaurant décor and detailed presentation of Chinese dishes inspired me to visually record these crucial elements of Chinese food culture. I also desired to a visual component to my study to capture the faces attached to my participant’s individual experiences. My visual component was manifested in the form of a documentary. The film has enhanced my study by widening my perspective to focus on visual elements of Chinese food culture. When ethnographers produce visual texts, these texts become part of their ethnographic knowledge and inspire conversations (Pink 21). However, these visual texts are not capable of capturing an objective reality, and can only be expected to allow interpretation of what is visible, and other elements of experience evoked through this (Pink 32). Applying visual ethnography as a method has provided me with the tools to gain a more comprehensive view of how Chinese food exists in the United States and of the Chinese restaurant workers who are in the industry.

Restaurants are fascinating sites for ethnographic research. Anthropologists have traditionally understood restaurants as spaces that “blend distinctions between work and leisure, home and work, and even sacred and profane” (Erickson 8). Restaurants exhibit the exchange, production, and symbolism behind consumerism, as well as a context in which questions about class and ethnicity play out (Beriss and Sutton 1). Furthermore, restaurants are representative of “the ethos of cities, regions, ethnic groups, and nations” (Beriss and Sutton 1). This project examines how Chinese restaurant workers craft their identities through food, which makes Chinese restaurants a vital location for me to conduct my research.

Participants

In this study, I performed ethnographic interviews with seven participants, Chinese restaurant workers who acted as servers, in four different restaurants located in Ohio. The restaurants I attended in Cleveland were Li Wah, Hunan East, and Szechuan Café. The restaurant I attended in Columbus was Sunflower. All locations were sit-down style places. I cold-called Chinese restaurants in the Cleveland and Columbus areas to find those that would be willing to have me come in to interview their workers and film their restaurant. Of the 11 places I called, these four restaurants accepted my request to conduct research. The interview participants, all above the age of 18, included both first-generation and second-generation Chinese immigrants who were primarily in charge of serving dishes. Interviewing restaurant workers who had direct interactions with patrons was vital to my study, because I gained insight of the way restaurant workers understand the way in which non-Chinese American patrons interact with Chinese food.

Specific Methodological Steps

I began by calling Chinese restaurants in the Cleveland and Columbus areas to ask for permission to conduct my study in early December. I explained my research project, its purpose,

the interview format, and the confidentiality agreements. Although my phone calls were often conducted in English, there were times that the restaurant workers wanted clarification in Chinese or asked for the entire conversation to be in Chinese. When I received permission to research my study at the restaurant, we set up an appointment. I often conducted interviews during weekday afternoons because the restaurants were least busy during this time. Although I spoke with restaurant workers on the phone, they were not always the person who would participate in my interviews. Thus my participants were determined upon arrival at the restaurant. I formulated an English and Chinese consent form to be given to the Chinese restaurant workers who were willing to participate in my study. For both versions, please see Appendix A.

Once the participants were selected, I sat down at a table across from them and began our interview. Interviews with each participant lasted between five to 20 minutes, and each interview was filmed. To accommodate my participants' comfort in communication, I prepared questions in both English and Chinese. Of the seven Chinese restaurant workers I interviewed, three participants requested that I conduct my interviews in Chinese. My questions were both direct and open-ended, which provided participants with the opportunity to share the details of their lived experiences.

My direct interview questions focused on the restaurant worker's relationship with Chinese food in the United States. I asked participants how they began working at this specific restaurant, the demographic of clientele at the restaurant, their thoughts on Americanized Chinese food culture, and how they perceive the status of Chinese food within the restaurant hierarchy. For the list of questions, please see Appendix B.

Upon completion of the interviews, my next step was to transcribe these interviews to

identify themes. My Chinese studies advisor assisted me throughout the process to ensure that I was transcribing and translating without mistakes. Once my transcriptions were complete, I found and analyzed patterns that were shared within my participants' stories. I looked for recurring statements and themes that were significant to my research. The identified themes and subgroups provided detail for my analysis.

This chapter has explained and justified my chosen method for research. My following chapter, written in Chinese in fulfillment of requirements for my Chinese major, contains detailed observations of my fieldwork and reflections. I summarized my interviews with each participant, identified common ideas raised by participants, and gave detailed insight of how my thoughts changed throughout the data collection and interview process.

第四章：数据采集

我从二零一七年十二月一日到二零一八年一月十八日进行数据采集。我去了哥伦布和克利夫兰的一些中国餐馆。以前我希望只选克利夫兰唐人街的中国餐馆，但是我很快发现得到访谈允许是非常难的。我给十七个中国餐馆打电话，但是只有五个餐馆同意了我的研究。最后我去了四个餐馆，访谈七个服务员。那四个餐馆是：四川酒家（克利夫兰），丽华（克利夫兰），东湖（克利夫兰），跟 Sunflower（哥伦布）。我访谈的服务员是第三波移民，就是说，他们都是 1943 年以后来到美国的。

访谈都在各个餐馆进行。我问服务员差不多十二个问题。因为我的研究是做民族志，所以我的研究集中是中国餐馆的服务于圆的“故事”。美国社会不尊重中国餐馆服务员的经验和感情。我研究的一个目标是放大服务员的经历。所以进行访谈的时候，我使用了比较私人的问题。我的问题都跟服务员的观点看法或经历有关系。虽然我只一次去餐馆，只一次跟服务员讨论，但是他们都坦率地说自己的思想。我认为这个研究是非常罕见的机会，因为我不仅学到了与我不同的人的故事。而且所有的访谈都是我独立完成的，所以中国餐馆服务员的每一个字对我来讲都非常重要。

服务员的故事都是非常不一样的。七个参加研究人都有各自不同的经历：

“Jonah”是第二代华裔美国人。他的母亲 1960 年来美国。虽然他的母亲经历种族歧视，可是她终于开了自己的中国餐馆。现在 Jonah 的母亲还经营两个美国化的中国餐馆。Jonah 在丽华打工。他说丽华提供真正的中国菜。他跟妈妈一样参与饭馆行业。但是他的孩子不要在中国餐馆打工。她们要在办公室打工，要比较社会地位更高的工 Jonah 的故事表现了中国移民的斗争跟中国人的职业道德。

“Sunny”是年轻的女人。她小时候跟父母一起来到美国。她在 Sunflower 打工。她认为自己跟客人的关系比较好。Sunny 了解很多美国人喜欢吃中国菜，而且她认识到中国饭馆有很多种类。有的中国饭馆提供美国化的、便宜的料理。有的中国餐馆提供真正中国的、很贵的料理。Sunny 的故事表现了中国餐馆服务员怎么感知美国人跟中国菜的关系。

“Leo”是年轻的男人。他也在 Sunflower 打工。小时候，他的祖父母已经住在美国，所以他们让 Leo 跟他的爸爸来到美国。Leo 认识到美国化中国菜跟真实中国菜的差别。他说美国化的中国菜不使用传统的料理方式。美国化的中国菜使用比较快跟简单的方式。Leo 的故事表现了中国餐馆服务员对美国化中国菜的看法。

“Alan”是比较年轻的男人，他十二岁的时候跟父母一起来到美国。他在四川酒家打工。这是他的父母开的餐馆，所以 Alan 在中国餐馆里面长大了。他从小时候看父母在中国餐馆打工。他也从小时候跟美国客人发展关系。因此 Alan 了解中国的饮食文化跟美国的饮食文化不是一样的。因为中国人跟美国人喜欢不同的口味，所以在美国的中国菜变成了。但是最近在美国的中国菜又变成更传统的方式，因为美国人开始希望吃真正的中国菜。Alan 的故事表现了年轻一代的中国餐馆的服务员怎么构想美国化的中国菜跟中国饮食文化。

“Julia”是 Alan 的母亲。她决定来美国因为 1997 年的时候，香港从英国回归到中国。她说在美国打工非常难，因为她不会说英文。如果你不会说英文，美国人不会聘请你。Julia 跟她的家人决定开四川酒家是为了希望家人都在一起。她说四川酒家的菜单现在包括很多美国化的中国菜，因为这是美国人喜欢吃的东西。Julia 的故事表现了中国移

民来到美国的时候得体验跟考虑的事。比方说，经历歧视的时候做什么，怎么处理商业竞争，等等。

“David”长大以后跟父母来到了美国。他也说中国人跟美国人喜欢不一样的口味。比方说，美国人不能吃非常辣的食物，而且美国人喜欢素材跟肉都混在一起。David说明了在中国饭馆打工人的斗争。在美国做中国菜很难，因为美国不是中国，所以没有中国的真实材料或进半成品。David的故事表现了在美国开饭馆的中国人的经验。中国餐馆服务员经验成功但是他们也经验困难，因为他们为美国客人得改变自己的传统文化。

“Karen”十六七岁的时候来到美国。她比较了美国人喜欢的口味跟中国人喜欢的口味。她说中国人比较喜欢吃辣，比较喜欢吃清淡的东西。美国人喜欢比较咸的，比较重口味的东西。而且Karen说美国人跟中国人的口味差别是必然的。美国人在美国长大，所以他们习惯吃美国菜或美国化的菜。中国人在中国长大，所以他们习惯吃真正的中国菜。但是如果中国人在美国长大了，他们喜欢中国菜跟美国菜。他不会喜欢每天吃中国菜，但是也不喜欢每天吃美国菜，因为他们有不一样的经历。因此人们的口味偏爱依赖他们长大的环境。

服务员的访谈揭示中国人跟中国菜的关系。进入访谈的时候，我已经有两个偏见。第一是我对中国餐馆的偏见。我以为中国餐馆的服务员觉得在美国，美国人不欣赏中国菜。在美国的中国餐馆大部分是外卖饭馆。历史上，中国菜的外卖饭馆以提供快跟便宜的食物著名。其实“便宜”跟“快”就让人想起“下层阶级”的料理。你描述三星级法国料理的时候不会用那样的形容词。所以我认为中国餐馆的社会地位很低。但是我最大的错误是以为中国餐馆的服务员会同意我的看法。我想错了。进行访谈的时候我很快意识到服务员不感觉中国菜是下层阶级的理。他们对中国菜很自豪，这是他们的母国的文化，而且这

是他们的生活激情所在。回想起来我非常尴尬。虽然我研究美国化中国菜的目标是暴露餐饮业的不公正，可是我无意中自己相信西方对中国菜的刻板印象。我相信了中国菜的社会地位是低的。我通过访谈发现了服务员跟我的经验不一样。我没有跟美国客人互相作用的经验，但是服务员每天跟美国客人沟通。听服务员的故事让我意识到自己的概念限制。听服务员的故事打破了我对中国菜的刻板印象。听服务员的故事显示听少数群体的话是非常重要的。如果我没听到服务员的个人经验，我的想法还是会很无知跟愚昧。我听了七个服务员的故事，所以我现在了解美国人跟服务员的复杂关系。David的话让我承认中国餐馆的服务员跟美国客人有良好的关系。他说“基本上[美国人的客人]听 nice 还也不是说上那个偏见那时候，歧视那种什么，都很 nice。”从服务员这里，我知道美国客人适当尊重中国饮食文化。美国客人也适当尊重中国移民。Julia说“我感觉到，刚来美国的时候挺难的，就是说英文不懂，小孩又小，就是说美国人，美国白人非常好，他真的会帮你。英文不好他不会笑话你。白人非常好，他会很热情地帮助你。”她的经验表示美国人跟中国人的关系有很多层。我调查的时候，学了第一波移民从美国人受到不好的待遇。但是Julia的故事表明美国社会从1820年之后改变了。美国人已经放弃了很多种族主义刻板印象和种族污辱。现在的美国社会培育文化交换的环境。Julia的话也对我的第二偏见有影响。

第二偏见是我对美国人的看法。我是日本人。我十八岁之前住在东京，以后四年住在美国。在这段时间，我看到很多美国人把日本文化（漫画，动漫，时尚，饮食，等等）商品化。根据我的经验美国人不能欣赏日本文化。美国人只能商品化日本文化因为他们要利润。而且住在美国的时候，我发现美国人觉得“外国”东西比美国东西更奇怪，社会地位更低。所以我觉得美国人会商品化中国饮食文化。而且因为中国饮食文化是外国的，因此美国人会感知中国饮食文化是比较低的东西。但是访谈让我发现在美国里的中国菜不

是真正的中国菜，是美国化的中国菜。所以我的重点领域不应该是美国人是否接受外国的饮食文化。我的重点领域应该是服务员跟美国化的中国菜有什么关系？美国化的中国菜还代表中国人的文化身份吗？参加访谈的服务员都说美国化的中国菜不代表中国饮食文化。Karen 说在美国里的一般中国菜“就是迎合美国的一般性大众的口味。”David 说他们的中国菜饭馆有两个菜单，英文的跟中文的。他说明中国餐馆有两个菜单因为“老外”不喜欢中国菜的口味，因为真实中国料理的口味不适合美国客人的口味，所以中国菜饭馆“要符合美国人的口味要改变一下。”根据 Karen 的话，美国人比较喜欢吃甜一点，咸一点，重口味的。中国人比较喜欢吃淡一点（南方口味比较淡一点，北方口味比较重一点），浓一点，也喜欢多素材。她也说中国人比较少吃蔬菜，而且蔬菜是分开，美国人蔬菜跟鸡肉和其他东西合在一起。这样说，中国菜来到美国的时候改变了，因为适合美国人的口味是必须的。因此在美国的中国菜改变了。我开始研究的时候，希望我论文的主题是美国客人对中国菜的影响。虽然我以前的访谈的目标是暴露不公正，可是进行访谈之后我的错误变得很明显。我的主题是中国菜，所以我应该听中国餐馆服务员的话，为了解中国身份跟中国菜的关系。因为中国餐馆服务员的职业跟中国菜有关系，所以他们的故事包括中国菜美国化的影响。不但是对中国菜文化的影响，也是对各个服务员的身份有什么影响。我发现应该放弃初始的构想，应该专注于说故事的人。暴露不公正可能是结果的一部分，但是不应该是我研究的目标。在这种情况下，说故事的人是中国餐馆的服务员。所以我研究的焦点变成中国人怎么使用美国化的中国菜代表自己的身份。这个分析还包括在美国中国餐馆的服务员体验的不平等的待遇，但是我的分析视角扩大了。访谈结果我分析看服务员的总体经验。

我开始访谈以前，以为我已经了解中国餐馆的服务员想什么。我觉得我了解服务员的想法，而且我觉得我了解美国客人的想法。所以开始访谈的时候，我进入访谈的环境的时候已经有假设。我没有开放的心态。但随着访谈的内容越来越深，这次我了解自己犯了一个错误。我要控制服务员的故事，可是我研究的意思是给弱势人一个平台放大他们的故事。最终我认为我的研究为边缘化的经验提供在中心舞台的机会。我希望读这个研究的人会了解“故事”的重要性。每个人都有自己的故事，我们只听他们的话。

第五章：分析

我跟服务员的访谈揭示三个主题。第一，中国的饭菜是一种沟通的方式。中国移民在美国总是“外国人。”中国移民要入乡随俗，所以他们做美国化的中国菜。虽然中国菜代表自己的身份认同，但是因为需要获得美国社会的认可，在美国的中国餐馆改变了中国传统饮食文化。第二，中国菜促进混合不同文化，打破身份的束缚。中国餐馆是文化交流的地方，有的中国人做美国化的中国菜，有的美国客人却吃到真正的中国菜。美国客人也在学习中国传统饮食文化，也更了解中国人的身份认同。第三是中国人复杂并不断变化的身份认同。中国餐馆有两种服务员：“老一代”是来到美国开中国餐馆的中国移民；“年轻一代”是小时候跟父母来到美国的中国移民。他们一边长大一边体验美国文化。他们既有中国跟美国的身份，所以他们对中国菜的概念跟老一代不同。中国餐馆提供的中国菜是老一代认为美国客人喜欢吃的菜，所以在美国的中国菜不代表真正的中国菜。但是根据年轻一代的服务员，在不远的将来，中国餐馆会开始提供真正的中国菜。

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS

I chose to conduct ethnographic research in Chinese restaurants in Ohio, specifically within the Cleveland and Columbus areas. Ethnographic research methods allowed me to observe the restaurant environment, the daily interactions of Chinese restaurant workers with their customers and with each other, and record and taste the food for myself. As a result, I was able to draw comparisons and discover mutual themes among a variety of Chinese restaurant workers with different lived experiences.

My study focused on Americanized Chinese food, and I investigated how Chinese food represents the process of crafting an identity in a foreign space. The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between Chinese food and the identities of Chinese bodies associated with cooking and serving both authentic and Americanized dishes in the United States. The previous chapter discussed the methods, justification of methods, and specific methodological steps of the research project. The first portion of this chapter will consist of background information of my participants. This portion of the chapter will be followed by an analysis of the participants' responses.

Background of Participants

Before analyzing the themes that emerged from my research, it is crucial to describe the participants and interview locations. The interviews took place from December 1, 2017 to January 18, 2018 in four restaurants within the Cleveland (Li Wah, Hunan East, Szechuan Café) and Columbus (Sunflower) areas. Participants were all individuals working at the Chinese restaurants where they were interviewed, and the interviews all took place at a table or booth within the restaurant.

While all participants shared the common background of working at a Chinese restaurant in the United States, each participant had attributes unique to their identity. These attributes shaped participant responses during the interviews. Information about my participants should first be acknowledged in order to understand and interpret this study in its entirety.

Jonah

“Jonah” is second-generation Chinese American. His mother immigrated to the United States in 1960, and he was born in Ohio. Jonah is in his forties, and has two daughters who are both working outside of the restaurant industry. He claims to be the bus boy at Li Wah.

Sunny

“Sunny” immigrated with her parents into the United States 10 years ago (in 2007). She is in her late teens to early twenties, and has been working at Sunflower, a dim sum restaurant, for five years. She primarily interacts with customers by recommending them items on her cart.

Leo

“Leo” had grandparents who initially immigrated to the United States. They brought him, his father, and his aunt to live with them. He has been working at Sunflower, a dim sum restaurant, for four years, and primarily interacts with customers by recommending them items on his cart.

Alan

“Alan” arrived in the United States when he was 12 years old. His parents had moved to the United States two years earlier to pursue working opportunities. He is the general manager of Szechuan Café, meaning he coordinates the ordering of raw material and basic operation of the restaurant.

David

“David” arrived in the United States in 2004, because his parents chose to immigrate to the United States. He began working at Hunan East in 2006. He works at the front of the restaurant, taking orders and serving customers.

Karen

“Karen” immigrated to the United States in 1982 and began working at Hunan East in 1994. Her husband had first come to work as a chef and study, and he opened a take-out restaurant in 1991, which he changed to a sit-down style restaurant in 1994.

Julia

“Julia” has been in the United States for over 30 years. Her father immigrated to the United States 40 years ago. She opened the restaurant, Szechuan Café, in 2002.

Analysis

In this section, my participants’ responses will be analyzed (see Appendix B), and participants’ relationships with Chinese food, specifically how they craft and navigate identity in the United States through food, will be revealed. I focused on three areas: the Chinese use food as a tool for integrating “foreign” identity in American society, cooking and serving Chinese food acts as a process of blending culture and blurring lines of identity, and the creation of Chinese identity in the United States is an ongoing process.

Chinese Food as a Communication Tool

Chinese food is a mode through which Chinese restaurant workers are able to communicate their cultural identity. Food represents a cultural-meaning system that creates boundaries between insiders and outsiders of a particular community (Oxfeld 25-26). The Chinese restaurants I interviewed create insiders – those for whom Chinese food reinforces their

Chinese cultural identity, and outsiders – those for whom Chinese food and Chinese culture is unidentifiably foreign. Beyond identification, food can also be used as a method of cultural exchange. Food is a commodity but it also “communicates social identities and creates and maintains social relationships through a variety of exchanges,” which is evident in the way Chinese restaurant workers use the dishes they cook as a method of exchanging culture with American customers (Oxfeld 30). Minority groups popularize ethnic foods in order to achieve social acceptance and integration, which is what motivates this cultural exchange (Hsu). Popularizing ethnic foods comes with promising customers the glamor of adventure by successfully playing to stereotypes and presenting something recognizably exotic through “cooking techniques, decorative schemes, and even their own personas” (Hsu). Chinese restaurant workers have integrated their dishes and consequently themselves into American society by modifying and transforming Chinese food culture to give customers a taste of the exotic they desire.

Using Chinese Food to Integrate “Foreign” Identity

In my study, I wanted to examine how Chinese restaurant workers crafted and navigated their identities in a foreign space through their relationship with Chinese food. After interviewing seven Chinese restaurant workers and analyzing each interview, three themes emerged from my research: integrating “foreign” identity into American society, cooking and serving food as a process of blending culture and disrupting identity categories, and crafting identity as an ongoing process.

The largest obstacle Chinese restaurant workers face in the United States is being inherently “other.” Americans held preconceived notions about the Chinese based on false images and assumptions about China, viewing the Chinese as racially and ethnically different,

and “backward, heathen, and degenerate” (Yung et al. 2). The Exclusion Act of 1882 was also crucial to marking the Chinese as other, in regards to foreign citizenship. The law had suspended virtually all Chinese from entering the United States (Baxter and Allen 383-384; Holland 152).

Chinese immigrants have faced discrimination upon arriving in the United States, due to being coded as outsiders. Jonah explained that his mother emigrated from China to the United States in 1960, and began working at Perkin’s Pancake House. “She was a very good employee, but Perkins would only let her be a salad girl and a janitor,” said Jonah. Other participants also had stories to tell about discrimination in the United States. “When we just came...we wanted to work...our English is so bad that other people can’t understand us, and they don’t need us,” said Julia. The experiences Jonah and Julia shared align with the idea that Chinese immigrants have historically faced discrimination in the United States. Many of the Chinese restaurant workers I interviewed had parents who immigrated between the 1970s through the 1990s. Although third-wave Chinese immigrants – arriving in the United States from 1943 onwards – were successfully integrated into mainstream society, many were still segregated into lower paying sectors of the labor market due to “racial discrimination, cultural barriers, media stereotypes” (Yung et al. 226-227, 230).

Chinese restaurant workers have historically been discredited for their labor because of their foreign identity. When first-wave Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States, they were seen as “cultural threats, labor competition, and racial inferiors,” which strengthened the perception of the Chinese as a separate people (Yung et al. 2). The Chinese were considered cheap disposable laborers, and faced hostility in California’s mining districts and fledgling towns (Baxter and Allen 383). This led to the conventional attitude of Americans viewing the Chinese as outsiders, and thus preparers and servers of food (Barbas 682). My participants explained that

the restaurants were unable to charge high prices for their dishes because the labor of inferior Chinese people is not considered to be worth the cost. “Us Chinese people, we work very hard and the wages we make at the end of the day are so few, our labor really isn’t considered to have value,” said Julia. Most Americans fail to view the Chinese as equal, leading to a perception of the Chinese as subordinate and their labor as cheap. The perception of Chinese labor as cheap labor has existed for years. A. P. Peabody wrote an article titled “The Chinese in San Francisco” in 1871, in which he claimed, “In my opinion, all that can be hoped from the Chinese is the supply of cheap labor which is needed for the rapid development of a new country” (178). While the focus may have shifted from railroad development to consuming food, the commodification and cheapening of Chinese bodies and Chinese labor is a persisting idea.

Many American customers are also uneducated on the amount of labor that is required to cook Chinese food. Part of the discrepancy arises from American customers failing to recognize the difference between the processes of Americanized Chinese food and authentic Chinese food. According to Jonah, full service Chinese restaurants require extensive labor, while fast food Chinese restaurants “offer a restricted menu, which are of course cheaper, but the portion size is smaller.” David also affirmed that the process of cooking “real Chinese food” is not fast. However, “people who eat our American Chinese food will think it’s a fast process because we just have to boil the ingredients then pour the sauce that has been adjusted to the American palette on top,” he said. Thus Americanized Chinese food has become standardized, as the use of multiple spices is simplified by a “house special sauce” to increase efficiency (Lu and Fine 543).

Meanwhile, authentic Chinese food requires a more detailed process. First, according to Leo, the chef and the boss must both approve for a new sauce to be officially listed on the menu.

Thus the dishes are not crafted at random or sold without extensive tastings. Second, the dishes cannot be made from pre-made products. David said,

Foreigners [Americans] have half-finished products, they don't need labor they can easily make it. But we, the Chinese people cooking Chinese food, we have no way to buy half-cooked foods or products. We have to buy whole pieces of meat and whole pieces of chicken. Therefore we automatically change them into what we could use for cooking through labor, but there's no way around this problem because we're in the United States not in China.

Chinese food requires extensive labor during the preparation process. The ingredients used in Chinese dishes are not available as pre-packaged sold in supermarkets, which are often available for other Western cuisines. Rather, Chinese restaurant workers must prepare the ingredients for dishes from scratch. David explicitly states that this additional step in cooking cannot be resolved because they are in a foreign environment. He recognizes that operating a Chinese restaurant in the United States ultimately comes with restrictions on the cooking process. While such restrictions require more labor power, they also limit the extent to which Chinese identity can be reflected in cultural dishes.

The lack of chain family-owned Chinese restaurants is proof of Chinese dishes requiring heavy labor. Alan explained, “[Chinese restaurants are] all individually run...that's because it requires a chef to actually cook the dish.” He contrasted the labor that goes into preparing a McDonalds meal with cooking Chinese food, explaining that a chain restaurant like McDonalds can hire anyone at minimum wage to follow a specific process, while Chinese food requires “a good chef to prepare a good dish.” Chinese food cannot be replicated by following a simple two or three-step process. While Americanized Chinese food might be cooked based on a formula,

“real Chinese food,” as David put it, cannot be duplicated in the same way. Thus authentic Chinese food requires a separate process and additional labor compared to Americanized Chinese food. However, many customers frequenting Chinese restaurants fall short of valuing this labor because they lack the education to understand this foreign food.

Chinese food is, as the name suggests, from China. However, the Chinese food that has integrated itself into the fabric of American society only represents what the older generation of immigrants chose to market. David explained,

Chinese food and drink has a lot of different elements but in the United States, food and drink in general only represents what the first generation immigrants created and sold, and then we followed the Chinese dishes that they had made. But in actuality, real Chinese food is multi-faceted and includes numerous elements.

The way Chinese dishes exist in the United States is dictated by commodification of Chinese food culture with the intent of marketing toward Americans. Thus authentic Chinese food culture is not accurately represented in the United States.

Authentic Chinese food is challenging to reproduce in a foreign country. The term “authentic food” implies that products are prepared with the same ingredients and methods found in the homeland (Lu and Fine 538). The creators and consumers of such authentic foods place emphasis on balance. Chinese food culture emphasizes the appropriateness of certain food to counteract health conditions or to favorably affect one’s *qi*, which is understood as vital energy that circulates one’s body (Oxfeld 21). Balance plays a further role as all food is observed to have a quality of cold, cool, hot, warm, dry, or neutral (Oxfeld 21). However, cooking authentic food is challenging in a country where the ethnic, national, or regional group has historically experienced discrimination. The group’s ingredients and tools are unlikely to have been easily

available. Therefore Chinese food in the United States exists as “Americanized ethnic food,” meaning the local and traditional characteristics of the food have been transformed (Lu and Fine 538). This transformation is seemingly inevitable, as ethnic foods in the United States are subjected to contradictory requirements – ideally authentic but practically Americanized – to reconstruct meanings of authentic food according to the images of their customers (Lu and Fine 539).

For Chinese restaurant workers, cooking and serving food is a process of blending culture and disrupting identity categories. The restaurants I interviewed had made attempts to maintain authentic Chinese food culture and thus Chinese identity. However, they had also disrupted identity categories by cooking and serving Americanized Chinese dishes. Finally, these restaurants offer American customers the option of eating authentic Chinese cuisine, which allows the blending of American and Chinese cultural identities. The different cooking techniques and flavors have led Chinese food to traditionally be regarded as the antithesis of Western foods (Roberts 25). Viewing Chinese food as “other” stems from historically racist attitudes toward the Chinese, which led to rice being a symbol of Asian inferiority and beef consumption representing white American superiority (Liu, “From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express” 2). Thus Chinese food evolved in a space that has been unwelcoming of the Chinese people responsible for cooking the dishes.

My participants considered the impact of the economy upon the status of Chinese food in the United States. Sunny and Leo found the status of Chinese food to be rising, as the dishes gain popularity among the American people. Karen also found the status of Chinese food to be in good standing, but only in correlation with the state of the economy. According to her, Chinese food occupies a higher status when the American economy is doing well.

The state of the economy also impacted how participants perceived the status of Chinese food to be lower than other Western immigrant cuisines. Chinese food is already not afforded the same esteem given to French and Italian food (Chen 16). Americans are relatively uneducated about the food of Chinese culture, despite Chinese food being one of the three ethnic foods most frequently consumed away from home (Newman). American consumers commonly associate Chinese restaurants with a cheap and fast take-out option. Meanwhile, French or Italian cuisine is often considered to be the luxurious option for eating out. My participants only affirmed Chen's statement in relation to economic reasons. David and Julia found that the cheap pricing and bargained consumption of Chinese dishes reflect how low the Americans perceive the status of Chinese food, but did not claim that this secondary status is explained by their customer's preconceived biases about the Chinese food and its people. "The prices on Chinese food are dropping now because there are people operating buffet restaurants," stated Julia. Thus she cited an outside factor, the economy, as the primary reason for the low status of Chinese food in the American restaurant industry.

Although participants did not attribute the low status of Chinese food with their own discriminatory experiences, they did recognize that Chinese people still experience discrimination in the United States. "We have nice relationships with customers. But if you're talking about the normal societal status, Chinese people in the United States don't enjoy a very high one," explained David. His statement reflects the general experience of Chinese restaurant workers in the United States, specifically the treatment of Chinese restaurant workers as machines with the sole purpose of feeding Americans (Lee 156). In the face of non-Chinese customers, the Chinese restaurant workers become nothing more than "an anonymous, all-purpose Chinese restaurant worker" (Lee 156). According to participants, the societal status of

Chinese food in the United States might be high, but the social status of Chinese people remains low.

However, participants did not associate their experiences with the discrimination in the United States with the food they serve. Barbas introduces a framework that helps account for this phenomenon: Americans have been able to eat Chinese food without feeling guilty for the cheap prices and consequently exploit the labor of restaurant workers by distancing foods of Chinese origin from people of Chinese origin (683). The food, which one might find delicious and worthy of consumption, is seen as separate from the person who prepares it, whose labor one finds unworthy of value. This allows Americans to enjoy consumption of Chinese food without concern for the labor of Chinese people. Similarly, the Chinese restaurant workers also interpret the status of food as separate from the status of their own people. For my participants, food is food. "I think they're perceived similar, just different kind, different variety. At the end of the day, they're all part of the food industry," said Alan. Thus Chinese restaurant workers dissociate their discriminatory experiences from the food they serve. Furthermore, Alan's recognition of all cultural foods existing as a part of the American food industry reinforces reinforces an idea put forth by Ellen Oxfeld in *Bitter and Sweet: Food, Meaning, and Modernity in Rural China*. Oxfeld suggested that no food system can be understood in isolation from other parts, or from an overall cultural-meaning system (25).

When Chinese dishes are conceptualized in relation to labor input, the experiences of restaurant workers are an inevitable factor. However, when Chinese food is conceptualized in relation to their status in the restaurant industry, the food is capable of wearing an identity that is separately categorized from the people that cooked it. Although Chinese food can be dissociated

from Chinese bodies, Chinese food also acts as an intersecting platform where Chinese restaurant workers and their customers exchange contrasting cultures.

Blending Culture and Disrupting Identity Categories

Chinese identity is complex and cannot be articulated within the framework of a single word. Although the term *zhongguoren* (中国人) carries the connectedness with the fate of China as a nation, and associates a sense of “fulfillment of being the bearers of a cultural heritage handed down from their ancestors,” the Chinese also view themselves as members of the *zhonghua minzu* (中华民族), which loosely translates to “the Chinese race” or “the Chinese people” (Wu 160-161). When Chinese people are overseas, they are automatically lacking a physical connection to their homeland, and lacking a physical connection to the nation and people that reinforce their Chinese identity. Therefore the preservation of Chinese food culture has a significant impact on the identities of the Chinese who are in the United States. More specifically, maintaining Chinese food culture allows the overseas Chinese to locate a sense of home. “A lot of Chinese customers think that the food here tastes like their mother’s home cooking, they’re happy...the flavor makes them think of home,” said Karen. In this way, Chinese food culture has deep connections and influence with fostering and maintaining Chinese cultural identity in the United States.

Chinese restaurant workers maintain authentic Chinese identity through the decorations and motifs that they implement in their restaurants. The restaurants I interviewed had common decorative elements, such as the heavy use of the colors red, gold, and yellow, hanging lanterns, watercolor paintings, Chinese characters hanging on the walls, and the use of phoenixes and dragons. These decorative elements are common throughout Chinatowns in the United States, and hold deeper meaning beyond aesthetics. For example, Chinese architecture dictates that the

colors and animal motifs are “believed to influence the fortune and destiny of a building’s occupants” (Lai 83). The different colors also signify different things – red is happiness and gold is prosperity – while the dragons and phoenixes are found to be auspicious (Lai 83). Therefore the decorative pieces of the restaurants are representative of traditional markers of Chinese culture. By implementing such distinctly Chinese elements, the Chinese restaurants are displaying and sharing valuable characteristics of Chinese identity with their patrons.

Another mode through which Chinese restaurants maintain authentic Chinese identity is by providing both Chinese and English menus. The two menus differed not only in language, but also in available options. The Chinese menus contained authentic dishes, while the English menus mostly contained Chinese dishes that adhere to the American standard. The integrated use of two different menus throughout Chinese restaurants demonstrates the way in which Chinese food culture has maintained its identity, and has allowed the Chinese to maintain Chinese identity in the United States.

Distinct elements of traditional Chinese food culture are sustained through the use of separate Chinese and English menus. Of the four restaurants I interviewed, three locations had separate menus for its Chinese and non-Chinese clientele. Sunny described the difference in menus at Sunflower, a dim-sum restaurant. She explained that the English menu contains the standard appetizer and lunch options, while the Chinese specials are more traditional and contain specific foods desired primarily by the Chinese clientele. Although these Chinese restaurants operate in the United States, they offer Chinese menus that list items catering to Chinese patrons, which serves to uphold traditional Chinese food culture in a sphere that remains uninfluenced by the pressure to adhere to American marketability.

Chinese dishes that do not meet the presentation standards of American food culture also tend to be excluded from the English menus. The presentation of food with eyeballs, appendages, and extremities such as tongues or feet were eliminated because Americans do not like being reminded “the food on their plate once lived, breathed, swam, or walked” (Lee 75). Another idea regarding the presentation of food in the United States is that “what goes into the mouth should never come out,” which also eliminates items that require chewing on something and then spitting an inedible portion out (Lee 75-76). One example is chicken feet. Leo recounted his experience as a server and explained, “When Chinese customers come they order a lot of chicken feet but American customers, they make a face.” Such authentic Chinese dishes that do not meet American standards of food presentation are removed from the menu. Although traditional Chinese food culture is maintained, the separate menus turn restaurants into a place of segregation between Chinese patrons wanting traditional dishes and non-Chinese patrons wanting dishes that cater to American standards.

The English menu contains traditional Chinese dishes that fulfill the American flavor and presentation standards, and Americanized Chinese dishes. When defining Americanized Chinese food, participants had a lot to say about what constitutes the American palate. Jonah said the American palate is “generally higher in carbs, higher in fat, higher in sugar, higher in salt, and the Americanized Chinese restaurants are really forced to accommodate that appeal.” Karen affirmed that Americans tend to “like more sweetness in their food.” Sugar, fat, and salt are consequently more prevalent in Americanized Chinese dishes than in authentic Chinese dishes.

Americanized Chinese food is made up of flavors and styles that have evolved in consideration of adapting to the American palate. Chinese food in the United States exists differently than in China. Although Chinese restaurateurs might have some dishes that are

specifically catered to Chinese customers, according to Karen, “When cooking in the United States, we adjust to American flavors.” The reality of cooking food in the United States is that more Americans than Chinese are potential customers, and thus the eating habits of Americans take priority in organizational strategies (Lu and Fine 538).

Karen explained the fundamental differences between the American and Chinese palate. She said,

Chinese people eat more spicy...Americans like to eat saltier flavors. Some Chinese people eat lighter flavors; it’s really different according to their age. Older households tend to like lighter flavors and younger people tend to like thicker flavors. Americans like their food a little more salty, and they like thick flavors.

Chinese restaurant workers thus recognize the clear contrast in preferences that exist between American and Chinese customers. Upon recognizing this difference, Chinese restaurateurs modified their culinary traditions, abandoning authentic foods that are more expensive and likely to be rejected, in favor of making the unfamiliar seem comfortable and the exotic nature of the food pleasurable (Lu and Fine 541). Thus the modification and marketing of Chinese food to suit the American palate is a conscious profit-driven and acceptance-seeking choice.

One distinct pattern of acculturation in Americanized Chinese food is the sweet and sour flavors. “Usually the American people, they like sweet and sour flavors mixed together,” said David. Sweet and sour pork, General Tso’s chicken, and orange chicken are a few items that incorporate sweetness with savory flavors, which demonstrate how Chinese restaurant workers have intentionally created dishes that cater to the American palate with the motivation to increase marketability of their cultural food.

A second pattern of acculturation, also in relation to added sugar, is the effort to make spicy dishes take on a milder flavor. Chinese patrons often want authentic spicy cuisine, but the common American is not accustomed to the consumption of such hot spices (Roberts 167). David confirmed this sentiment, claiming, “[Americans] eat spicy but don’t eat especially spicy things. They sometimes cannot handle the spiciness of Sichuan food or Hunan food.” Spicy Chinese dishes like Mabo Tofu and Kung Pao chicken are cooked differently in the United States. “They’re the same name, same material, but just different style of cooking. And we tend to use some sugar for the Americanized dishes,” said Alan. Thus Chinese restaurateurs have adjusted to the American palate by making their spicy flavors milder.

A third pattern of acculturation in Americanized Chinese food is changes in the cooking process. As Chinese food continues to exist in the United States, the cooking technique for Americanized Chinese food has evolved beyond its authentic Chinese roots. According to Alan, authentic Chinese dishes must be cooked individually with a wok. However, Leo recounted his experiences dining at an Americanized Chinese restaurant, claiming that the techniques and flavors differed greatly from any authentic Chinese dishes he had consumed. “You can just kind of taste the taste of the wok...but if you go to a fast-food store and taste it, it doesn't taste the same,” said Leo. Americanized Chinese food is made to fulfill the fast and cheap stereotype. This stereotype has guided public perception of Chinese food for decades, beginning with the initial operations in San Francisco where Chinese restaurants appealed to non-Chinese customers with competitive low prices, long hours of operation, and fast delivery (Chen 122). The process of cooking Chinese food has consciously adjusted to suit American expectations of Chinese food should be in the United States.

A fourth pattern of acculturation in Americanized Chinese food is the mixing of vegetables and meat within a single dish. Both Karen and David stated that the general American public enjoys eating dishes that mix vegetables and meat in a wok. Traditionally, Karen explained, “Chinese people ate meat as meat, and vegetables as vegetables.” However, Chinese restaurateurs quickly learned to cater to the American palate. The rise in popularity of chop suey, an Americanized Chinese dish made with scraps of meat and vegetables, illustrated how the everyday American enjoys dishes that combine both meat and vegetables (Roberts 138). Chinese restaurateurs across the nation have continued to capitalize upon this trend, implementing chop suey into their menus and creating dishes that have continued to cater to the American preference of mixing meat and vegetables. Much of how Chinese restaurants exist in the United States today has been shaped by the shared experiences of Chinese restaurant workers. “We just kind of learned from experience,” explained Alan. “The industry, you learn from each other pretty much.” While Chinese restaurant workers have learned from one another, Chinese restaurant workers have also used Chinese food to craft a space for cultural exchange and education with American patrons.

Chinese food has become a site for maintaining Chinese identity, for acculturating to American standards, and for blending identity categories. Chinese restaurants boast a relatively diverse clientele. According to Alan, 50% of his clients are Chinese students within the area, 40% are white Americans – although they tend to order Americanized dishes rather than fully authentic dishes, and he described the remaining 10% simply as “other people.” For the Chinese patrons, the authentic dishes provide not only a remembrance of home, but also the opportunity to be reliving home. Thus the restaurants serve to reinforce Chinese identity among their Chinese

patrons by offering authentic cuisine. However, for the American patrons, the restaurants provide a site of experiencing exotic other cultures.

Chinese restaurant workers recognized the impact of sharing their food culture with American customers through face-to-face interaction. Leo explained that such a moment would be when a customer claims to have really enjoyed a dish. “They try to name the food, but they don’t know the name of it...I would tell them what it is,” he said. “I would explain to them what’s inside.” Thus Leo illustrates how the consumption of authentic Chinese dishes by American patrons allows access to dialogue that was previously foreign and unavailable.

When American patrons have positive experiences with foreign foods, they are able to shed preconceived judgments and gain new perspective on foreign cultures and people. While introducing foreign foods from different cultures is not an easy task, Alan explained that he often tries to introduce some authentic dishes to white American patrons. He said,

I get positive feedbacks. They would never order it by themselves because they were never taught to order that, and they don’t know what’s inside. But once I tell them, you know, there’s nothing inside, nothing that you’re going to be allergic to, they’re willing to try.

Alan claimed that he boasts a 70-80% success rate of clients actually enjoying his recommendation for authentic Chinese food. Most Americans have biases that lead to immediate rejection of foreign food culture simply because there is a lack of exposure and lack of education on the different cultures that exist outside of the United States. “They never knew, that there was this possibility out there,” said Alan.

However, there are limitations for Chinese food acting as a channel through which cultural identities are shared. The limitation stems from Americans preferring to eat their own

cultural foods, rather than normalizing the consumption of foreign foods. Julia and Karen both referred to the environment during one's developmental period for one's food preference.

“[Americans] can eat Chinese food every once in a while, but if you make them eat Chinese food every day, they're definitely not going to be accepting of it. They'd want to eat the food of their own country. Why wouldn't they?” asked Karen. She explained that her own child, who grew up in the United States, would not willingly consume Chinese food daily. She drew commonalities to the Chinese immigrant experience, stating that Chinese people who grew up eating authentic Chinese cuisine would also refuse to eat Western food daily. Alan also emphasized the impact of growing up around a different food culture. “We eat differently...you know, it's a different culture. That's the foundation of why we are not finding success in the market,” he explained.

If Americans venture to eat foreign foods, specifically Chinese food, they still prefer to eat Americanized versions of dishes. The comfort that exists around one's own food culture is not easily shed. “The American clientele is not ready to provide the bread and butter on the regular basis to eat authentic Chinese,” said Jonah. “They are still used to eating egg foo young, chicken chow mein, sweet and sour pork.” While Americanized Chinese food is technically still Chinese food, the dishes clearly differ from its authentic forms. Americanized Chinese food has been molded to become a marketable brand, created and maintained by the restaurant workers who initially brought Chinese food culture into the United States.

Chinese restaurant workers claim that Chinese food in the United States only represents what business owners are willing to offer. Alan asserted that Chinese food in the United States fails to represent even a fraction of the food culture in China, because it is a brand of cuisine created with the purpose to appeal to American consumers. Chinese food in the United States “only says what the restaurant owners are trying to tell the client,” he said. “Until we fill that

gap, until we offer the true authentic Chinese dishes that we offer in China, [the food] doesn't represent our culture." David also found that Americanized Chinese food is too simple and common to represent the complexity of Chinese food culture.

However, one must acknowledge that food does not always have to represent a singular culture. According to Julia, "Everyone goes somewhere to learn to cook, no matter where you're from in China, and so food doesn't just represent a singular culture." Her statement resonates with arguments made by Zhang, who contends that China has great diversity in terms of language, cuisine, and customs (241). The development of Chinese-American identity, as the children of the older generation of restaurant workers mature, is also a new form of variation to consider. Therefore we cannot conceptualize Chinese identity as a homogeneous one. Rather, Chinese food culture – which is representative of Chinese identity crafted through the cooking and serving of authentic and Americanized dishes – is representative of an ongoing and ever-changing process.

Conceptualizing Chinese Identification as a Process

The changes observed in Chinese food are reflective of changes experienced by the identity of Chinese restaurant workers in the United States. Such changes are attributed to environmental factors and generational differences, which have experienced varying degrees of transformation since the 1820s when the first-wave Chinese immigrants arrived into the United States.

Social contexts have changed since the time Chinese immigrants first cooked a version of chop suey for their white American counterparts. Chinese immigrants have historically been victims of racial prejudice, primarily because their homeland was viewed as "backward, heathen, and degenerate" (Yung et al. 2). The discrimination faced by Chinese immigrants only worsened

during the Exclusion Act, when Chinese immigrants were forced out of higher-paying skilled occupations into menial service jobs (Liu and Lin 136). However, my interview participants would all be categorized as third-wave immigrants, meaning that their immigration dates no further past 1943. Thus they experienced a United States that was less colored by racial discrimination and instead, a United States that placed more value on consuming Chinese culture as a commodity.

General American understandings of food have shifted under the normalization of globalization. “The world is becoming more sophisticated,” said Jonah. “People know ‘this is authentic Chinese’ versus ‘this is the Americanized.’” While Americans have traditionally wanted dishes that suited the flavors of their palate, globalization has allowed for many Americans to be exposed to tastes outside of their comfort zone. Some Americans have enjoyed these flavors, even deliberately seeking restaurants that serve authentic cuisine. The shift toward searching for authentic flavors is occurring in a space that has been defined for decades by fierce Americanization to suit the American palate. Chinese restaurants in the United States have been guided by efforts to acculturate, to adapt to the American palate and American customs related to food, as Chinese people faced decades of discrimination for their race and culture. But globalization has ushered in an age where authentic Chinese dishes can be sought rather than condemned. Nowadays, people are “more willing to accept these new styles, these new foods,” said Alan. Thus as the market changes, the Chinese restaurant industry also experiences change.

The Chinese restaurant industry under current American stratifications is influenced by two generations of Chinese identity, specifically the restaurant workers who immigrated as adults and their children who have matured in the United States. The older generation of immigrants might be American citizens now but believe that they are still Chinese, and maintain

a strong sense of Chinese identity despite any economic assimilation (Lu and Fine 537-538). My interviews revealed that the younger generation grew up with an identity that cannot simply be categorized within the box traditionally marked “Chinese.” The children of first-generation immigrants have had formative experiences in the United States, and thus have inherited elements of American identity. They were exposed to American values through everyday life, and were often forced to choose between being Chinese and being American (Wang 188). Therefore Chinese restaurant workers who arrived to the United States as children claimed to identify less with traditional Chinese identity, and more with characteristics of an American identity.

Younger generation Chinese restaurant workers view themselves as being Americanized and feel a consequent disconnect from traditional Chinese culture. “Personally, I’m an Americanized Chinese, and I think a lot of Chinese culture is bizarre! It’s because I’m raised in America, I’m used to American customs,” said Jonah, explaining the distance he feels with Chinese culture as an immigrant who grew up in the United States. He claimed to be accustomed to cold desserts and prefer burgers to Chinese food. The descriptors Jonah used to describe his cultural identity, namely his self-proclaimed fondness for McDonalds as a mode of differentiating his identity between Chinese and American, highlights the crucial role food plays for Chinese restaurant workers to manage their multifaceted identities.

The children of Chinese parents who immigrated to the United States have grown up with cultural experiences that differ greatly from their parents. While both generations of Chinese restaurant workers interviewed for this research are classified as third-wave immigrants, the older generation experienced American culture as purely foreign. Meanwhile, the younger generation spent many of formative years in the United States, which led to conceptualizing both

Chinese and American cultures as foreign and local. Consequently, the older and younger generations theorize Chinese and American food cultures in varying ways, which is evident in their contrasting ideas of Chinese food in the United States.

According to the younger generation of Chinese restaurant workers, Chinese food culture in the United States only represents what the first-generation immigrants believed would be marketable to the general American public. Chinese food in the United States is simplified and Americanized for the purposes of serving the general public to make a profit and continue survival in the American restaurant industry. First-generation immigrants scrapped the diversity and richness of Chinese cuisine because they wanted to focus on what was marketable to Americans. “Fifty years ago, if they made fully authentic Chinese food, they will go bankrupt because nobody will like it...because of that, they’ve evolved to fit the market to meet the demands,” explained Alan. And as a result of marketing Chinese food culture to Americans, two major consequences have emerged.

First, Chinese food in the United States has remained rooted within a stagnant framework for decades. The unchanging nature of Chinese food in the United States has contributed to American perception of Chinese food as the product of a single homogeneous nation, ignoring the regional differences that strongly characterize Chinese cuisine (Roberts 225). In actuality, Chinese food culture reflects the diverse subcultures that exist throughout the nation, reflected in the food habits that differ from region to region such as northerners preferring steamed bread or noodles as staple food while southerners preferring rice (Liu and Lin 151).

Second, cooking Chinese food to cater to the same American market targeted by first-generation immigrants has ultimately limited the development and availability of Chinese food for Chinese restaurant workers. David, a younger generation restaurant worker who immigrated

to the United States with his parents over a decade ago, has never tasted many elements of Chinese cuisine. David reasons that his limited consumption of Chinese food culture is simply because Chinese food culture is so diverse. But if Chinese food in the United States was conceptualized under the framework of exploration and progress, rather than marketability for Americans, his experiences with Chinese food may not have been so restricted.

Although Chinese food has previously been limited by conscious marketing toward the American public, the younger generation of Chinese restaurant workers claim that Chinese food culture in the United States is evolving. Alan explained, “What we see in this market right now, is older generation having restaurants. It’s the older generation of China that came over to America and they all opened restaurants. And that’s their knowledge of what Chinese food should be.” However, the market is changing and so is Chinese food culture in the United States. Alan promised that within the next five to 10 years, Americans would be seeing authentic Chinese dishes being offered in the United States.

A new generation of Chinese restaurant workers is rising to reclaim the discourse surrounding Chinese food culture. These young workers plan to return to their roots, reclaiming authentic Chinese dishes that have either never been listed or have been taken off the American market. “The layout of the dish is no longer just a whole bunch of broccoli and beef on a plate... that’s something I’ve seen changing in this market, especially in bigger cities like Chicago and New York,” said Alan. He expects his generation of restaurant workers to supply the restaurant industry in Ohio with traditional Chinese cuisine, replicating the change observed in larger Metropolitan cities across the nation. The different ways in which Chinese food is valued by the older and younger generations reveal how food is “a vehicle for evaluating and remembering the past, and memory is an active and ongoing process” (Oxfeld 32). As preferences shift and

patterns emerge, Chinese food culture is likely to continue adopting newly Americanized or old authentic trends to secure its place in the restaurant industry.

第六章：结论

我的研究揭示四个结果。第一，中国餐馆服务员有代际差异，但是他们都认为中国人非常努力工作。第二，中国餐馆服务员认识到中国菜商品化的原因，因为他们得赚钱。第三，服务员通过中国菜代表自己的身份。第四，中国菜正在经历变化。最近美国人要吃真正的中国菜，所以年轻一代打算提供更贵的、更正宗的中国菜。我研究的限制是我只去了克利夫兰跟哥伦布。而且我只访谈了服务员，没有访谈厨师或客人的机会，所以我研究的范围比较小。我的中文能力不够，所以访谈的时候，我常常不了解服务员说什么。我也不擅长表达自己的意思。我对将来研究的推荐是访谈除服务员以外的人，并分析在别的国家的中国菜怎么保持或改变口味。最终，我认为这个研究教我听别人故事的重要性。

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of my study is to examine the relationship that exists between Chinese food in the United States, and the identities and treatment of Chinese bodies associated with cooking and serving the dishes. To analyze the presentation of Chinese food culture and communication of Chinese identity through food, I interviewed Chinese restaurant workers to hear about their personal stories. After conducting interviews and analyzing their experiences, I was able to draw conclusions on how Chinese restaurant workers perceive Chinese food and process their identities within the United States. Ultimately, my findings from the seven participants generated similar responses. Participants discussed their identities using rhetoric related to food. They drew parallels between the changing experiences of Chinese food in the United States, and their own experiences being foreign bodies in a foreign country. In this chapter, I will elaborate on my conclusions, explain the implications of my research findings, discuss the limitations of my study, provide recommendations for future research, and express my final thoughts.

Major Conclusions

Cooking and serving Chinese food in the United States represents a mode through which Chinese restaurant workers communicate identity. My participants demonstrated complex relationships with Americanized Chinese food. My interviews revealed themes that illustrated how Chinese restaurant workers communicated their identities through experiences related to food. The language used by participants indicated that Chinese food carries the complexities of creating and sharing identity in a foreign space, serves as a space for maintaining and disrupting cultural identity categories, and continues to evolve as an ongoing process. In conducting this study, I found three significant conclusions.

The first conclusion focuses on participant perception what being Chinese means. Jonah explained, “Chinese people are generally very hard working people...the Chinese generally work very hard, they save their money for their family, they’re a very family-focused Asian culture.” The hard-working nature of Chinese people, particularly Chinese restaurant workers in the United States, is observed in the way participants, of all ages, described their dedication to Chinese food culture. However, the disconnect between the older and younger generations of Chinese restaurant workers regarding the current representation of Chinese food culture in the United States is representative of a multifaceted and multilayered Chinese identity. In other words, there is no single Chinese identity in the United States or in the world of Chinese diaspora, and such oversimplifications disregard the history and rights of the Chinese in the United States (Wang 25). Although the younger and older generations of restaurant workers interpret the present and future of Chinese food culture differently, both generations mutually value a strong work ethic that they find to be representative of Chinese identity.

The second conclusion regards the Chinese restaurant workers acknowledging that the marketing and commoditized consumption of Americanized Chinese food caters to an American audience. However, cooking and serving food in consideration of the American palate prevents an accurate representation of Chinese food culture to exist in the United States. But as globalization stimulates the American’s desire for authentic cuisine, and as the younger generations of restaurant workers gain opportunities to capitalize upon this demand for authenticity, Chinese food culture in the United States may evolve to become more representative of its authentic form.

Finally, Chinese restaurants act as a mode through which Chinese bodies reclaim agency to control their identities. While Chinese restaurant workers have historically been forced to fit

their complex and multilayered identities into rigid categories deemed acceptable by American consumers, times are changing. Restaurants have always served as a site of cultural communication. However, the younger generations of Chinese restaurant workers have found ways to actively create cultural exchange, primarily by recommending authentic Chinese dishes to non-Chinese American patrons. Thus Chinese restaurant workers have reclaimed the agency to control presentation and perception of Chinese food culture and consequently Chinese identity.

Implications of Research Findings

The major themes and conclusions of my study provided several implications. First, this study suggests that silenced narratives belonging to historically marginalized communities exist in the United States. The dominant hegemonic stories that are told and retold within the fabric of American society tend to exclude the voices of non-white Americans. The way we understand the existence of Chinese food in contemporary society – primarily as the cheap, fast, and easy option – disregards the perspective of Chinese restaurant workers. My interview participants fought against the stereotypes dictated by the dominant narrative. Chinese restaurant workers perceive Chinese food as cheap only to keep up with competition, and requiring intensive preparation time and labor. Thus my findings tell the long silenced narrative of Chinese restaurant workers, and consequently encourage customers to look beyond their surface level understandings of Chinese food culture.

Second, identity is a complex and ever-changing process. Although identities are often conceived as specific categories with rigid structure, identity is actually an active and interactive process. Within the identity group of Chinese immigrants, there are those who have sought employment at Chinese restaurants. And within those who are employed at Chinese restaurants,

there is the older generation who often pioneered modern Chinese food culture in the United States by catering to the American palate, and the younger generation who feels more claim and agency within the country and desires to establish Chinese food culture in its authentic form. My research demonstrates the impossibility of labeling the Chinese restaurant workers as participating in a wholesome overarching identity. Instead, identity is prone to change. Chinese food itself acts as a site for cultural exchange, which heavily impacts the identities of Chinese restaurant workers cooking and serving the dishes. Therefore understanding identity requires the recognition that identity categories are dynamic and cannot be simplified.

Lastly, Chinese food culture in the United States is likely to adopt more authentic flavors in the upcoming years. The younger generation of Chinese restaurant workers explicitly stated their expectations for changes in the authenticity of Chinese food, thus revealing implications for continued operations of the Chinese restaurant industry and the way Chinese food culture exists in the United States. As the younger generation inherits management positions, the Chinese restaurants will likely adopt more Asian fusion style cuisines, which are capable of being priced more expensively, and will adopt more authentic Chinese dishes. The increased emphasis on authenticity comes from the younger generation that has recognized the disconnect that exists between authentic Chinese food culture and the Americanized version that permeates society. In the upcoming years, Chinese restaurant workers are likely to include more flavors and textures that are traditionally Chinese. Therefore an implication of this study that is relevant to the Chinese restaurant workers I interviewed, is the expected change in the way Chinese food culture will move beyond commercialization and solidify its existence as a form of heritage food.

Limitations

There were several limitations to my study. First, my access was limited. I traveled to Chinese restaurants in the Cleveland and Columbus areas of Ohio to conduct my ethnographic study. However, I was unable to spend prolonged periods of time observing and experiencing the environment. Due to time and travel constraints, I was only able to travel to each restaurant once for the purposes of conducting my interviews. I was also asked to conduct interviews during weekday afternoons when the restaurants were least busy, which prevented me from seeing the interactions between the Chinese restaurant workers and their non-Chinese patrons. I was also unable to speak with the chefs, who would have been able to offer details on the labor and Americanization process that has historically been involved in Chinese dishes. My limited opportunities to enter the space restricted the relationships that I was able to form with the workers, and also restricted my understandings of the interpersonal relationships between workers and their customers.

The second limitation to my study is the choice of Chinese restaurants I interviewed. The restaurants that participated in my study were sit-down restaurants that took pride in their selection of authentic dishes. None of the restaurants that participated in my study were Chinese restaurants that primarily focused on take-out, which have the tendency to offer more Americanized dishes. Because my study only included sit-down restaurants, my sample was already more likely to offer responses related to the value of authentic Chinese food culture.

Finally, my insufficient Chinese language speaking and listening abilities hindered the communication process throughout my data collection. Three of my seven interviews were conducted in Chinese, due to participant request. Because Chinese is a language I am still learning, there were times during the interviews that my participants did not fully understand the

interview questions. Furthermore, there were times during my interviews that I did not fully understand participant responses. Thus my insufficient Chinese skills served as a barrier in my Chinese interviews to achieving the same level of comprehensive communication as my English interviews.

Recommendations for Future Research

Several changes should be implemented for future research. My recommendations stem from the limitations that are evident in my own study. First, the ethnographic process would benefit from expanding the interview participants. One expansion would be to include the chefs because the chefs would be able to offer invaluable insight about cooking authentic Chinese food compared to Americanized Chinese food. Another expansion would be to include both Chinese and non-Chinese patrons as interview participants. While one of the primary purposes of my study was to hear the silenced narratives of Chinese restaurant workers, the stories of customers would have been valuable to frame and contextualize the workers' narratives.

Second, future researchers should focus on various types of restaurant owners. Many Chinese restaurants in the United States are family-owned businesses, meaning that restaurant management is usually passed down from generation to generation. The earlier Chinese immigrants who opened these restaurants were forced out of skilled jobs, and had to join the restaurant industry to make a living. However, recent Chinese immigrants tend to be highly educated individuals with capital, which they choose to invest in Chinese restaurants. An interesting component of the study would be to compare the businesses run by restaurant owners with different backgrounds. The purpose of including such a comparison would be to observe whether the generational element of family restaurants lead restaurant workers to focus on

maintaining the current menu to reflect Americanized dishes, while recently opened restaurants would feel free to focus on high-end Asian fusion dishes or heritage food.

Third, an expansion of this study would be to conduct a cross-cultural analysis of Chinese food in various countries. For example, Chinese food culture in Japan exists differently than Chinese food culture in the United States. However, Chinese food culture in both countries has adopted and abandoned certain characteristics to cater to the national palate. An examination of Chinese food culture as it exists in different countries would allow a more thorough analysis on how Chinese food represents identity and a blending of identities beyond the borders of the United States.

Finally, future studies should consider the intersection between location and identity, which is a point my research failed to address. If one examines extended scholarship on food culture in China, and how Chinese food culture in the United States compares, one is likely to find a strong connection between the location and the perception of Chinese food culture. Location plays a crucial role in perceiving Chinese food culture because of Chinatowns, which act as a geographically based enclave where the Chinese are isolated from peer society (wong 416). A valuable point of insight would be to see if operating a restaurant within such an enclave has allowed for the preservation of authentic Chinese food culture.

Final Thoughts

The process of creating and executing my ethnographic study has been an incredible learning experience that taught me many valuable lessons, primarily to listen. When I was proposing my study, I wanted to conduct research that would give a voice to marginalized groups. I ultimately chose to focus on Chinese restaurant workers, but did not attempt to release any stereotypes or biases that were instilled within me. Therefore I had initially approached my

interviews with assumptions that I quickly realized had to be dismissed. Hearing the stories of Chinese restaurant workers taught me to disregard the one-dimensional ideas about Chinese food culture that I may have had, and instead, focus on listening to the restaurant worker's lived experiences with an open mind.

I had agency throughout every step of writing my Independent Study. From pitching an idea for my thesis that stemmed from a personal experience of discomfort and disorientation, to collecting and analyzing my own data, the process was a rewarding one. The process was also full of firsts. I had never had to reiterate and synthesize the writings of others on such a large and intimate scale. The intimacy stemmed from the research being so personal, to both my interview participants and me. I felt the responsibility to do their stories justice weighing on my shoulders, and it was then that I suggested incorporating a visual component to my study. The agency I had over this project was further emphasized as I was given free reign to design a supplementary documentary. It was also another first, as I had never crafted a documentary before. I have emerged from the academic and creative process of Independent Study with a profound understanding of what it takes to envision a final product, then dedicate oneself to fulfilling that vision.

Copeland Funding allowed me to visit a number of Chinese restaurants in the Cleveland and Copeland areas, which provided opportunities to realize my abstract ideas into concrete reality. I was able to physically go to Chinese restaurants and interact with the workers there who have dedicated significant portions of their lives to integrating, promoting, and maintaining Chinese food culture in the United States. Listening to their stories face-to-face provided me with a deeper level of understanding their experiences. I was also able to taste the authentic and Americanized Chinese dishes that I had learned about and discussed throughout my research

process. Speaking with the Chinese restaurant workers about the changes in texture and flavor was one thing, but actually tasting the difference was a unique experience that was only made possible by physically sharing a space at the restaurant.

Choosing this topic was fueled by my personal crusade for justice, inspired by an experience where I witnessed another East Asian body – just like mine – being commoditized and fetishized for the purpose of catering to the American palate. I entered my research with the desire to expose oppressive power structures embedded within the American restaurant industry. However, my research taught me the complexity of people’s relationships with food. Food is not black and white. In fact, food involves a variety of colors, textures, and flavors that are interwoven with cultural identity. Throughout my Independent Study journey, I have recognized the importance of critical thinking. Not only critically thinking of society, but also critically thinking to deconstruct and reconstruct my own ideas. Thus this project has seen me grow as a student, and as an individual. I can only hope that those who reached this point in my thesis have also had a similar experience of growth, whether it is a growth of perspective or growth of appetite for Chinese food. The next time you go to a Chinese restaurant, remember that there are stories concealed in the people who are cooking for you, who are serving you, and all one has to do is listen.

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APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANTS' CONSENT FORMS

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

*An Ethnographic Study of Chinese Restaurateurs in Cleveland's Asiatown:
Evaluating American Public Perception of Chinese Food*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Meg Itoh (advised by Dr. Ahmet Atay and Dr. Ziyang You) from the Communication Studies Department and Chinese Studies Department at The College of Wooster as part of an undergraduate independent study. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This project examines the general American perception of Chinese food. The researcher will interview Chinese restaurant owners, chefs, workers and patrons in Asiatown, Cleveland. The purpose of this project is to investigate how the common American perception of Chinese food as the cheap takeout option is damaging to Chinese restaurant owners and workers, as well as Chinese food culture itself. The researcher is conducting visual ethnographic interviews with the hopes of giving a voice to the narratives of Chinese restaurant owners, workers, and chefs that are often unheard.

- **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to do the following:

1. Participate in a video-recorded interview, anticipated to last 30 minutes to 60 minutes long, in which the researcher may invite you to talk about your current perceptions of Chinese food in the U.S. restaurant hierarchy, and of being restaurant owner, chef, worker, or patron in Asiatown, Cleveland. Following the interview, the researcher will transcribe the recorded conversation and send you a copy. This turnaround is expected to take two to three weeks.
2. On being sent a copy of the transcribed interview, you are welcome to contact the interviewer to make editorial changes or add comments. This interview transcript and recorded footage will be published as part of the study, although the researcher will attempt to maintain participant privacy through the use of pseudonyms and saving data on an encrypted drive. All original copies of transcripts with names will be destroyed at the end of my study.
3. As a part of this study, the acquired video footage will be compiled into a documentary film. In the event of a public film screening, audiences beyond the researcher and faculty advisors will be viewing content that might include portions of the filmed interview. Signing this form will also indicate that you consent to film screenings of this interview footage.

- **BENEFITS**

There are no direct benefits to you for your participation. An indirect benefit is that we learn more about the public perception of Chinese food in the United States, as well as how Chinese restaurant owners, chefs, and workers interpret these perceptions.

- **COMPENSATION**

Although the study does not offer any financial compensation, participants who complete interviews will receive a small gift, either a small box of chocolates or an ornament, to thank you for your participation.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS**

There are no more than minimal risks involved with participating in this study. This project is not intended to provoke any physical or emotional discomfort. However, you may choose to share sensitive and confidential information during the interview.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Personal information will be maintained by using a pseudonym instead of your name within transcriptions and presentation of film footage. The researcher will also keep the original interview tapes (audio and video) and pseudonym keys in a locked box separate from the transcripts. These materials will be shared only with their advisors, and will later be destroyed. However, the researcher cannot promise confidentiality because audiences of film screenings may recognize you.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether or not to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact the researcher and their advisors:

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Your signature below will indicate that you have decided to volunteer as a research participant, that you have read and understand the information provided above, and that you are at least 18 years of age.

 Printed Name of Subject

 Signature of Subject

 Date

 Signature of Witness

 Date

同意参与研究

在克利夫兰的“亚洲街”里的中国餐馆的民族学：
评估美国人对中国餐饮文化的舆论

您被要求参加由张萌红（顾问：Dr. Ziying You and Dr. Ahmet Atay）从伍斯特大学的中文部门跟通讯部门。这是大学本科生的研究。您自愿决定参加或不参加我的研究，请读下面的信息。

- **研究的目标**

我的研究会调查一般美国人对中国餐饮文化有什么舆论。调查员会访问克利夫兰亚洲街里的中国餐馆店主，厨师，服务员，跟客人。这研究的目标要显示美国人对中国餐饮文化的舆论造成不好的影响。调查员使用视觉的民族学，因为他们要给中国餐馆店主，厨师，跟服务员一个台子。从这个台子，别人（包括一般美国人）可能了解在克利夫兰亚洲街住在中国人的故事。这个研究的结构：调查员先选和学一个话题，自己计划纲领，然后贯彻始终。调查员会材料汇总，分析资料，达到结论。

- **程序**

如果您自愿参与研究，您的责任是：

1. 参加录像语录的访问（差不多三十分钟到一个小时）。在这个访问里，调查员会问您对在美国哩的中国餐饮的社会地位有什么感觉，在亚洲街的经验怎么样，等等。以后，调查员会抄写访问的内容和送给您一个复制。这个过程要求两到三个星期。
2. 收到访问的抄写以后，您可能联络研究生编辑您说的话。这个资料和调查员的结论会问世，但是研究生会保护参加人的名字（您的名字变成了假名）。研究完了以后，原来的抄写跟录像会删除。
3. 这研究的一部分是影片的上演。公公上演的时候，调查员跟顾问以外的人会看您的访问包括的录像。

- **利益**

这项研究不会为您提供具体的利益或补偿，而不是分享您的观点和意见的机会。然而，您的参与给学生非常有益的机会，因为学生可能了解当地的事件和发展了解别人观点的能力。

- **风险**

这项研究不故意危害。但是您可能选透露私人信息。研究生会努力保持机密性。如果参加本研究项目造成身体和/或精神伤害，伍斯特学院不为本研究参与者提供任何医疗，住院或其他保险，而且伍斯特大学也不会提供任何医疗或补偿因参与本研究而造成的任何伤害，法律规定除外。

- **机密性**

与本研究相关的可与您确认的任何信息将保密，只有经您的许可或法律要求才会披露。当请求转录面试时，使用假名而不是姓名为保持机密性。研究人员将把他们的面试录音带（音频和视频）和假名键放在一个锁定的框中，与本学期的成绩单分开。这些材料只能与他们的顾问共享，后来被销毁。

- 参与和退出

您可以选择是否在本研究中。如果您愿意参加这项研究，您可以随时撤回，不会造成任何其他方式的任何形式的任何种类或损失的损失。您也可以拒绝回答您不想回答的任何问题。

- 坚定调查员

如果您对本研究有任何问题或疑虑，请联系调查员及顾问：

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我理解上述程序。我的问题已经得到我的满意答复，我同意参加这项研究。我已经获得了这份表格的副本。

名称

签名

日期

见证人的签名

日期

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When did you or your family members arrive in the United States?
2. When did you decide to work at this restaurant?
3. What is the demographic of your clientele?
4. What food do Chinese patrons order, and what food do non-Chinese patrons order?
5. Do you eat Chinese food at different Chinese restaurants? How do you choose where to go?
6. How do you perceive the status of Chinese food in the United States?
7. How do you think Western foods are seen relative to the status of Chinese food (ex: Italian, French)? How do you perceive other non-Western foods to be seen relative to the status of Chinese food (ex: Mexican)?
8. Non-Chinese Americans sometimes think that Chinese food is “fast, easy, and cheap.” Would you agree with this idea?
9. Chinese restaurateurs have previously state that Chinese food takes a lot of labor but they cannot get away with charging a high price because of the perception that Chinese food and Chinese labor is not worth much. Do you find this to be true?
10. How does the general American public perceive Chinese people and Chinatowns?
11. Do you feel that the fusion of Asian foods in your menu and the fusion of Chinatown to become Asiatown stems from American perceptions of viewing East Asian cultures as homogeneous and interchangeable?
12. Food is often said to be representative of the culture, but what does Chinese food say about Chinese culture in the United States?

访谈问题

1. 您或您的家人什么时候决定要来美国？
2. 您什么时候开始做饭？
3. 您什么时候在这个饭馆做饭？您以前在别的饭馆做饭了吗？
4. 您喜欢试验不同的食材吗？您做什么饭？
5. 您在哪儿买食材？在美国做饭的时候，您得改变使用的食材吗？
6. 您怎么决定菜单？
7. 您怎么决定各道菜的名字？
8. 在美国，为适应美国人的口味您做了什么改变？
9. 您给自己做的饭同您给客人做的饭有差别吗？
10. 您给中国顾客做别的菜吗？
11. 这个饭馆什么时候决定菜单里包括不是中国料理的菜？
12. 您怎么感知在美国的中国菜的社会地位？
13. 您觉得西餐的社会地位比中餐的社会地位更高吗？
14. 美国人常常认为中国菜是“快，容易，便宜”。您同意吗？
15. 中国店主以前说“中国菜需要很多劳动但是中国菜的饭馆不可以收取高昂的价格，
因为中国菜跟中国劳动没有价值。您同意吗？
16. 您觉得一般美国人怎么看中国人跟唐人街？
17. 很多人说料理代表文化，但是您觉得在美国的中餐代表什么中国文化？