

for "good taste"); but I have never heard staff or diners refer to this name in conversation.

6. Thanks to Yael Raviv for this observation.

7. *Kol Nidrey* is the prayer recited at the start of Yom Kippur.

Daughters, Duty and Deference in the Franco-Chinese Restaurant

Winnie Lem

As I walked through the doorway of Le Salon Impérial after an absence of six months, I noticed that the counter that displayed trays of prepared stir-fried vegetable and meat dishes, stews, steamed pork buns, dumplings and other delicacies had disappeared. In its place was an area with tables and chairs that extended the seating of the restaurant considerably. Lorie, the sister of the owner greeted me, invited me to sit down and immediately set about making tea. As she filled the pot with hot water, she said that Christian (the owner of the restaurant-caterer) would be back soon, assuming, in her unassuming manner, that it was he I wanted to see. She set down a pot of steaming tea and two teacups. I remarked that Le Salon is no longer a restaurant-*traiteur*, but has become a real restaurant, to which Lorie replied that they were a business in transition. The family did not want to turn away their faithful take-out customers from their business, so it was a bit of both at the moment. At the precise moment I asked what prompted the change, Lorie's brother Christian burst through the front door carrying a big box of greens and other supplies for the restaurant. Lorie sprang up immediately, relieved her brother of his burden and receded to the kitchen, explaining that she had to help with preparations for the evening. "You noticed the changes," he said after exchanging greetings with me. "What you see," he said proudly, "is the result of my family's hard work. We were doing very well, particularly at lunchtime, and almost every day we had to turn people away, so we decided to renovate and expand to add more seating." I congratulated him on his success. Christian joked in response "There are two things that the Chinese know and know very well. Food is one thing. The other is how to succeed in business. This particularly is the case" he said with a wink "if you are a Chinese immigrant from Wenzhou."

Introduction¹

France has been one of the major European destinations for migrants from Wenzhou prefecture in Zhejiang province. Located on China's coast, Zhejiang province has had a long history of migration, with flows of Wenzhou people moving to

Europe and more recently to North America. While Wenzhou itself is an important destination for migrants from other parts of China, having been one of the first areas to achieve the "miracle"¹ of economic growth through market reforms and privatization, migration has continued to flow outward from that area.² Transnational relocation beyond Zhejiang's and indeed China's borders has both resulted in and been a product of the class polarization and regional disparities in income and wealth that have accompanied the opening up of China to market forces. Members of Wenzhou households across different socio-economic classes migrate not only as a strategy for survival, to improve absolute incomes, but also to improve their relative incomes under circumstances where average real incomes in Wenzhou have increased since the 1980s (Massey *et al.* 1993). These forces inform the compulsion to migrate, and this compulsion is often reported by migrants as motivated by a desire to "get rich quickly in Europe." One of the ideas that circulate among the Wenzhouese in Zhejiang is that wages earned as servers in restaurants in Europe far surpass any wage that might be made in the most lucrative of forms of waged work in China, so that one can actually become quite wealthy as a server in a restaurant (M. Li 1999). The result of these forces is that there has been an increase in the numbers of Chinese migrants to Europe and a growth in the economic activities pursued by migrants in Europe.³ The Chinese restaurant is a case in point. In Paris, the number of restaurant-caterers operated by the Chinese and Asians has grown from roughly under 200 in 1960 to well over 850 in 1992, and accounts for over 50 percent of Chinese economic activity (Pairault 1990; Live 1998). A number of factors have fostered the heightened mobility of global migrants in recent times.⁴ Political crises in such Southeast Asian nations as Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam prompted the departure of large numbers of Chinese residing in those countries. The efforts made by the Chinese government to reform and restructure its economy and society to create a socialist market economy have meant increasing flows of Chinese seeking to make a living inside France's borders. For migrant men and women alike, this often involves the work trajectory of making a living initially as workers in restaurants, and then later as owner-operators of restaurants serving Chinese and other Asian cuisines.

In this chapter, I wish to address the question of the reasons behind the dynamics of growth in Chinese restaurants as an example of immigrant entrepreneurship. By examining the organizational practices of the restaurant-caterer (*restaurant-traiteur*) operated by Chinese migrants in Paris, I address problem of what I call the "thesis of Chinese culture" that has been advanced in contemporary scholarship to examine the nature of Chinese enterprise and reasons for the success of businesses run by Chinese entrepreneurs. This thesis proffers the idea that particular features of Chinese culture and its value system are responsible for the growth and expansion of businesses and firms run by the Chinese. Using examples from fieldwork conducted in restaurants run by Chinese migrants, I will argue that while certain values are brought forth, by both analysts and subjects alike, to explain and to also justify

certain management strategies and organizational practices in the restaurant-caterer, their growth and expansion cannot be reduced to the presence of those values. Rather, the inclination toward growth can be more attributed to the structural logic of the family-run restaurants and the ways in which they operated as family-based petty enterprises. This logic, I further argue, transcends the specificities of any given cultural group.

The Franco-Chinese Restaurant-Caterer

The restaurant-caterers operated by the Chinese are often family owned and operated with a labor force that is composed both of kin and non-kin employees. There is some degree of variation in the form that such restaurants take. While Chinese restaurants proper in Paris resemble Chinese restaurants in Toronto and New York, having kitchens and a serviced dining area, the restaurant-caterer is a hybrid of a restaurant and a delicatessen, called a *traiteur* in France, which has pre-prepared dishes displayed in a refrigerated glass case for the purposes of take-out — *pour emporter*. *Restaurant-traiteurs* will often have a few tables and a kitchen where orders from a menu are prepared for customers who wish to eat on the premises. Other establishments are *traiteurs* only, with pre-prepared foods mainly for take-out. Many *traiteurs* tend to have no tables. Some are able to accommodate the rapid consumption of meals that have been reheated in a microwave by providing a counter space. Restaurant-caterers and caterers only tend to be small operations, while restaurants proper tend to vary in size from small establishments that seat twenty or so around five or six tables to very large establishments that seat hundreds of diners. While Chinese restaurant-caterers are scattered throughout Paris, most are concentrated in the three Chinatowns of Paris. In many establishments identified as a Chinese restaurant (*un restaurant chinois*), and Chinese caterer (*un traiteur chinois*), menus are not restricted to specifically Chinese items, and pan-Asian dishes are served. The presence of Thai, Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian as well as Malaysian dishes on Chinese restaurant menus (see Figure 9.1) reflects the provenance of the migrants who make up the population of Asians in Paris, all of whom are frequently glossed by insiders and outsiders alike as "Chinese."

The growth and expansion of the Chinese restaurant sector as well other commercial sectors of Chinese business in France in the past few decades is often seen as evidence of the kinds of miracles that have taken place in the global economy, in which the Chinese have participated as entrepreneurs since the early 1980s. In the context of the 1980s, scholars began to try to track down the roots of the economic success of Chinese entrepreneurs in Asia and elsewhere, and, within the context of Asian "miracles," the "thesis of Chinese culture" emerged.⁵ I present the thesis in some detail in the next section and then, in the body of the chapter, I discuss its limitations through an ethnographic exploration of restaurants owned and operated by Chinese émigrés in Paris.



Figure 9.1 Le Prestige. Photo credit: Corin Swann.

The Thesis of Chinese Culture

The thesis of Chinese culture is a variant of Weber's idea that culture drives the economy (Weber 1970) and recently journalists, social scientists and management specialists alike have maintained that certain sets of values were distinctive to the Chinese firm and responsible for making it the major engine for economic growth in Asia. Redding (1990) in particular claimed to have discovered the driving force behind eastern capitalism, and claimed that it lay in Chinese culture, and particularly in the values associated with Confucianism. The Confucian Ethic, so he asserted along with Kahn (1979), was the eastern counterpart of the Protestant Ethic, which Weber claimed around the turn of the twentieth century as the driving force behind Western capitalism. The Confucian Ethic produced a specific form of capitalism, i.e. "Confucian capitalism."

The central tenets of Confucianism have been given different emphases by different authors who have written about the role of the Chinese values in economic life. But, in general, authors emphasize the significance of collectivism, familism, hierarchy and authoritarianism, paternalism and patriarchy as principles that are key in the organization of the Chinese firm.⁶ The primacy of the family requires

the subordination of the desires and wishes of the individual member to the wishes of the collective. Further, the values of male authority and filial piety require the submission of the wife to the husband, children to parent, and sisters to brothers. In particular, filial piety, the respect and obedience of children to their parents, is emphasized. From this, it is claimed, stable, harmonious hierarchical relationships can be formed. Stability and harmony are needed for firms to thrive and expand. Redding and other proponents of the thesis of Chinese culture, such as Hamilton (1996) and Wong (1996), argued that the high value placed on family, kinship and hierarchy is thus the key defining feature of businesses run by the Chinese and is responsible for the success of Chinese businesses. Indeed, the premises of family, values, culture and the particularities of certain ethnicities have been applied to many other groups to explain the establishment, operation, stability and success of different forms of ethnic enterprise. In confining the discussion to food services, it has been applied for example to Greeks in the pizza business in the United States (Lovell-Troy 1990).⁷

While these values governed the relationships within the family and the firm, they were also extended outside it. The ethic of communality and the primacy of the collective were expressed generally in terms of a cultural affinity and personalism. For immigrants in particular, who must live and work in the alien environment of host societies, cultural affinity and personalism are considered to be a response to the problem of establishing reliable ties between people in social interactions where trust cannot be assumed. In this way, the thesis of Chinese culture is tied to what I call the "thesis of marginality" to explain the economic success of the Chinese as a minority group in different national settings.⁸ The thesis of marginality focuses on the fact that, owing to discrimination, migrant and minority groups were marginal to the societies where migrants have relocated. So, in discussions of Chinese who have migrated to other countries, it is argued that the opportunity structures in the new host societies are blocked. Chinese migrants, and also other ethnic minority groups, are therefore compelled to seek alternative avenues inside an ethnic enclave to make a livelihood (see Lovell-Troy 1990).⁹ Living inside an ethnic enclave allows immigrants, so it is assumed, to remain attached to the traditional values of their home country. Fostering an ethnic business sector allows Chinese migrants to avoid competition and in some cases hostility from the dominant group, relying instead on maintaining relations with those who are known. Thus, personal relations become very important in the workings between people, and members of the Chinese community rely on dense networks and ties in their dealings. Social bonds are economic bonds.

These bonds of trust and social networks amongst the Chinese are generally referred to by analysts and subjects alike as *guanxi* (M. Yang 1994; Gold *et al.* 2002). Chinese migrants are thought to import these cultural assets to their host societies, and so, for example, familism enables the overseas Chinese to use family ties and clan ties to support the establishment of restaurants and other businesses by

providing financial support through rotating credit societies and providing labor to work in businesses (Light 1972; Light and Gold 2000). These bonds also transcend national boundaries, and represent the avenues along which flows of information, goods, labor and other resources travel between migrants and other Chinese in different global locations. They are also the means by which Chinese culture and its values are sustained. In sum, this is a contemporary iteration of Weber's idea that culture drives the economy (Weber 1970). It is contemporary in that it applies his premise to the economic developments that have taken place in an age that has been variously called the "age of globalization" and "the age of migration" (Castles and Miller 2003). What follows is an ethnographic examination of the workings of several Chinese restaurant-caterers in Paris as a way of criticizing the "thesis of Chinese culture" described above.

Work and Women in the Franco-Chinese Restaurant-Caterer

I turn now to my research on restaurant-caterers run by Chinese immigrants in Paris, and will explore some factors that contribute to the growth of the restaurant sector in France as well as of the individual enterprises that make up that sector.¹⁰ I first present the case of management strategies in a restaurant-caterer owned and operated by a Laotian-Chinese family in the smallest of the Chinatowns located in central Paris. In particular, I will focus on the role that Lorie, the sister of the owner, plays within that enterprise. By focusing on Lorie, I wish to make the point that the growth of enterprises rests less on the mobilization of a value system that is distinctively Chinese than on the structural logic of family-owned and operated restaurants. Through this example, I also illustrate the ways in which the social marginalization of Chinese immigrant women is reproduced through their work in small family-run restaurants. The second example I present also illustrates the ways in which women who have been socialized within the milieu of the Chinese migrant community become disposed toward taking up certain forms of livelihood activity that, in effect, sustain their marginality and confinement to an economic, though not necessarily an ethnic, enclave. In other words, in the second example, I explore what might be called the "habitus" of Jenny, in this case the daughter of the owners, to understand the ways in which she, like many other informants who are the children of immigrant parents, becomes inserted into local and national societies and economies.¹¹ I do this by outlining the forces at work that generate a disposition toward certain forms of livelihood in the global economy.

Le Salon Impérial¹²

Le Salon Impérial restaurant-caterer is owned and operated by Christian, a Laotian Chinese refugee, and his wife Annie, an immigrant from Wenzhou. Shortly after

they married in 1989, Annie and Christian secured funds for its purchase through an informal rotating credit association of friends, compatriots, relatives and friends of friends. The Chinese in Paris refer to this as a *tonhne*.¹³ Annie mentioned that she managed to locate the restaurant and organize the *tonhne* through *guanxi*. They cultivated a network of social ties and family connections to secure the loan. Since they took over the restaurant, the family has managed to expand it from an establishment that seats twenty to one that now seats forty. I suggest that this expansion has taken place because of a structural logic that requires that increasing amounts of surplus value be extracted from those who are employed in the firm.

As a restaurant business that is run using family labor, Christian and Annie employ Christian's two younger sisters, Ginette and Lorie. Ginette is employed as the cook and Lorie, the youngest in the family, works as a server and general odd-job person in the restaurant, doing a little bit of every thing, from working behind the counter, to cooking in the kitchen when it is busy, and managing the restaurant when her brother and sister-in-law are absent. Sam, an illegal immigrant from the province of Fujian, is the only non-family employee, and works as a *sous-chef* and dishwasher in the kitchen. One of the ways in which Annie and Christian have been able to expand their small business is by employing family labor. They also employ illegal or undocumented labor who are paid less than the minimum wage. Ginette receives the minimum wage, while Lorie is paid less than the minimum. Ginette receives a higher relative wage to reflect the value of her specialized work as a cook in the restaurant. Sam is paid the lowest wage.

Some details of Lorie's life and work particularly encapsulate the mechanisms at work in the organization and management of this small restaurant-caterer. Lorie left Laos at the age of fourteen in 1984 to join other members of her family who had arrived earlier in Paris. She is thirty-five years of age, single and childless. Having immigrated at quite a young age and having had some familiarity with the French language, Lorie entered into the education system in Paris and struggled through it to graduate with a degree in accounting. After working for a few years in an accounting firm, Lorie was asked by the family to quit in order to work in the restaurant that her brother and sister in law had bought. Lorie claims that although she was reluctant to leave her employment, she said that her duty was to help her family establish themselves in Paris. So she dutifully left her accounting job and began to work in the family restaurant. After having worked in the family business for quite a few years, Lorie confesses:

I regret that I was not able to make use of my training as an accountant and that I was not able to make a living from it. To be honest I prefer to work for my other employers. They were not members of my family. I prefer that to working for my brother and his wife because I had just one set of rules to live by. One set at home and another set at work. To work for my brother means I have to live by his rules both in the home and also at work.

Lorie continued by contrasting her work routines in a business run by what she called "French," i.e. Franco-Europeans and Asians:

When I worked for a French boss, I had regular work hours. I worked from 9:00 to 7:00. I had a two-hour lunch and I worked a five-day week. I also had all the holidays off, and, as you know, in France there are a lot of holidays, especially in May. When I left the office my job was finished. In the restaurant-catering businesses run by the Chinese everybody has to work longer hours and at least six days a week, often without any holidays.

Lorie describes her routine at work:

My day begins at 10:30 and I finish around midnight and often later if there are customers who linger after closing time. Because I work such long hours and six days a week I am not able to see many of the friends I made while in school. These friends are not Chinese, and so they do not understand why I am never able to socialize with them. My friends ask me why I don't get an apartment of my own because that living on my own would give to have more freedom to come and go.

But Lorie asserted that the Chinese had a different way of living, and drew on the value of the family as well as family values to explain why she did not take her friends' advice:

The Chinese live with their families until they are married. The family is very important for the Chinese and family ties are very strong in Chinese culture. Because of this I have to go along with the decisions and plans that are made by the family because everybody has to contribute to the well-being of the family.

Lorie's contribution to the well-being of the family has resulted in sacrificing her own career in order to work in the family restaurant. It also involved a material sacrifice, as she receives less pay working for her brother than for her work in an accounting firm. But she feels that such sacrifices were necessary for the sake of ensuring the success of the family restaurant.

Her sacrifices were not unrecognized by her family, as Christian notes: "Without Lorie's help, we would not have been able to keep the restaurant going." He adds that: "As long as Lorie lives with us she does not need to be paid as much as an employee who is not a family member, because she does not need to pay rent or to pay for groceries. We share everything."

Both Lorie and Sam are paid less than the minimum wage and also "under the counter." Paying Lorie a living wage, then, is seen by her family as unnecessary so long as she lives with and is partially dependent upon the family for her own subsistence. In this way, the family business has been able to exploit the labor of Lorie precisely because she is a member of the family and indeed of the household.

By this method of payment and by relying on Lorie to work such extreme hours the family business is able to sustain its profits and realize its potential for capital accumulation (cf. Bubnas 2003).

Maintaining Marginality

This accumulation orientation is also realized as a result of the hierarchical structure of the business. As a hierarchy based on gender and age that must be maintained through concrete practices as well as supported by a set of values, many have argued that Chinese family businesses tend to be largely a male preserve in which men tend to monopolize the high-paying positions and positions of authority (Greenhalgh 1994). They become established as the managers and bosses. In Le Salon Impérial, Christian is referred to as *le patron* and Annie is *la patronne*. But Christian is the absolute *patron*, and his directions overrule any that Annie might issue, if they are in conflict. But as the senior members of the family and the firm, they are the bosses, and together they manage, serve and oversee the day-to-day running of the business. Positions of authority and power are occupied by the seniors in the family, particularly the senior males. The least favorable jobs with the lowest responsibility are allocated to daughters or sisters. This hierarchy is seen a "natural" by workers and Chinese customers alike, all of whom automatically refer to Christian as *le patron*, or *laoban*. And the fact that Lorie receives lowest pay (next to Sam) makes it increasingly difficult for her to disengage herself from the value system and work context in which she is embedded.

The family firm is also a male preserve in another sense. Like many migrant entrepreneurs, Lorie's brother had to face the problem of how to stop the lowest-paid, lowest-ranking members of the family firm – the junior women – from demanding more independence from the family. He also had to face the problem of how to prevent demands for more pay, as well as securing stable labor for the family firm. This was done in two ways. First, Lorie's independence was curtailed by a strategy that ensured her sustained 'marginal status' in French society. The only way that Lorie is able to live on her low wages is by living with her brother and sister-in-law. Lorie does not have the financial means to live independently in her own apartment, as she says, "like French people." She is financially dependent on the common family budget, and is thus by necessity securely embedded in the family and the enclave of Chinese migrants. Second, the dependence and docility of junior women is assured through other management practices. As Greenhalgh (1994) points out in her study of Taiwanese enterprises, entrepreneurs in many retail and restaurant businesses do this by arranging job and incentives within the family firm so that women's jobs are the most uninteresting and as well as the lowest paying. They run the cash register; they stock the shelves and clean up. Women are discouraged from thinking of their jobs as careers, and because their roles in the firm are undervalued and of low status,

they often aspire to "traditional" roles. Married women talk of returning to their roles as wives and mothers, which they find more rewarding and more highly valued.

Annie underscores this desire:

If I were able to stay at home to care of my three young children, instead of working in the restaurant, I would do this. I feel that this work takes me away from my kids. They have a baby-sitter, but having a baby-sitter look after your children is not the best way to raise them. A babysitter is not a substitute for a mother.

But, as in the case of many wives who run family restaurants with their husbands, Annie's labor is indispensable in the day-to-day operation of the business.

In the case of women who are unmarried, many seek to become wives and mothers to escape from the drudgery of their position in the firm. Lorie outlines her intentions: "I will work for my brother until I get married and start having a family. When I start having babies, I will quit to raise my children. But for the moment I will continue to work in the family firm as long as I am needed."

Lorie sees her job as a temporary phase in her life, something to which she is not committed and certainly not a part of her career. As she sees herself as just working temporarily, she does as her brother tells her and seldom raises a fuss when he claims to not be able to pay her or to pay her more. Through these practices Christian and Annie have been able to enjoy the compliance of their employees and stability in the workplace, where the authority of men and senior men and women goes unchallenged and obedience is the norm. Owners, then, are well positioned to exploit wage employees so as to permit increased levels of accumulation. This contributes toward the success and also the expansion of restaurants and other petty enterprises. Owners are able to benefit from and exploit the dependent status of relatives, particularly women, and also the illegal status of employees like Sam, who is unable to find work as a regular registered member of France's labor force.

Lorie's case also demonstrates the fairly rational calculating strategies exercised by the family to ensure a steady supply of labor to the firm and therefore harmony within the firm and the stability of the firm. This harmony and stability is *not a simple extension of the values of familism and collectivism*. Consensus, when achieved, is reinforced by material constraints and determinants, where the interests of certain categories of people, junior women in particular, are subordinated to the interests of other categories of people, particularly senior men, within the family firm. In other words, it involves processes of disciplining individuals and creating the political and economic conditions that will lead them to conform to the needs of institutions and enterprises. In the context of the Chinese family firm, the "values" of Chinese culture are the ideological means through which individuals are disciplined to assimilate the priorities of the family. This is done through a process of "self-orientalization." This process supports the material requirements of the family firm. Moreover, the example of Lorie belies the assumption that there is a common good that prevails

and that everyone in the family benefits. The "common good" is in fact based on sustaining power differentials between junior women and senior men, and therefore differentials in the ability to exercise control over material resources. Finally, the example of Le Salon Impérial shows that harmony and obedience are not the natural outcome or manifestation of some essential quality of Chinese culture. The harmony and stability that are so highly valued for the purposes of capital accumulation are produced by a structural logic that requires that the management practices of an enterprise run using family labor are embedded in a hierarchy based on gender and age. In this way, the orientation toward accumulation is thus built into the structure of petty enterprise. As a logic that is built into the structure of family-based enterprises, it transcends the specificities of any cultural group and any particular work activity.

This structural logic and orientation toward accumulation can be found amongst family-owned and operated enterprises in China and elsewhere (see, for example Len 1997; Murphy 2002; Smart and Smart 2005). It can be found in family operations in contemporary contexts¹⁴ as well as in the past (Roseberry 1986; Cohen 1991).

By participating in and being subjected to such organization and management practices, women often acquire the knowledge and "cultural capital" required to participate in host societies as entrepreneurs. Lorie claimed that she still hoped to be married one day, but confesses in a rather frank manner that this is not likely, as she is already 35, with no prospect of a husband in sight. Having worked for such a long time in the restaurant business, Lorie says that it is unlikely that she will ever work as an accountant again; but she could see working opening a restaurant of her own:

I have the experience and the knowledge required to take over my brother's restaurant when he retires. I don't know if I will inherit his business because he might give it to his children. But I doubt that they will want to work in a restaurant because they were born in France, unlike me, and will have a French education and will want to do other things with their lives. Let's face it, working in a restaurant is not for the well educated. But at least for my part working in my brother's restaurant has given me the knowledge and work experience to be able to start a restaurant of my own. This isn't a bad thing altogether, because it is always better to be the employer than an employee and a restaurant owner than a worker.

Thus, the effect of the organizational practices on those who are subject to them is double-edged. The cultural capital of entrepreneurship is transmitted between individuals to enable the participation of immigrant women and men in host economies; but it also sustains the social marginality of immigrant women who are socialized to work within the confines of the restaurant sector within an ethnic enclave which is also often an economic enclave or sector, even when that sector is part of what has been referred to as a "global network" or "worldwide web" of Chinese business (Kao 1993). While some, like Lorie, have received training for other forms of work, they still succumb to the social and cultural forces that have

drawn them into this sector. The prevailing forces at work drawing women into the “worldwide web” of Chinese business are illustrated in the example of Jenny, who, unlike Lorie, was born in Paris and thus able to enjoy some of the benefits of being able to be more easily integrated into the French education system. She completed university, which resulted in more options for higher-status work, as is illustrated below. Jenny is the daughter of Peter, who owns and operates Lotus Gardens, a restaurant-karaoke in another of Paris’s Chinatowns.

Lotus Gardens

Peter was born in the prefecture of Wenzhou and arrived in Paris in 1965, after having first emigrated to Hong Kong with his family. Like many other migrants, Peter worked in restaurants as a dishwasher and cook when he first arrived in France. He was finally able to establish his own small restaurant in 1975, after marrying his wife Marie. Together they were able to secure funds to help set it up through a *tonnine*, consisting of friends, relatives and friends of friends. After five years, they moved to a larger location, having expanded the family restaurant from an establishment that sat 30 to one that now seats 130. They also added a karaoke room. Peter, *le patron*, runs this restaurant with Marie, and employs his sister Lily. Most of the servers are immigrants, both women and men, who have arrived from Wenzhou. Lily and Marie run the cash, work serving tables and clean. Marie manages the front of the restaurant. Peter cooks and manages the kitchen where there are five employees, consisting of cooks and *sous-chefs*. At various times, Peter admitted he hired illegal immigrants – *sans papiers* – to work in the kitchen and basement of the restaurant to clean and prepare vegetables and meat.

Their daughter Jenny was born in 1980, and, until Jenny entered university, she was sent to spend at least one month each summer with cousins in Beijing to immerse her in the Chinese language and Chinese culture. Peter describes the transnational network of reciprocal exchanges that allowed him to maintain an “education in Chinese” for Jenny:

I paid for the plane fare and once she was in China, everything was taken care of. She stayed with relatives who put her up because I sent money to help my relatives set up a couple of businesses in China. They set up a restaurant in Wenzhou and a small grocery shop in Beijing with my help. So this was a way of paying me back.

Once Jenny entered university, she stopped going to China and spent her summers in Paris, working in the family restaurant. She was paid only a token sum for this work. Her labor was needed because some of the restaurant staff wanted to take holidays, and summers are slow, and August – the traditional month of holidays in France – is a time of particularly low revenues. Peter said that Jenny hated working in the restaurant when her friends were all traveling around Europe, or going to their

houses in the south of France. But Peter added, “She is a good daughter, and good daughters obey their parents.”

In Chinese, when children are being assessed as good or bad, the term for obedient – *ting hua* – is often used as a synonym for good (*hao*). Peter recounted a story of a girl who was a “bad daughter” because she was not obedient (*bu ting hua*). She was the daughter of one of his friends who defied her parents on everything, from learning Chinese as a child, to allowing her parents to select her friends, to working in the restaurant and studying hard: “My friend cut her off completely, once she was 16. They did not support her when she wanted to go to university. They said she was on her own, and we think this young woman now works in a very bad job, maybe in a club in Paris, somewhere.”

Peter implied in our conversation that this was one amongst many other stories often related to Jenny as a cautionary tale while she was growing up.

But Jenny went on to university, financially supported by her parents. As a “good girl” until she started university, Jenny was also required to study Mandarin in Paris as an extracurricular activity. She resented this, as it meant that the available time for socializing with friends was limited. But as an “obedient daughter,” she respected her father’s wishes. Jenny eventually obtained a post-secondary degree in business. Obtaining a degree in business was also Peter’s idea. Peter reports that he anticipated that China would one day be an economic success story and wanted to prepare his children to be a part of it, “to be able to live and be a success in two worlds,” so he reports. He proudly points out that because he was so prescient, his daughter now holds a management position in Air France and helps to direct their operations in Beijing. While working in a restaurant was genuinely a temporary phase in Jenny’s life, her habits, her part in the family firm as an organization, the work relations and family relations in which she was embedded and the expectation that she would submit to her parent’s will all inclined her toward working within a Chinese milieu, if not necessarily a Chinese enclave.

Now Jenny travels frequently between Beijing and Paris, and on one of her visits I managed to interview her. Jenny comments:

I lived up to my father’s expectations. I listened to him and so did not really have the kind of childhood that many of my friends had. I had to work hard not only in school but to learn Chinese, and I had to work in the restaurant for the family, when all my friends were living a very French way of life – enjoying their summer holidays and traveling or making money in jobs for which they were paid. I felt excluded from them and from their way of life. They had money at the end of the summer, and could spend their money in any way they liked on clothes and parties. I did not. For any pocket money I needed I had to ask my parents. They usually gave it to me, but I always had to tell them what it was for. My French friends were free to spend money. Sometimes I used to think that we learned in school that the French Declaration of the Rights of Man guaranteed liberty, fraternity and equality for all citizens of the Republic. But when I was a kid and saw the

lives that my friends lived, I rather believed that the constitution only applied to French people. I did not feel all that free, and certainly not equal.

But Peter announces that Jenny benefited immensely from her upbringing.

Jenny does not work in a Chinese restaurant because, let's face it, running a restaurant is really something for people who do not have much education or can't speak French. But because of her training and my insistence on keeping up her language and her knowledge about how Chinese business works, she is still working among the Chinese; and look at China now!

Peter plans to return to China eventually. He plans to sell his restaurant in Paris "when the time is right" and set up a business, perhaps a restaurant which serves French food, in Beijing or Wenzhou. Peter elaborates enthusiastically:

With China's economy growing and business people moving back and forth, tastes will be changing, and I think there is an opportunity here to fill a niche in China's restaurant sector. My daughter reports that there are very few Western restaurants in Beijing. She says that she would help me set it up with her knowledge of international business and how business is conducted in the new China. I already have family members there who would be able to help me and work in the restaurant – many nieces and nephews from Wenzhou who now live in Beijing, and more of my family members are leaving Wenzhou to look for work in the city.¹⁵

When I asked Jenny about her future plans, she replied:

I would like to have my own business. I don't want to be an employee working for a big company forever. While my job is a good one, there is only so much room for advancement and promotion, especially for women. It makes no difference that I am a Chinese woman working in a Chinese market. I work with many men, both Chinese and French, who started after me and who earn larger salaries and are promoted more quickly. Air France is a French company after all. So, I'd like to run my own business with my family. My father made sure I was raised with the right values and with what I know of the restaurant business and how to conduct business in China, it seems natural for me to be able to start up something one day. It also seems logical since my father made sure I had all the Chinese qualities needed for success, so I think that whatever business we start up will grow in no time. Look at my father's restaurant. He started with very little and made it grow quite big. The Chinese seem to have a talent for business.

Conclusion

While many analysts have produced cogent critiques of the cultural thesis and Confucian capitalism (Greenhalgh 1994; P. Li 1993; Yao 2003), the idea that Chinese

cultural values drive the economy remains one of the most popular explanations for the growth and expansion of local and national economies in Asian and non-Asian countries. It is popular among scholars, analysts and policy-makers, as well as officials in immigration bureaus. It is also popular amongst many Chinese subjects themselves. Apart from the fact that it resonates with some of the oldest stereotypes held in the West about the Chinese, there are also historical and political reasons why the cultural thesis remains so powerful. Many critics have noted that the whole idea that there is a Confucian form of capitalism was widely promoted in the press in the North America and Europe, particularly in the 1980s. At that time, the industrialized nations of the West were suffering through a period of economic decline and recession. In this context, the thesis of Chinese culture became part of the mythology surrounding the east about how these poor underdeveloped nations have managed to achieve extraordinary levels of growth through an emphasis on the traditional values of hard work, cooperation and the importance of the family. In the 1980s, such mythologies led Western commentators to raise nationalist fears that they would be overtaken by Asian "tigers" and "dragons." More recently, there has been much made in the media about the coming of the "Pacific Century" and about the twenty-first century's becoming the "Chinese century."¹⁶ Fears are focused on the growing political and economic ascendancy or influence of China and the Chinese in the world as growth rates in the East continue to surpass those of Western economies. However, a second emotional reaction has been added to the fears of being overtaken in the age of globalization. The spirit of global entrepreneurialism was being stirred, as individuals and companies in the West are being challenged to capture their share of the Chinese market and to take advantage of the very successful form of capitalism that many Western analysts suggest is based on Confucian values.

Yet, as I have pointed out, it is not only Westerners that subscribe to the stereotype. Many Asians themselves – scholars, journalists and immigrants alike – accept the force of such values as well. Thus many informants speak of the virtues of Chinese values in a fashion similar to Jenny, and hold that Chinese business practices will enable their participation in the "Chinese Century." Many owner-operators such as Peter, as well as other workers in Chinese restaurants and retail shops in Paris, cite the values of kin solidarity, a familistic morality combined with a competitive entrepreneurial ethic as the motive for providing resources to relatives and friends in China to start up businesses in rural villages, towns and cities. "We are helping to make the miracle in China," so Peter claims.¹⁷ Like Peter too, they also commonly talk of their own plans to return to China with their earnings to invest in businesses and infrastructure, and are busily ensuring that their children learn Chinese so as eventually to be able to work in China. Many informants speak of Chinese business practices and values as being well suited to the age of globalization. Many Asian informants speak also of how they as Chinese immigrants are model citizens¹⁸ in host countries, because they run their businesses with the help of their families with loans from their friends, without bothering or depending on anyone. This is often cited

as the reason such businesses are able to thrive. The informants I interviewed often stated that because there was such an extensive network of friends and associations in the Chinese community, Chinese immigrants are able to help each other, and they do not need to get involved in politics. Nor, in fact, could they, as their work routines are filled with long working hours, which leave little time for politics and leisure.

In drawing on these examples of restaurant entrepreneurship as examples of small enterprises run by Chinese migrants, I have stressed that the organization principles and work routines have meant the marginalization of migrant men and particularly migrant women in different sectors of the French economy. I have also stressed that within the sector of family-owned and operated businesses, such as restaurants, the principles of organization actually rely on the maintenance of disparities of power and material resources between men and women, as well as elders and juniors. These disparities are mirrored beyond the family firm, in other areas of the economy. This is illustrated by the example of Jenny, who was bypassed for promotion in Air France. Beyond discrimination in the world of corporate and transnational capitalism and exploitation in small-scale firms in local economies, these disparities are reflected in society at large in the political, economic and cultural limits that such practices impose on the participation of immigrant women and men in their host societies and on the ability of such "model citizens" to exercise the full rights of citizenship.

Notes

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2. For discussion of the "Wenzhou Model of Development" see Liu (1992), Parris (1993) and Nolan and Dong (1991).
3. See Benton and Pieke (1998) for details of the history of Chinese migration to different countries in Europe as well as the social, political and economic activities in which they are engaged.
4. See the discussion in Castles and Miller (2003); Glick-Schiller (1999); Glick-Schiller *et al.* (1992) and Ong and Nonini (1997).
5. For a discussion of the different ways in which the thesis of Chinese culture emerged to explain entrepreneurial success in different countries, see P. Li (1993; 2001), Moore (1997) and Yao (2003).
6. See, for example Koh (1993), Wong (1988, 1996) and Hamilton (1996).

7. See also Caplan (1997).
8. This is also referred to as the "blocked mobility thesis" or the thesis of "disadvantage" (see P. Li 1993).
9. See, for example, Light (1972), Moore (1997) and Bonacich and Modell (1980).
10. Paris has three main Chinatowns located in the 3rd, 13th and 18th *arrondissements* or districts. The smallest and the oldest is in the 3rd *arrondissement*.
11. Bourdieu's idea of habitus is generally understood as a structure of dispositions that reflect a 'field of objective possibilities' open to agents at a particular historical moment (Bourdieu 1977: 82-3). For further discussion see Lane (2000: 25) and Brubaker (1985: 758).
12. Names of restaurants and research subjects are pseudonyms.
13. *A tonitue* in this context resembles a rotating credit society, in which investors each advance small loans to the borrower, who repays each investor with interest according to a pre-determined schedule. For a detailed discussion see Piraault (1990).
14. See Smart and Smart (2005).
15. For a discussion of internal migration in China see Murphy (2002); L. Zhang (2001); M. Zhang (2003).
16. See for example the series of articles under the title "China Rising - Are We Missing the Boat?" in *Globe and Mail* October 23, 2004 and in *Le Monde diplomatique*, October 2004 edition on "China, Past Present and Future" (Lew 2004).
17. On the issue of remittances, M. Li (1999) points out that while some funds are used for the purposes of investment in businesses, much of the money that is sent back to China is often spent on conspicuous consumption. She reports that it is expected for migrants who return and for those who receive remittances from migrants abroad to display their relative wealth.
18. See Lem (forthcoming) for a discussion of immigration and the ideals of citizenship under neo-liberal governance.