YOU ARE WHAT YOU EAT: EXPLORING A CHINESE-JAMAICAN FOODWAY

by

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Abstract

Food is a multi-sensual form of communication that represents culturally-specific ideologies about places of origin. In this Major Research Paper, I honour subjective ways of knowing as a second-generation person of multiple ethnicities by adopting an autoethnographic “cooking as inquiry” method to cook vegetarian versions of my grandma Ella’s Chinese-Jamaican recipes. This research investigates how family recipes transfer a unique cultural identity across generations. My findings illustrated that cooking family recipes can increase spiritual, emotional, and sociological connections to ethnocultural identities. The food I prepared represented the Hakka and Jamaican values of my ancestors: entrepreneurship, resilience, and tight knit community building achieved via oral communication. This study empowered me to share my food memory with future descendants to maintain the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora overtime.

Keywords:

Food Communication, Food Memory, Chinese-Jamaican Diaspora, Belonging, Migration, Intergenerational, Informal Knowledge

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Dedication

“I come as one, but I stand as 10,000”

—Maya Angelou, *Our Grandmothers* (Angelou, 2015)

I am dedicating this paper to my grandmother Ella Chong and all of my ancestors that have lived before her. I am grateful for the sacrifices you have made in your life to afford me the privileges I have today. Thank you for molding me into a woman with passion and grit while cooking delicious food along the way.

Figure 1. Ella Chong and Celina Chong at Markhaven Home for Seniors

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Introduction

As a foodie, I have always been fascinated by the immense emotive power food has to produce happiness, connection to others and knowledge about particular cultures. Growing up as a second-generation, Chinese-Jamaican and Ashkenazi Jewish woman, I felt a lack of connection to my roots. Being multi-ethnic, I often felt like I had one foot planted in each of my cultural backgrounds. Detached, not fully immersed. Growing up, food was one of the only clear markers of my cultural identity. Taking a bite of jerk chicken or latkes made me feel like a fulsome member of two different ethnicities. The flavours in my mouth were not a “pity invite” to the cultural diaspora; rather, the food made me feel as though I was on the “A” list. I thought, “this is the food of my people.” Whether I am eating in the name of celebration or shoving buckets of popcorn in my mouth to cope with stress, I can count on the visceral aspect of food to transform my state of being and my sense of self. Similarly, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic made me realize the significant impact Chinese-Jamaican food had on my grandmother, Ella Chong’s life.

Originally born in Kingston, Jamaica, 80-year-old Ella Chong has been a Canadian migrant since 1968; she now resides at Markhaven Home for Seniors in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Prior to March 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, Ella was a social butterfly. She would go to the local mall to connect with her Chinese-Jamaican community and have the food of her choice brought to her long-term care (LTC) home. Key dishes she often requested were within her familiar food profile including rice and peas, oxtail, jerk chicken, beef stew with dumplings, or curried goat.

In our check-in calls, my grandma's consistent response to "how are you?" was "I miss eating good food. Rudy (her partner) can't bring me Jamaican food anymore. The food here isn't good." Ella's inability to choose her own food during the pandemic was impacting her quality of life, her connection to her community, and her sense of joy.

Our conversations led me to reflect on my own food identity growing up. I realized that memories of my grandma's food were the puzzle pieces that comprised part of my cultural identity. I began to question whether there is a relationship between one's family food and feelings of joy and belonging for ingroup cultures. Is this a common sensation shared amongst migrant families in North America?

The purpose of this Major Research Paper (MRP) is to explore how family recipes transfer a unique cultural identity across generations—in this case a Chinese-Jamaican migrant family to Canada. As Ella's granddaughter, I conducted autoethnographic research by re-creating Ella's recipes that I felt communicated my identity best due to my frequent exposure to the food growing up—rice and peas and cassava pudding. Although my grandma occasionally would make Chinese dishes, she most often cooked Jamaican recipes with her mantra "cook intuitively." Thus I chose to follow suit to mirror her preferred food choices. Before, during and after the cooking process I documented my experience introspectively. Throughout this MRP I compared my subjective findings with existing literature on migrant food memory and identity to understand whether other research addressed a similar visceral sense of belonging to their heritage via with family recipes. I also examined research on elements that directly influence my own relationship with food like multi-ethnic identity and belonging, Chinese-Jamaican diasporic culture, the flexible vegetarian diet and disordered eating patterns. I recognized that this was a different cooking adventure than my grandmother's, enabling me to outline where our

perspectives differ in cooking and eating Jamaican food. This research used cooking as a method of inquiry (Brady, 2011) to learn about my intersectional identity living in Ontario, Canada as a second-generation Chinese-Jamaican and Ashkenazi Jewish woman. Reflecting on my own lived experience through cooking, I strived to self-define my individual Chinese-Jamaican diaspora in Canada. I empathized with my grandmother's experience during COVID-19 to uncover how her cross-cultural food identity has been passed down to my own.

This MRP goes beyond a conventional essay to showcase my in-depth engagement with literature and reflective writing. I do this by engaging relevant literature directly with my journal episodes to foster a dialogue with the authors and analyze how my experience either aligns or differs from existing research on the topics explored. The following section will explain my methodological approach in further detail.

Autobiographical Inquiry

The goal of this research is to determine how my grandmother's cross-cultural food identity has been passed down to my own to highlight the important relationship between family recipes and belonging. Linking autobiography with ethnography, autoethnography is a research method that "systematically analyzes personal experience to understand cultural experience" (Ellis et al., 2011, p. 1). It uses storytelling conventions to highlight epiphanies from personal experiences and fill in knowledge gaps using existing research.

Autoethnographic research is useful in supporting my complex social location as a cisgender, able-bodied, multi-ethnic, second-generation Canadian woman. During this study I respect my subjective knowledge and personal ontology as unique and valid. Wilson's (2001) explanation of the Indigenous research paradigm emphasizes that the researcher's relationship to the humans and inanimate artifacts analyzed is equally important to the outcomes of the research itself. Therefore, throughout this study I strived to unpack my intimate relationship with my grandma and our symbolic experiences with the recipes chosen.

To understand how family recipes transfer a unique cultural identity over generations, I re-created two of Ella's recipes that make us both feel "at home"—rice and peas and cassava pudding (see Appendix A and B for recipes)—and journaled my experience to create a reflexive discourse (Beard, 2017). I have documented my experience using Google documents and photographs as data to reflect on my own cross-cultural identity. Similar to Brady's (2011) study using cooking as inquiry, I placed the following guiding principles into the Google document to support my reflexive process:

1. **The research process:** The researcher must exercise vulnerability by engaging in the process “emotionally and bodily” (p. 323) while honestly questioning their own lived experiences (Brady, 2011).
2. **Impact on the researcher:** The research must examine their identity using new perspectives (Brady, 2011).
3. **Quality of the text:** The researcher’s writing must be clear and vividly describe their learning, cooking and eating experience to precisely articulate the visceral and emotional reality with food (Brady, 2011).
4. **Impact on the reader:** The researcher must attempt to inspire readers to reflect on their own personal narratives related to food and perhaps use autoethnography and cooking to retrace their own cultural identity (Brady, 2011).

Validity

Kauffman (1993) critiques autoethnography as a method that risks propagating an individualistic, biased perspective. Presupposing universal implications where none exist is an inherent methodological limitation of autoethnography. In this research, I acknowledge that my subjective experience inherently includes implicit subconscious decisions that may be unknown to me as the researcher (Clough, 1998). I was committed to being an honest researcher while recognizing that communicating my thoughts inherently involved performing my identity to a certain extent (Dewan, 2017). As the narrator, I recognized that I rely on my own memory and share information that I implicitly believe to be pertinent to the study with potential bias and personal goals (Beard, 2017). Particularly when discussing a variety of ethnic identities, it is important not to participate in narratives that create a homogenized and absolute binary between imperialist and migrant groups. As a counter statement to mitigate essentialist notions,

autoethnographic research only captures the lived experience of one person. To keep my research accountable, Dr. Seko supervised my process and commented on whether my entries are committed to vulnerable, transparent, and truthful experiences without a pre-supposed agenda.

Various scholars have used autoethnographic research, journaling their reflections and analyzing it as data, to explore their food identity. Gringras and Tiro (2015) recreate her grandmother's Tinola to uncover and validate her ethnic identity. Likewise, Brady (2011) adopts autoethnographic practices to use her body as a site of sensory, visceral data to "perform her Cypriotness" (p. 324) through cooking. Dewan (2017) unpacks his lived experience as a "Hindu religious lacto-vegetarian" (p. 15) by becoming vegetarian for a month to analyze his rationale for specific food choices. I chose to conduct autoethnographic research to emphasize the complex food identities of individual migrants and their descendants. For instance, Ella's Chinese-Jamaican, Canadian identity may yield a variety of food preferences from cross-cultural experiences. On an intergenerational level, when analyzing my own multi-ethnic identity, the complexity of my food identity will be magnified. Further, I am interested in discovering the differences that exist between me and my grandmother in cooking, eating and emotionally reacting to Chinese-Jamaican food and consider the causes of these differences.

Research Question

This research was guided by the following research question:

RQ: How do family recipes transfer a unique cultural identity across generations?

When one learns how to cook family recipes passed down from earlier generations, one gains the courage to embark on new experiences with food, otherwise known as "food courage" (Beck et al., 2021). Since food is intrinsically linked with one's cultural identity (Beagan et al., 2014), I am interested to determine if cooking Ella's recipes will allow me to understand her and

my own cultural identity on a deeper level. My goal was to identify similarities and differences between our food identities. This may permit me to understand the social, economic and environmental factors that create or hinder the transgenerational transfer of family food identity.

Identifying the differences in our cultural identities are equally important to illustrate the extent to which Ella's food identity has transitioned to my own (Alibhai-Brown, 2013). Cultural differences will be revealed by discrepancies in ingredient choices, cooking skills, cooking tools, as well as emotional experiences while eating the food (Meiselman, 2016). Younger generations tend to find cooking family meals challenging due to "deciding what to cook, not knowing how to cook and a lack of enjoyment cooking" (Metcalf & Leonard, 2018, p. 191). In addition to this potential challenge, my complex social identity as a multi-ethnic woman born and raised in Canada is expected to yield differences in our experiences. Now that I have introduced me and my grandmother and walked through my research methodology, I will be unpacking how my reflexive experience engaging in cooking as inquiry intersected with relevant existing literature to support my research question.

Cooking Ella's Recipes

Across a myriad of diverse ethnic cultures, food is a common mechanism to sustain cultural integrity intergenerationally (Alibhai-Brown, 2013; Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Malpezzi & Clements, 2005; Rodrigues, 2008; Williams-Forson, 2014). The ongoing reality of refugee seekers and general globalization drives the mobilization of migrants. Their offspring alter recipes to negotiate a contemporary identity in the host country (Beagan et al., 2014; Sanou et al., 2013). In what follows I will introduce three episodes to put my subjective reflections while cooking my grandma's recipes in dialogue with theories and existing research. The episodes are grouped into three main streams: belonging as a multi-ethnic person, rice and peas as everyday food, and cassava pudding as food for special occasions. Producing a dialogue between my subjective experience and related literature will contextualize my experience with how family recipes transfer a unique Chinese-Jamaican cultural identity over generations. Prior to cooking, it was important for me to reflect on who I am and why I felt the need to conduct this study as a multi-ethnic Canadian.

Episode #1: Why I wanted to conduct this research: Thoughts on being a multi-ethnic Canadian, food growing up and feelings of belonging

Multi-ethnic Identity and Belonging

Up until recently, I had never considered how deeply the threads of my culture were sewn into the fabric of my identity. In Song and Hashem's (2010) study on multi-ethnic identification, Irish and Chinese participant Paul expressed his lack of self-belonging to his Chinese culture because he frequents spaces with predominantly white-presenting people. Likewise, as a Chinese and British identifying person, participant George felt a strong disconnect between what Harris

and Sim (2002) coined as his “internal racial identity” and his “external racial presentation” because he was not exposed to facets of Chinese culture growing up (Song & Hashem, 2010). This disconnect causes ongoing irritation for him, as people who do not know about his absence of connection to Chinese culture assume he is well-integrated into the British-Chinese community solely based on his visual appearance (Song & Hashem, 2010).

To be transparent, as a multi-ethnic person living in a white-passing household for most of my life (my stepfamily is Southern Italian and my mom is Ashkenazi Jewish), unlike Paul and George, I was not highly cognisant about the negative affordances that can come with walking through the world as a person of colour. My mom always placed me in fairly culturally diverse spaces whether it was in school or at YMCA swim practice. I rarely felt ethnically different. This may emphasize my privilege as a person who experienced positive multi-ethnic stereotypes. In Skinner et al.'s (2020) study exploring American stereotypes of multi-ethnic people, the most common stereotypes that differentiated from mono-racial people were attractiveness and racial ambiguity. In one sense, I internalized the common racially ambiguous discourse that I would experience as a multi-ethnic person. For example, as I would be washing my hands in the bathroom in high school, people would ask “What are you?” Without me responding, they would rhyme off various ethnicities as a guessing game, “Spanish, Hawaiian, Indonesian? You can be anything! You’re mixed, that’s why you’re pretty.” At the time, I never thought of this as offensive. For the most part, as a high schooler craving a sense of belonging, I was happy about the praise I received about my appearance despite my peers projecting multi-ethnic stereotypes onto me. Now, unpacking this encounter made me feel uncomfortable and quite ignorant—unaware of the prejudice people who look like me may have faced. In my adulthood I proudly identify with my specific ethnic backgrounds, and I do not think it is appropriate to guess

people's identity in an unwarranted manner. When the Black Lives Matter movement and Anti-Asian Hate movements re-surged in 2020-2021, it heightened my self-identity as a person of colour and I became more of a proud, active advocate for Black Indigenous, People of Colour (BIPOC) human rights online and in the workplace. It allowed me to reflect on my own experiences as a person who is Chinese-passing and recall situations where I did face racially-driven micro-aggressions. I yearn to obtain a closer sense of belonging to my Chinese-Jamaican heritage to align my external racial appearance with my internal racial identity (Harris & Sim, 2002). My grandma's Chinese-Jamaican food is a vehicle to do so.

Alibhai-Brown's (2013) research confirms that food is a gateway to engage with cultural identity, particularly for multi-ethnic people. While her kids reject various facets of their multi-ethnic identity, they sprint at the sight of their mom's East African food like "fried mogo (cassava) and kuku paka (a coconut chicken dish from Zanzibar)" (p. 202). She believes serving them family recipes growing up has acclimated their taste buds to specific East African flavours. Likewise, in Malpezzi and Clements (2005) ethnographic study on Italian-American food, second generation Italians note that polenta lasagna was a cherished signifier that Lent was over. Study participant Granieri identifies lasagna as an invitation for family togetherness,

My brother, Mike, and I would take turns stirring the polenta in a great big pot. We had to stand on a kitchen chair for that. Then Mom would spoon out the polenta in patties onto a large oval platter, at least three layers high, with the sausage, sauce, and cheese between the layers. There were always plenty, as we never knew how many visitors would just happen to be passing by with Easter greetings. (Malpezzi & Clements, 2005, p. 136)

Again, the reason the second and third generation Italian-Americans express a fondness towards polenta is because they ate it often as kids (Alibhai-Brown, 2013). Their food memory allows them to have an acquired taste, and moreover, a romanticization, for polenta lasagna in the present (Malpezzi & Clements, 2005). It is interesting to note that the Capello family

grandchildren categorize polenta as a treat eaten on special occasions while at the same time wanting to learn how to make it independently, on a regular basis (Malpezzi & Clements, 2005). Similarly, the recipes I created in this study felt like an isolated event rather than an everyday practice. Both Alibhai-Brown (2013) and Malpezzi and Clements (2005) found that migrant children often deny their heritage and cultural practices. Nevertheless, their research revealed that mom's fried mogo and Nonna's (grandma's) lasagna were special nuggets of family culture that sparked sentimental feelings for younger generations.

I can relate to the children in the studies by Alibhai-Brown (2013) and Malpezzi and Clements's (2005) because in my reflexive entry, I too categorized rice and peas and cassava pudding as treats, associating the food with the rarity of visiting my grandma and dad. For that reason, holding on to food as a crutch to connect with my Chinese-Jamaican identity can be deemed as a prevailing tendency for second-generation Canadians. A "special treat" that we hold close in the treasure chest of our minds (and stomachs). My reflections paired with the literature presented illustrates that everyone has an individual experience with cultural identity. It is clear that food can be used to enhance one's closeness to their cultural identity (Alibhai-Brown, 2013; Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Malpezzi & Clements, 2005; Rodrigues, 2008; Williams-Forson, 2014). However, there should not be a threshold one must measure against to prove how "cultural" they are as a direct opposition to their Canadianness. Food is flexible, food is delicious, and food is a vehicle for learning. It should not be tainted with social judgement if one is genuinely attempting to cook their interpretation of family recipes, regardless of whether they accidentally add too much cinnamon and change the flavour profile. While I owned a Cheongsam (a Mandarin dress), I did not really know about my ancestors' migration story, how to speak Patois, Mandarin, Cantonese, or Yiddish, or many traditional customs. Regardless, I still

proudly identify as a Chinese-Jamaican and Jewish Canadian person. By reading the food narratives of other second-generation people and reflecting on my past, I concluded that food is one of the tangible markers of my multicultural identity, particularly my Chinese-Jamaican identity.

Belonging to a Chinese-Jamaican Foodway

This research project presented me with the opportunity to learn about my grandma's demographic history, the hardships her ancestors may have endured, and how her migration story contributes to who she is today. Harris (2013) characterizes diaspora by the forced or elected mobilization of people from a particular place of origin. The word "diaspora" comes from "the Greek word "dia", meaning "across" and "speirein", meaning "scattered" (Harris, 2013, p. 98). The Chinese diaspora is transnational with approximately 40 million Chinese people dispersed around the world. The most popular countries where the Chinese settle are Singapore, the United States, Canada, and the Caribbean (Harris, 2013). Particularly in the 19th century, approximately 7.5 million Chinese people, otherwise labelled as "Chinese coolies" were indentured to tropical countries such as Jamaica, Panama, Guyana, Trinidad, and Bahamas to work as labourers (Hu-deHart & López, 2008; Lai & Tan, 2010). European colonists distinguished Chinese labourers as more economical and less "menacing" than African slaves and Indigenous peoples—creating a racial hierarchy with the Chinese placed as the in-between labourer (Hu-deHart & López, 2008). While only 1,000 "coolies" originally were indentured to Jamaica, most exited their work contracts prior to the eight-year agreement due to their entrepreneurial drive. By the 1880s, the Chinese population doubled due to voluntary migration (Plaza, 2006), with "61% of the Chinese population conducting business in Kingston, Jamaica and only 8% remaining in plantation districts" (Lai & Tan, 2010, p. 76).

In 1918, a riot broke out in Kingston, flamed by the success of the Chinese, a small community in the Caribbean, dominating over 80% of grocery retail trade in the British colony (Lai & Tan, 2010). The Chinese-Jamaicans strategically sold food such as “salt fish, beef, pork, cornmeal, flour and rice” (p. 77) for the lowest prices and supported low-income people by providing loans. Looking towards my own lineage, my great grandfather owned various shops in Jamaica selling portable food such as tuna salad sandwiches, ice cream and drinks. The shops were colloquially known as “ice cream parlours.” My grandma told us stories about her time working in the ice cream parlours at 6:00 p.m. sharp after school. Before her and her siblings were to embark on a night on the town, their father ensured they finished their shift—teaching them hard work and discipline. A good balance of work hard, play hard. In the early 20th century, many Chinese-Jamaicans re-emigrated to America and Canada due to the socialist movement which would infringe upon their economic success (Lai & Tan, 2010).

Reading the Chinese-Jamaican migration story brought me an instant sense of closeness to my grandma because it painted a vivid image of the experiences my ancestors may have lived. This motivated me to dive deeper into Ella’s Chinese ethnic background. I discovered that “Chinese” contains diverse people. Whenever I asked grandma Ella where our ancestors came from, she would respond, “We’re Hakka. We speak Hakka.” Leung’s (2015) research on Hakka culture enlightened my understanding of my grandma’s Chinese-Jamaican migration story. I learned that Hakka translates to “guest families” (Leung, 2015, p. 802). The Hakka people continue to have a strong global migration culture starting from their migration in China. From 880 to 1126 A.D., they were located south of Jiangxi, then migrated to Fujian, then to Guangdong (Leung, 2015). Since then, Hakka people have migrated around the world to the Caribbean, Canada, New Zealand, the United States, and more.

A key characteristic of Hakka culture is the ability to fit in with the host culture—adopting their customs, behaviours and food (Leung, 2015). Considering that Jamaica was a British colony, fast food restaurants including Kentucky Fried Chicken, McDonalds and patty shops were a part of the transnational foodscape. When migrating to Canada, Hakka Chinese-Jamaicans were accustomed to global fast food chains as a natural part of their everyday foodscape. When my grandma came to Canada, she was already habituated to the metropolitan foodscape, easily adopting a love for Tim Hortons; her favourite item on the menu is the raisin tea biscuit. Growing up, when I arrived at her house for a weekend stay, she would let me pick out some of my favourite “Canadian” foods for the weekend in addition to her home cooked meals. She was practically denoting to pick out my “kid friendly” Canadian foods that I loved (and still love) such as Froot Loops and Captain Crunch cereal, Eggo chocolate chip waffles and chocolate milk. I remember looking forward to this grocery trip every time I went because my mom did not regularly allow me to eat these items because of their high sugar content. I believe one of the primary reasons my grandma would buy me these foods was to elicit a sense of belonging in her home, an act of love. Perhaps her intention was to accommodate my acquired taste for Canadian, kid-friendly foods, while also passing down her Chinese-Jamaican roots. Personally, the burst of excitement I felt from this smorgasbord of options could not be beat. These multicultural food offerings allowed me to not only understand, but physically digest and therefore become one with my identity as a Canadian and Chinese-Jamaican person.

Similar to Barjinder Virk, a study participant of Beagan et al. (2014), who negotiates his food identity in Canada by enjoying both South Asian food and brussels sprouts and asparagus—vegetables that are an acquired taste in Western culture, this demonstrates both me and my grandma’s ability to negotiate our sense of Chinese-Jamaican and Canadian identity by

consuming a myriad of foods and celebrating all the cultures that embody our food identity. Clearly my grandma and I both enjoy Chinese-Jamaican food and Canadian (fast) food, which reaffirms literature that deems the food migration process, otherwise known as the dietary acculturation process, for migrant families as multilateral and unique, rather than an overgeneralized homogenization of foods from one location (Beagan et al., 2014; Farias & Asaba, 2013; Long, 2021).

Now that I have discussed pieces of the Chinese-Jamaican and Hakka migration story and my relation, I will explore key cultural discourses of these groups outlined in literature to discover if the Hakka Chinese-Jamaican culture I know and love embodies similar ideologies. To do this, I reflected on my experience going to Dim Sum with my family-friends, otherwise called “Aunties and Uncles” (Leung, 2015; Phillips et al., 2012). For me, the communal nature and eating tools used at Dim Sum signified Chinese-Jamaican unification.

Aunties and Uncles at Dim Sum

Dim Sum was always fun for me as a kid. I appreciated that there were both familiar and unfamiliar foods available on a cart for me to try. My all-time favourites were sticky rice with ground pork and shrimp, har gow (shrimp dumpling), peking duck, and siu mai (pork and shrimp dumpling). Dim Sum symbolized a sense of family for me. Ikenbuchi and Ketchell (2020) and Alibhai-Brown (2013) both illustrate that culturally-specific kitchen tools are an integral part of their food identity. Ikenbuchi and Ketchell’s (2020) rice cooker is the most used appliance in her house and chopsticks are always placed beside the silverware in the kitchen cabinet (Ikebuchi & Ketchell, 2020). Likewise, when migrating from Uganda to Britain, Alibhai-Brown (2013) unquestionably brought cooking tools integral to preparing cultural food such as “a wooden contraption with a metal blade that sticks out front, used to grate hairy, brown shelled coconuts”

(p. 199). Going to Dim Sum is how I learned how to use chopsticks—a popular utensil in Chinese cuisine (and a wide variety of other cultures). I remember my grandma, Aunties and Uncles collectively instructing me to only use chopsticks and not ask for a fork at the restaurant. They preached that the more you use them, the more you will learn. They demonstrated how to place the chopsticks between my fingers. I looked across the round table, witnessing the excitement in their eyes when I got the hang of it. They shared unsaid eating behaviours like placing the small rice bowl close to the mouth to make it easy to pick up the rice with chopsticks. Daily food practices such as preparing, eating, and sharing food allow people to perform their ethnocultural identities. For migrants, food is a codified, semiotic system. It can communicate who they are and what they value. Once I learned how to eat at Dim Sum, I grasped the social codebook—an official member of the club—a sense of belonging and acceptance into my Chinese heritage (Song & Hashem, 2010).

Ferguson (2014) argues that food cannot exist without meaning. In fact, when humans psychologically process food, “the code supersedes the materiality of the dish itself” (p. 163). Similarly, Bourdieu (1979) claims that migrants codify food into semiotic systems of meaning such as light, heavy, healthy, unhealthy, tasty, familiar, and unfamiliar. For me, the materiality of the restaurant table at Dim Sum was a personal marker of communion as I was able to have an equal view of all Aunties and Uncles from my seat. The family style of serving the food is also a clear symbol of community. You take your food then spin the turntable to pass the food to the person to your right—an unspoken ceremony of intimate connection. This spiritual practice reinforces Chukwu and Gingell (2005) and Bak’s (2015) idea of shared food consumption as a precious and sacred ritual amongst loved ones.

While culturally-specific foods are re-created in diasporas across Canada (Beagan et al., 2014), each individual still maintains a sense of autonomy based on acquired tastes. I was introduced to chicken feet at Dim Sum. Lugosi (2013) notes that Western culture often deems eating unconventional parts of an animal (i.e., offal) as unordinary, causing discomfort. However, I argue that Lugosi's (2013) finding is limited because members of an ingroup culture can equally find certain foods unappetizing. For instance, although he is a Chinese-Jamaican migrant, my dad was never fond of chicken feet because of the rigid texture in contrast to chicken wings and breast. I shared this sentiment with my dad, disliking the texture and taste after my first bite. I remember my dad's twin, Uncle Karl, poked fun at my dad for not embracing chicken feet saying, "they're delicious!", we would all laugh at the disjunction in the acquired tastes between twins raised in the same household. Thus, as a response to Lugosi's (2013) argument, I state that acquired tastes should be discussed on an individual and cross-cultural level rather than homogenizing Western distastes for "unfamiliar" food such as offal. Conversely, Mills' (2019) study on Thai chefs in America infers that diasporic food in North America cannot possibly be generalized because those within Thai culture would not all appreciate restaurant specials like raw blood soup. Further, Mills (2019) suggests that the White/European culture vulture trope, where consumption is only for elitist gain of certain racial groups, is not accurate because people of colour across North America also enjoy consuming foods from different cultures.

Here, it is appropriate to consider the concept of cosmopolitanism, where multicultural cities are constantly changing and adapting to new acculturated processes due to the globalization boom (Dey et al., 2019). Dey et al. (2019) argue that people in multicultural environments consume food from a wide variety of cultures due to the dynamic multi-directional

influences that migrants transfer to the host country. Rather than trying to create regulations that dictate which cultures are allowed to consume certain foods, Mills (2019) states that food should be welcoming. Blood soup is on the menu for whomever to enjoy with a couple of beers, not as an artifact to prove how ornate Thai culture is in comparison to Canadian or American food. However, Piwoni's (2018) study on the cosmopolitan practices of American students enrolled in elite universities suggests a relationship between cosmopolitan behaviour and class. The author distinguishes between "cosmopolitan aspirations" versus "cosmopolitan practices" (p. 175). For example, most participants elected into the ideology that cosmopolitan culture involves studying abroad to be "well-travelled" to "contribute in tiny ways to global problems" (Piwoni, 2018, p. 185). Contrary to participant belief, Piwoni (2018) qualifies this rhetoric as cosmopolitan aspiration, an ideology attributed to those of a higher economic class who have the luxury to taste-test multiculturalism without mindful regard for the broader cultural context. In the same vein, "unfamiliar" food such as chicken feet, offal or blood soup should not be approached tokenistically or isolated to a fine dining environment (Mills, 2019). Instead, "unfamiliar" cultural food should act as a welcoming vehicle to increase future learning about the socio-cultural cosmopolitan environment that one lives in. Hence, even if I dislike chicken feet, being in the presence of those who regularly ate chicken feet enabled me to learn about this cultural norm within the Chinese diaspora. Instead of an "unfamiliar" food, to me, chicken feet became a heartwarming symbol of what my Aunties and Uncles ate at Dim Sum.

One Love: Jamaican Warmth

In addition to feeling "at home" during Dim Sum, I connected with my Chinese-Jamaican culture in high school. I went to Cardinal Ambrozic High School in Brampton, Ontario. Despite it being a Catholic school, there were people from a wide spectrum of ethnic and religious

backgrounds including a sizable Jamaican community. What I absolutely loved about every Jamaican person I interacted with at Cardinal Ambrozic is that they were very welcoming. For instance, although I visually look Chinese and identify as Chinese-Jamaican, whenever I told a Jamaican person at school that I was Chinese-Jamaican, they would embrace and celebrate it, making me feel like I was a part of the community. We would laugh with a mutual understanding that we were automatic friends. My grandma's social life in Jamaica was no different. In a neighbourhood in Kingston where everyone knew everyone, she called her friends to say, "hey, come as you are party tonight, be there." Come as you are parties were simply gatherings where no fancy clothes or food were required. Everyone was welcome with no formal guest list. Attendees would bring a small snack and a few drinks. The casual food did not matter. It was a vessel for the community to indulge in pure laughter. This vibrant communal energy echoes Phillips et al.'s (2012) study on Jamaica's national fruit, ackee, as a metaphor for Jamaica's culture. The Jamaican diaspora, including my grandma, love to eat ackee as a breakfast food known as "ackee and saltfish" often paired with fried plantains, greens and rice (Phillips et al., 2012). The ackee growth stages are a symbol for Jamaica's family values and way of life. The ackee tree is a metaphor for Jamaicans' resilience against hardships such as slavery, natural disaster and poverty (Hu-deHart & López, 2008; Lai & Tan, 2010; Phillips et al., 2012). Notwithstanding these challenges, Jamaicans continue to have an entrepreneurial drive in Jamaica and in the host countries they migrate to (Lai & Tan, 2010; Phillips et al., 2012). In the early 20th century, the Chinese-Jamaican community dominated the grocery store market owning 80% of grocery conglomerates (Lai & Tan, 2010). In Canada, Chinese communities continue to grow conglomerate grocery store businesses (Phillips et al., 2012) fueled by word-of-mouth communication to build a business network and gain consumers (Ferguson, 2014; Lai &

Tan, 2010; Lum & Springer, 2004). The second stage of ackee growth is temporary toxicity, representing the corrupt case of Jamaica today invaded by violence and political turmoil (Phillips et al., 2012). The third stage of ackee growth, the ripe ackee, represents Jamaica's complex diversity and acceptance of various social identities, including the Chinese. The final stage of the ackee fruit, cooked, is a metaphor for community and ritual (Phillips et al., 2012). For Jamaicans, food is the centerpiece that links family, friends and communal joy regardless of social barriers (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Phillips et al., 2012).

My instant connection with Jamaican people in high school can be attributed to Jamaica's ideological foundation outlined by Phillips et al. (2012)—acceptance of diverse identities regardless of skin colour and commitment to building a tight knit, jubilant community, whether it be in Jamaica, or in diasporic spaces, such as Cardinal Ambrozic high school. I hypothesize that my grandma's bonded Chinese-Jamaican community reflects the collective identity of Hakka, Chinese and Jamaican communal values transnationally as a means for not only ethnic survival, but also to cultivate thriving, fruitful and sustainable communities across generations.

Now that I have shared where my social location lies, childhood food memories and key characteristics about my heritage, I will describe the process and significance of cooking my grandma's rice and peas and cassava pudding at home. I chose to cook rice and peas and cassava pudding because they hold nostalgic significance. The first (and only) dish my grandmother taught me how to make was rice and peas. While some may consider meat as the star of a meal, rice and peas is the trusty sidekick that can always be counted on for deliciousness and satiety. Grandma Ella would always cook a huge pot of rice and peas to store leftovers in the fridge for future meals (or a midnight snack). In my opinion, rice and peas taste just as good, if not better, warmed up as the flavours of thyme and kidney bean juice marinate into the rice. The second

dish I chose to re-create is my grandma's cassava pudding recipe. I would always eat my grandma's cassava pudding at the community Tsung Tsin festival. She used to make batches of two or three trays at a time to serve the large community of Chinese-Jamaicans in Markham who enjoyed the coconutty treat. These food memories are pillars in my subconscious that tell the story of who I came to be.

Episode #2: Everyday Food—Cooking and eating rice and peas

Everyday Jamaican Food

Jamaicans eat a variety of different foods influenced by multicultural migration (Phillips et al., 2012). Samuda et al.'s (1998) qualitative study interviews Jamaicans in Kingston to determine the most popular foods eaten in their households. Findings indicate that rice and peas, fruit juice, chicken and bean soup were the top foods eaten by participants followed by “white rice, fish, pork, and ackee and saltfish” (p. 572), a common breakfast food (Samuda et al., 1998). Every Sunday, the dinner menu traditionally consists of rice and peas, chicken (either stewed or fried) and a soup or porridge (Samuda et al., 1998). For this research I relied on my grandma's food memory to dictate her version of our everyday staple, rice and peas.

Maintaining the Chinese-Jamaican Diaspora with Informal Communication

Ella communicating the recipe orally through the phone is a significant acknowledgement. During times of slavery and onwards, Black communities in America and Canada have used oral communication and storytelling as a medium to maintain cultural integrity to combat cultural repression and sacrifice (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Lu & Steele, 2018). Oral communication is a key method for both Chinese and Black communities in Canada. Chukwu and Gingell (2005) argue that when Jamaicans get together to cook, verbally instructing one another what to do and showing one another what to do, the kitchen becomes a sacred space

for family members to participate in a ritual of sharing nuanced, family-specific information. Similar to Jamaican culture, in China, people have transitioned to informal communication methods over time. Li (2020) illustrates that oral and haptic communication possesses media rich affordances (Daft & Lengel, 1986) that written communication simply does not, such as the speaker's energy level, emotional state and frankness. In the Greater Toronto Area, the Chinese diaspora leverages its word-of-mouth social network to navigate health care, bank, church and store services that speak Mandarin and Cantonese (Li, 2020). This culture of informal knowledge sharing was prevalent in my grandma's Chinese-Jamaican community in Markham. I recall information about buying raffle tickets to the Tung Tsin festival, paying bills, vacation deals and karaoke events were communicated at the friend group's daily trip to the food court before the mall opened. In fact, I remember one of my grandma's most common phrases used to comment on friendly banter was, "you chat too much." Informal communication is highly present in the kitchen, a sacred space for Jamaican mothers and aunties alike to pass down family recipes intergenerationally (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005). My grandma's memory forsaken her as she forgot how long to simmer the rice and peas. She relied on the telephone, calling her friend Ivoone to ask, and calling me back to share. I wrote the recipe down, formalizing the knowledge from a verbal to written format because unlike my grandma, the recipe was not comfortably ingrained into my food memory. I was not only documenting my grandma's food memory, but also the collective food memory of the Chinese-Jamaican network in Markham which was traditionally passed down via informal communication. I had my recipes documented, ready to prepare the ingredients, mirroring Ella's cooking methods.

Home Cooking Methods: Defying Industry Knowledge

My grandma loved to cook before a stroke limited her ability to use both arms and walk on her feet. She used to describe food as an art repeating that a cook must know what goes into the food from memory and substitute ingredients when needed. Similarly, Atkin (2020) discusses that teaching someone how to cook refogado, the foundation of various Portuguese dishes, is not a strict formula.

Cooks must have tacit knowledge on how to adjust amounts of garlic and onions depending on recipe flavours (Atkin, 2020). For instance, salty dishes like bacalhau (salted cod) require higher onion caramelization to create a salty and sweet combination whereas cooks making stews that include tomato paste must supplement onions for butter and more oil (Atkin, 2020). This information is not communicated formally in cookbooks. Instead, the process of teaching younger generations to cook is a process that brings about informal ways of knowing and family unity.

When I asked my grandmother what ingredients and tools I needed for the rice and peas recipe, she listed them in order of the cooking instructions (see Appendix A). Ingredients were coupled with an anecdote advising which brands and tools to use (see Figure 2). For example, it was important to buy the Grace brand of coconut milk because in Ella's opinion, it was an

Figure 2. Rice and peas ingredients and tools.

authentic Jamaican brand (see Figure 3). Interestingly enough, affordability was also acknowledged as she continued to say that Grace coconut milk was not a necessity, but a preference if one could afford it. The Chinese-Jamaican diaspora have historically understood economic challenges having to build

communal wealth after being indentured from China to Jamaica (Lai & Tan, 2010). As discussed earlier, the Chinese-Jamaican grocery store owners sold products competitively, for the lowest prices, and supported low-income people by creating a credit record in exchange for food (Lai & Tan, 2010).

Hence, my grandma's consideration of food security speaks to the economic hardships historically faced by the Chinese-Jamaican community. No matter what one's socio-economic status is, Chinese-Jamaicans can use

Figure 3. Kidney beans and Grace coconut milk.

affordable brands to satisfy hunger and maintain Chinese-Jamaican culture through food. This re-iterates the lesson that one's iteration of a traditional dish is flexible and not necessarily brand-dependent to be authentically their own version of a family recipe.

In addition to Grace brand coconut milk, Ella instructed me to buy canned kidney beans (the peas) as opposed to dried kidney beans in a bag because the kidney bean juice from the can was extremely important to “make the rice have a pink, pretty colour.” A final unique instruction for the rice and peas was the measuring tools. When I asked my grandma how much rice I should make and what her usual rice to water ratio was, she laughed, explaining that she does not remember, and it depended on how much rice I wanted to make. After taking a few moments to jog her food memory, she instructed a “likkle cup of water for every cup of rice.” Hearing this, I switched my generic measuring cup for what I perceived to be a small mug. Also, to crush the garlic, Ella instructed me to use a “big glass” rather than a knife or garlic crusher, which I had prepared to crush the garlic. Using household items in lieu of formalized cooking utensils (i.e., a standardized measuring cup and a garlic crusher) illustrates that family home cooking is nuanced based on domestic customs and practicality. Using the glass to crush the garlic was quite the

cathartic sensation for me being able to see the liquid come out of the clove onto the cutting board, and the long-lasting pungent aroma released (see Figure 4). It was surprisingly easier to crush the garlic with the bottom of a glass. It efficiently resulted in less clean up. I learned that there is no rule book for cooking. In contrast to Ikenbuchi and Ketchell (2020) and Alibhai-Brown's (2013) critical use of culturally-specific kitchen tools, my grandma's use of everyday

Figure 4. Crushing garlic with a big glass.

household items shows that there are no exclusive tools required to cook her recipe. Cooks should not base kitchen tool decisions on pre-existing notions of what “experts” suggest. Rather, it is an individual decision based on what empowers one to feel confident and comfortable. Using a big

glass for garlic crushing elicited feelings of joy and

belonging for me as I was mirroring what was burned in my grandma's food memory. We similarly preferred using unconventional tools to cook, making me feel like I was equipped with the right material to reproduce Ella's rice and peas while also replicating the spatial feeling of home from memories in her Alton Towers kitchen to my own Etobicoke kitchen. After preparing the ingredients, I was ready to begin the cooking process.

Cooking as a Ceremony: A Visceral Experience

Food making is a process of meaning making that goes beyond the purpose of satiation. (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Li, 2020). Cooking preparation, methods, tools, cookbooks, and conversation after meals are all a part of an end-to-end spiritual ritual in various cultures; key to the community's communication practices and lifestyle (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Ferguson, 2014; Long, 2021; Lugosi, 2013). Scholarship notes that food is a key element of formalized

religious practices. In Islam and Judaism, meat goes through a spiritual ritual, blessing it as halal and kosher before consumption (Lugosi, 2013). Hindus practice vegetarianism to pay respect to animals such as cows who are holy beings (Dewan, 2017). Taking a metaphorical approach, Chukwu and Gingell (2005) explore cooking as a ceremony. They analyze Jamaican poet Lorna Goodson's piece "The Domestic Science of Sunday Dinner" where she describes her lived experience cooking rice and peas in her mother's kitchen as a spiritual practice. Goodison's poem transforms cooking from a mundane daily practice to an act of sacredness (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005).

My experience echoed the same sentiments as Lorna Goodson. Preparing the rice and peas ingredients in itself was a ceremony. My nose entered the thyme container as I inhaled a big whiff. The creaminess of the coconut milk was a beautiful sight to see: soft, fragile and malleable. Immediately after smashing the garlic with the glass, the strong aroma pervaded the air unapologetically throughout the kitchen: the ceremony had begun. The rice and peas making process is a metaphor for a Christian communion cooked on Sundays during "advent season" (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005, p. 47). After adding the water, butter, coconut milk, thyme, garlic and pimento seed into the pot, the ingredients initiated a harmonious dance. Every thread of my clothing never failed to mimic this scent whilst visiting Ella. The permeating smell was an immediate indicator that the rice and peas slow cooking process was happening. I was getting hypnotized stirring the milky liquid in the pot. At this moment my comforting visceral experience allowed me to understand why Lorna called pouring the coconut milk a libation to officiate the consecration of a sacred practice (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005, p. 48). The mixture looked like my own personal galaxy with the creamy yellow butter and "pretty" red kidney bean juice colliding (see Figure 5). My face was immersed in the mixture. My pores absorbed the

steamy liquid, being nurtured in warm and familiar nostalgia. It was like my grandma was giving me a hug. Smell is an important hedonic facet of food communication. My affective embrace of the rice and peas mixture demonstrates Policastro et al.'s (2019) theory that familiar food has the

Figure 5. Butter melting into coconut milk and kidney beans.

power to increase one's overall happiness, sense of existence and agency. This may be due to Atkin (2020) and Williams-Forson's (2004) concept of food memory, where a single waft, taste or colour of a familiar food has the power to instantly spark memories of home. My emotive experience was similar to Alibhai-Brown (2013) who ate a mango and was overwhelmed with

gratitude and Portuguese-American participant David Leite who caught a waft of refogado in his Massachusetts residence and was transported to his homeland, São Miguel, Azores (Atkin, 2020). It is clear that my experience with smell is generally shared with those who have written about their own food memory in academia. The hedonic experience of home instilled confidence in me to continue the cooking process.

Trust your Gut, Trust your Ancestors

Intuition and individual cultural histories are factors when choosing what to eat (Hayes-Conroy & Hayes-Conroy, 2013). Reflecting on my sense of agency during the process, cooking rice and peas increased my pride with my Chinese-Jamaican culture because I was able to use my intuition to make cooking decisions. For example, I taste-tested the liquid to see if it needed more salt. My intuition told me that it would likely taste saltier as more liquid evaporated, and the rice soaked up the flavour. My taste buds guided me as to what Ella's rice and peas should

resemble. Finding confidence in my rice and peas cooking skills ultimately made me feel more connected to Ella. She once floated around the kitchen majestically, without thought. For her, cooking rice and peas was as second-nature as breathing. This reflection brought forth that if customs are not passed down intergenerationally, it risks the loss of rich cultural memories that ancestors before us battled hardships and oppression to preserve (Lu & Steele, 2018). The next section will unpack the potential loss of family memory with the inevitability of aging and what it then means to preserve family heritage.

Aging Bodies, Timeless Food Memory

While I experienced joy and nostalgia from the rice and peas cooking experience, a key juxtaposition worth highlighting is the sadness I felt in tandem during the cooking process. This perspective may differ from the overall optimistic and positive tone in existing accounts of food memory (Atkin, 2020; Brady, 2011; Malpezzi & Clements, 2005; Rodrigues, 2008; Williams-Forsen, 2014). As noted above, since I am a second-generation migrant who only consumed rice and peas with my grandma, the nostalgia I experienced was not content in its entirety because my grandma was missing from the physical picture. Since my grandma is now in an LTC home, smelling the rice and peas mixture denoted a realization that I will never cook rice and peas in my grandma's kitchen again. My melancholy is a subjective experience that my grandmother does not associate with cooking rice and peas. As I was waiting for the rice to cook, I began feeling lethargic. My excitement level dwindled from when I first started the cooking process (2 hours had past).

For Jamaican poet Lorna Goodison, the slow cooking process of rice and peas involving softening the callous kidney beans and rice (see Figure 6) was a metaphor for her mother's aging process (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005). Chukwu and Gingell (2005) analyze the metaphor, "the process of cooking, which softens the ingredients of the food to make it more readily digestible, can be read as a process parallel to sickness and death" (p. 47). Therefore, the authors elevate the importance of rice and peas. It is not only a

Figure 6. Rice and peas slow cooking.

Jamaican staple, but more significantly a representation of Goodison's spiritual life, from birth to the gradual and divine ascension into heaven. Although the thought of Ella's health as a roadblock to cooking together elicits sadness for me, it is also a driver to learn these special recipes to pass them on overtime and allows me to commemorate her love and support while raising me. Since daily food practices are deeply ingrained into cultural fabrics as sites of creativity, emotion and joy (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005; Li, 2020), elderly residents should be able to access familiar food options in their LTC home.

While my grandma may not be able to make rice and peas independently, I recommend a future study to be conducted on the benefits of familiar food options in LTC Homes. In an Ontarian context, perhaps The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care can implement increased diverse food options into their Seniors Strategy to decrease social isolation and sadness amongst LTC residents (Um, 2016). This way, residents such as Ella may still be able to recreate a familiar sense of habitus within the LTC home. Infusing my own familiar food identity into the

recipe, a signature difference in my rice and peas cooking process was the omission of pork to accommodate my vegetarian diet.

Negotiating Food Identity: A Vegetarian Palate

My craving for belonging to the Chinese-Jamaican community was the sociological factor that motivated me to re-create a vegetarian version of my grandma's recipes. I ultimately wanted to continue the cultural integrity of our Chinese-Jamaican family lineage while modifying the recipe to accommodate my pescatarian diet.

Growing up, when walking through the front door of Ella's condo, the first thing my grandma would ask me and my dad is if we were hungry. She was always cooking whether it was a fresh pot of rice and peas, oxtail, jerk chicken, beef stew with dumplings, or curry goat. As a kid, I did not like a lot of the meat options that she cooked besides chicken, so I was content with simply eating rice and peas, making it my favourite Jamaican dish. This choice can potentially be explained by my acclimation to meat substitutes from growing up in a vegetarian household.

To many, vegetarianism is a lifestyle that is closely tied to religious regimes that have occurred for centuries. India has the largest percentage of vegetarians amongst all nations with almost 40% of Asian Indians practicing vegetarianism (Borude, 2019). Since vegetarianism is faith-based for Indians practicing certain sects of Sikhism, Hinduism, or Buddhism, many Indians adopt the vegetarian diet at birth (Borude, 2019). Catholics also practice vegetarianism, particularly during Lent.

In grade 10, I decided to observe Lent. This meant I engaged in temporarily omitting a certain food in the name of religion. Within a religious context, vegetarianism is practiced differently based on the individual. Some may forgo all meat products, while others may only

exclude red meat, or continue to consume milk products and eggs (Dewan, 2017; Hamilton, 2000). Dewan (2017) can be classified as “quasi-religious” or “para-religious” where one identifies with a religion holistically or socially yet does not follow all customs prescribed by religious texts. Therefore, the diet falls at the intersection of faith and secularism (Hamilton, 2000). For example, Dewan (2017) conducted an autoethnographic study practicing vegetarianism for a month to connect to his family’s Hindu religion. Lugosi (2013) claims that identity is not only self-defined, but also influenced by external interpersonal relationships. Vegetarianism in the name of faith is not only an individual choice but tied to cultural and communal practice. My friends also practiced vegetarianism for Lent. In this sense, we normalized vegetarianism within our social group which offered encouragement to maintain the diet. After the month of Lent was over, we continued the vegetarian diet; not necessarily for religious reasons, but in the name of environmental sustainability and animal rights. Ferguson (2014) highlights that there is a contemporary wave of North Americans adopting “Flexitarian” diets where one omits meat on an interim basis. The ability for one to choose when they eat meat and omit meat from their diet demonstrates the autonomy and socio-economic privilege one has to negotiate their food choices. The decision to adopt vegan, vegetarian or pescatarian diets are not random, but usually based on social trends and religious influences.

Beyond faith-based vegetarianism, secular vegetarianism is popularized in Western culture because it aligns with values of individuality and expressing oneself (Ferguson, 2014). Secular motivations for vegetarianism range widely and often reflect contemporary social values (Lugosi, 2013). A few popular reasons are environmental sustainability, animal ethics, religious subscriptions, and novel dining trends (Dewan, 2017; Hamilton, 2000; Lugosi, 2013). For instance, the fine-dining subculture in North America may view offal (e.g., ears, beaks, hearts,

feet, and livers) as a delicacy whereas the vegan subculture may disagree and choose the latest trendy vegan eatery (Lugosi, 2013). Similar to faith-based vegetarianism, secular vegetarians view the diet as choice-based and flexible within their lifestyle. Some choose to incorporate “Meatless Mondays” or “Flexitarianism” into weekly food routines to align with values of environmentalism or animal rights while eating meat the rest of the week (Lugosi, 2013). In a cultural context, contemporary Italian restaurants take popular meat dishes and modify them with soy-based or vegetable-based meat replacements to accommodate vegetarian diners (Malpezzi & Clements, 2005). Adoption of the vegetarian diet reveals how food is personal, choice-based (Lugosi, 2013) and symbolizes one’s core beliefs, philosophies, and overall identity (Beagan et al., 2014).

Tying this ideology to my rice and peas cooking process, I was able to create a version that included the core cooking process and ingredients that my grandma used, while also modifying it to define my own food identity. In contrast to my grandma who believes pork is a necessary element for the rice and peas she knows and loves, the rice and peas I created with no pork was an acquired taste for my palate. The kidney beans provided a meaty taste to substitute for the omission of pork. I was able to combine my pescatarian food identity with my grandmother’s Chinese-Jamaican food identity to negotiate my own Chinese-Jamaican flavour profile. The following section further explores the idea of rice and peas as a hedonic, codified system that communicates my identity.

Summoning Food Memory via Sensual Communication

Around 4:00 p.m. my hunger and lack of patience overtook me, so I tried the rice on a spoon to test the texture (see Figure 7). I could not resist sneaking in bites here and there like a kid finessing a cookie out of the cookie jar. Every time I had a bite, it was like a drug of

nostalgia. I wanted more even though I was not physically hungry, I was mentally hungry for the feeling of family. According to literature, this is a common phenomenon. In his research about

Figure 7. Tasting rice and peas on a spoon.

the Ghanaian-American diaspora, Williams-Forson (2004) concludes that recreating familiar food fragrances localizes North American spaces for migrants. A single smell, taste or colour of a familiar food has the power to instantly spark memories of home (Atkin, 2020; Williams-Forson, 2004). Food memories are signifiers of specific time periods in one's life

with the ability to adapt over time based on life circumstances. For

Alibhai-Brown (2013) eating potatoes reminds her of her time at Oxford, mastering a variety of affordable potato dishes. She uses food memories as milestones allowing her to reflect on experiences of migration, education, and financial gain throughout her life (Alibhai-Brown, 2013). Likewise, for Portuguese-American David Leite, a single whiff of refogado—slowly sautéed onions and garlic—reconciles feelings of homelessness while residing in Massachusetts (Atkin, 2020). Therefore, migrants still idealize their homeland and use food to consummate a comfortable sense of place in their new host country, while also sharing new food memories with family and friends (Atkin, 2020; Bonifas et al., 2014).

Food is successful in re-creating a vivid feeling of familiarity because it is a multi-sensual form of communication that engages taste, sight, smell and touch while also representing culturally-specific ideologies about the place of origin (Lugosi, 2013). The hedonic potential of food is defined by its ability to produce feelings of enjoyment for the eater (Raghunathan et al., 2006). In addition, food can impact one's emotional/psychosocial wellness—the degree of resiliency they have over their life (Meiselman, 2016). Therefore, food can be a tool to cultivate

joy. Times of hardship have proven to produce innovative dishes from a variety of cultures. Portuguese beef stew (Rodrigues, 2008), Caribbean codfish fritters (Janer, 2007), and Italian polenta (Malpezzi & Clements, 2005) are all foods that were created from people who were facing famine, poverty and warfare. Dishes such as these can have the power to increase one's overall happiness and perceived autonomy in life (Policastro et al., 2019). This demonstrates that the emotional benefits of food are equally important to its nutritional value (Raghunathan et al., 2006). As literature suggests, my hedonic experience eating my grandma's rice and peas ignited comfort, familiarity, and overwhelming joy while I was experiencing the underscoring stress of the COVID-19 pandemic and daily doses of anxiety. As soon as my mouth hit the spoon, I tasted the perfect balance of pungent salt, creamy coconut and butter, and warm kidney bean. The

Figure 8. Rice and peas plated.

brown rice was chewy and enjoyable to eat. The texture of the liquid was perfectly congealed as the kidney beans made a creamy texture in-between pieces of rice. As Bak (2015) notes, the experience of the physical food becoming one with my body is a symbol for unifying with my Chinese-Jamaican identity. This marriage of

physical and symbolic communion is also found in A. Conroy and J. Conroy's (2008) study where they confirm that a visceral sensation is when the mind and body collide from sensory interaction with the physical world.

My craving for rice and peas went beyond the materiality of the food itself—it was a signifier communicating my cultural heritage. For Beagan et al. (2014), food is innately a characteristic of one's identity. Many scholars note that Canadian migrants use food to connect

with “home”, re-creating its taste in their place of settlement (Beagan et al., 2014). For migrants, food is a semiotic system that communicates who they are and what they value (Beagan et al., 2014; Ikebuchi & Ketchell, 2020). For example, Kwame told Williams-Forson (2013) that he will accept his wife’s Southern American crab cakes, macaroni and cheese and string beans, but cheers at the sight of traditional fish, kenkey and pepper sauce exclaiming, “Now this is real food!” (p. 82). Kwame elaborates that he does not consider his meal to be complete without a starch such as fufu and a Ghanaian soup (Williams-Forson, 2013). The notion of “real” food proves that food is much more than sustenance. One can be nutritionally satisfied, yet emotionally unsatisfied if they have not eaten food from their home country because they may feel misaligned with their cultural identity (Raghunathan et al., 2006). I have argued that my grandma experienced this dissonance due to the unavailability of Chinese-Jamaican and other preferred food at her LTC home during the COVID-19 pandemic. The LTC home food met the Canadian nutritional requirements yet did not meet her familiar food profile. Taking the concept of food and identity a few generations further, do second and third-generation children also use food as a discourse for feelings of belonging?

Adopting Food Identity Intergenerationally

Beagan et al. (2014) and Squires (2002) illustrate that each individual has a unique food identity that should not be homogenized based on cultural stereotypes. As a second-generation Canadian and multi-ethnic person, I infer that Canadian grandchildren of migrants can also use food as a code that ignites their cultural food memory growing up; however, I hypothesize that it is more complex for youth to negotiate their food identity due to a wider variety of options. Since Millennials and Generation Z (such as myself) may have greater social media access, youth often engage in a “food for sharing” culture where users post what they eat and critique what their

followers are eating in the name of social interaction and online engagement in the “foodie” community (Rousseau, 2012). Social media affords Millennials and Generation Z with more exposure to knowledge about diverse restaurants, cultural foods and recipes. Living in an online social media bubble, younger generations may solely view desired food options by what is available on their newsfeed (Rousseau, 2012). The participants in the studies explored (Alibhai-Brown, 2013; Atkin 2020; Beagan et al., 2014; Williams-Forson, 2014) predominantly analyze direct linkages between food and feelings of belonging for migrants. Findings pointed to a strong sense of “home” from eating cultural foods in host countries given that these foods were eaten regularly throughout their lifetime. There is a gap in the literature reviewed as it does not flesh out the plausibility of younger generations adopting migrant food. Canadian and American popular restaurant foodscapes (e.g., cities such as Toronto or New York) are characterized by a diverse cultural body consuming food as a means for entertainment (Mills, 2019). There is a strong desire to eat foods from cultures that are not one’s own because it aligns with the cosmopolitan discourse of being well-rounded, welcoming of diverse cultures, and belonging in elite social spaces (Dey et al., 2019). When Millennials and Generation Z post food on social media, engagement such as likes and comments validate feelings of social belonging (Rousseau, 2012). Hence, for descendants of migrants, tasting new foods may have more cultural capital (Sato, 2016) than reproducing foods from within one’s ingroup culture. Molz (2007) defines culinary tourism as “practices of exploratory eating, especially in which unfamiliar foods are seen as an encounter with difference” (p. 77). Younger generations living in multicultural cities may prioritize cosmopolitanism by engaging in culinary tourism to gain social capital. This could inadvertently yield less time spent cooking family recipes at home and decrease feelings of belonging to their familial heritage. Participating in this MRP catapulted me to engage in home

cooking dishes that I associated with special occasions. On one hand, by shopping for ingredients at grocery stores in my neighbourhood and cooking my grandma's recipes in my own home, I localized my Chinese-Jamaican culture, moving it metaphorically and quite literally, closer to home. On the other hand, like the members of my Millennial cohort in Rousseau's (2012) study, I could not help but engage in the social media food culture I was involved in, sharing photos of my creations online. However, unlike participants, I posted to express my appreciation for my grandma and her cooking, not necessarily to engage in cosmopolitan culture. In comparison to my grandma who deems the recipes re-created as a part of her everyday lifestyle, I experienced them as an extraordinary event. Eating rice and peas was indeed extraordinary in more ways than one. In the next section I will share how eating this food helped me challenge my disordered relationship with food.

Interrogating Disordered Eating and Dominant Health Discourse

After I finished my meal, I felt a physical sense of fullness and a mental sense of peace and contentment. I have to admit that I used to get food anxiety because from 2018 to 2020, I went through disordered eating patterns that some may classify as orthorexia. I was mentally obsessed with eating foods with a dense number of micronutrients in every meal (i.e., fruits and vegetables) with little to no carbohydrates from wheat products. While my mind occasionally falls back into these unhealthy eating behaviours, when I was eating this meal, although I knew that there was a good amount of butter in it and no vegetables, I did not have any thoughts about if it was nutrient-dense.

In summary, I discovered that eating familiar foods from my culture is equally important to eating what diet culture may deem as "nutritious foods" because it not only helped keep me satiated and full, but it also mentally gave me an immense sense of gratitude to have delicious

food that I traced back to my ancestral history. The experience gifted me a sense of pride that “nutritious foods” could never offer. Raghunathan et al. (2006) agree with this argument claiming that the visceral and spiritual benefits of food hold equal value to the nutritional benefits. Their implicit association test reveals that nutritionally “healthy” foods are hegemonically viewed as “serious” and “worthy” while less nutritious foods are denoted as “frivolousness” and “trivial” (Raghunathan et al., 2006). Moreover, Meiselman’s (2016) research analyzes the relationship between food and various pillars of health. He found that humans not only have to take care of their physical health, but equally have to look after their “subjective well-being,” one’s individual contentment with life, and “spiritual well-being,” meaning found in “something greater than oneself” (Meiselman, 2016, p.103), such as cultural heritage. Similarly, Mudry et al. (2014) critique the medical, nutrition-based model of eating asserting, “Good [nutritional] food must prevent something bad from happening in the body. In this model, eating becomes fraught with angst and anxiety” (p. 28). Whole Foods supermarkets in Canada and America reproduce the discourse of paying more money for organic “good foods” in contrast to culturally-specific grocery stores which are labelled as “processed” because the corporation associates them with the working class with the assumption that they cannot afford nutritious food (Anguelovski, 2016). Meanwhile, one could fry an organic potato from Whole Foods while making a baked chicken and vegetable dinner with less saturated fat purchased from a Latino grocery store (Anguelovski, 2016). Whole Foods attempts to sell culturally-specific foods as the new superfood sponsored by Oprah such as Jerusalem artichokes, chia seeds and adzuki beans (Anguelovski, 2016; Mudry et al., 2014).

For me, eating rice and peas in the name of nostalgia rather than maximum nutritional value brewed the realization that food goes beyond diet discourse—feeding the body to remain a

“healthy” size. Food must also be used as medicine to feed the subjective and spiritual well-being. One’s favourite family dish can give them a sense of peace and belonging with their cultural heritage without participating in diet discourse (Meiselman, 2016; Raghunathan et al., 2006). I cleaned my plate without guilt. My stomach was full, and my heart was happy. Jamaicans often let their meals digest before diving into desserts later in the evening such as potato, cassava, cornmeal and puddings or ice cream (Samuda et al., 1998). In true Jamaican fashion, I waited a few hours in anticipation for dessert time.

Episode #3: Special Food—The significance of cassava pudding

Buying Cassava at T&T Supermarket

One of the main ingredients that I specifically came to T&T to find was cassava because my grandma could never find it at the Canadian grocery stores and said the Chinese grocery store (incidentally owned by Canadian food giant Loblaws) was sure to have it (see Figure 9). I decided to explore existing scholarship on grocery store rhetoric to compare findings with my experience at T&T.

Latinx feminist scholars such as Counihan (2008) use testimonios to share subjective experiences with American food rhetoric. Roncero-Bellido (2018) also uses testimonios to observe the process of ethnic homogenization within grocery store spatial rhetoric such as the “ethnic aisle” signage. She outlines that grocery store discourse is multi-modal as the linear design of the aisles themselves dictate how the customer navigates, interacts, and understands products from various cultures. Products are not placed on shelves at random, but in fact strategic marketing tactics to convey a hierarchy of importance to increase buying potential. Therefore, homogenizing Hispanic and Latinx products diminishes the cultural histories of those that produced them. It is ignorant to glaze over the social and political differences amongst the

cultures (Roncero-Bellido, 2018). While this process of homogenization may also be true for American products in grocery stores around the world, in an American context, there were two main “ethnic aisles” in this grocery store—the Latinx/Hispanic aisle and a “catch all ethnic aisle” including Kosher, Polish and East Asian products. Interestingly, the Italian products are not labelled as “ethnic” and simply labelled by the product itself such as “sauce” and “pasta”. This signifies that Italian food is normalized in the American foodscape. Roncero-Bellido (2018) questions why Mexican products such as corn oil must be in a distinct, overly homogenized “ethnic” section instead of nuzzled in the baking section with the other oils. Her study ultimately observed that the American grocery store rhetoric was limiting and homogenizing of Latinx foods because it merged a variety of national products together, enabling the customer understanding of transnational food to be oversimplified. Farias and Asaba (2013) agree with this notion, critiquing the portrayal of migrant families in literature as overly dichotomous where the migrant family is a unified whole with a linear, oversimplified migration narrative. In the same vein, Squires (2002) argues that academic discussion should shift from an idea of a single public sphere to an acknowledgement of several publics that may hold unique cultural ideologies that incorporate both North American and traditional discourses. For example, Chinese migrants in North America, Singapore and the Caribbean potentially belong to “more than 56 different ethnic groups and speak a variety of languages” (Harris, 2013, p. 100). When speaking about food and culture, Atkin (2020) views acculturated foods as complex rather than as a homogenous, carbon copy of food from the home country. Long (2021) candidly adds that the term “cuisine” itself is inaccurate because it signifies a collection of superior dishes chosen to represent an entire culture.

In contrast to literature that discusses the of homogenization of cultural food ideologies within North American discourse, I found that the Chinese grocery store, T&T, was very inclusive of different cultural foods—organizing and labelling products not as sites of distinction, but as an embedded part of the grocery store foodscape. This suggests that the multicultural diaspora in Ontario is not only accepted but ingrained in the surrounding community.

The various cassava options available is a prime example of having national products ingrained into the North American foodscape. Cassava is a key ingredient in Caribbean and African cooking alike (Alibhai-Brown, 2013; Harris, 2013). Dating back to the late 19th century, Indian survivors of enslavement in East Africa built prosperous communities with their staple foods being fried banana, plantain and cassava (Alibhai-Brown, 2013). As stated earlier, in her food memory, Alibhai-Brown (2013) is reminded of her East African Asian roots when she makes one of her children’s favourite foods, fried mogo (cassava). Traditional cassava preparation is a very laborious process involving hours of pounding the ingredient and either boiling, frying, roasting, fermenting, or steaming it (Falade & Akingbala, 2011). Cassava is often used to make the popular meal starch, fufu. In Williams-Forson’s (2014) semi-structured interview, Ghanaian migrant residing in Maryland, United States, ruminates about the irreplaceability of fufu as a reminder of his parents reminiscing, “with the fufu ... I think about my mother, I think about my father, I think about my siblings back home ... we talk about jobs, we talk about school, and we enjoy our soup with fufu” (p. 83). Cassava is found in various quantities in commercial products such as fermented drinks, juices, and pudding (Falade & Akingbala, 2011). T&T recognized the complexity of the cassava product based on its neighbouring cultural context. It meets the needs of the diverse diasporas it serves by offering a

variety of the product. This signifies that T&T acknowledges cassava is not a novelty, one-brand-fits-all product, but rather a nuanced ingredient. The brand and texture are chosen based on the specific cultural recipe one is making. T&T used this cultural knowledge to adopt a neighbourhood-specific, more inclusive approach to food rhetoric than Roncero-Bellido's (2018) "ethnic aisle" example.

Particularly for her cassava pudding recipe, my grandma instructed me to buy the grated cassava in the green and white package in the frozen section because it integrates into the batter smoothly and is pre-prepared, saving time (see Figure 9). It is interesting to note that her food memory recalls the colour of the packaging but does not rely on the brand name to identify the

Figure 9. Grated, frozen cassava in the "white and green" package.

product. In Canada and America, migrant enclaves exist, defined by "spatially clustered networks of businesses owned by members of the same minority" (p. 185) to build social and economic conglomerates (Polvorosa, 2012). Williams-Forson (2014) comments on migrant entrepreneurship highlighting that African, Caribbean, Chinese, Japanese and Mexican migrants share common ingredients such as corn, yam, plantain and rice. Ghanaians in America will often visit Mexican grocery stores to buy Maseca corn for kenkey as a close substitute for traditional Ghanaian cornmeal (Williams-Forson, 2014). Ramtahal (2018)

claims that cultural foods re-created in the host country can be "adulterated versions of the food that was created in the country of origin" (p. 49) due to the need to substitute ingredients for what is available. For example, Pilcher (2001) explores the acculturation process of the novel Mexican chile. While traditional use of the pepper involves blending chiles to produce mole

sauces, Mexican food in Colorado, often labelled as “Tex-Mex”, modifies mole by combining chile powder, water, garlic, oregano and salt because it compliments acquired Tex-Mex dishes with tortillas, meat and cheese (Pilcher, 2001). In these scenarios it is evident that the lack of availability of nationally-specific ingredients allows new versions of traditional family recipes to be produced in host countries.

Contrarily, my fortunate experience finding the specific green and white cassava product for Ella’s Jamaican recipe can be attributed to Polvorosa’s (2012) “middle-man theory” that Chinese supermarkets in Toronto (i.e., T&T) often act as a liaison for various migrants to access culturally specific food to recreate diasporas in Toronto and encourage cultural belonging. Dey et al. (2019) agree with this theory, noting that in complex multicultural environments, ethnic groups may share broad acculturated practices in the host country. For example, “Muslims from different parts of the world go to Arab halal butchers’ shops or Bangladeshis get frozen fish from South Indian groceries” (p. 791) for a national ingredient within a multicultural, dynamic city (Dey et al., 2019). The particular T&T I visited had a Filipino bakery section (see Figure 10), demonstrating the inclusive approach to meet the diverse needs

Figure 10. Filipino bakery in T&T.

of Canadian migrants in the neighbourhood. Designating a specific area for Filipino sweets differs from a homogenized “ethnic aisle” because it respected the specific country where the products derived from. I felt productive that I was able to find the brand of cassava my grandma directed. I went home to begin baking.

Tsung Tsin Festival: A Cassava Pudding Food Memory

When making the cassava pudding with the specific quantity of ingredients instructed by Ella, I realized that one pan was not enough as my big bowl with the baking mixture was on the verge of overflowing. I felt a sense of autonomy making the executive decision to use two pans for two puddings (see Figure 11). After making this decision, I remembered that this is what my grandma used to do. Cassava pudding points my food memory directly to preparing delights for the Tsung Tin festival to sell. After retirement, my grandma was introduced to the Tsung Tsin Association, a Chinese-Jamaican not-for-profit. I remember she was hesitant to go because she exclaimed that only older people were members. Since she did not know how to play their games such as the tile-based Chinese Mahjong, she felt as if she could not be a part of the Tsung Tsin community. However, she would still attend some of the board member meetings simply by hanging around her core friend group. One day, the President of the association suggested that my grandma help with food preparation and event coordination. Once she started to support in this capacity, she fell in love with serving the Tsung Tsin community. In fact, her active involvement allotted her nomination to become a Board of Directors member. Choosing to immerse herself into the community network allowed her to reconnect with long-time friends from Jamaica that she had not seen in decades. Tsung Tsin was not only an organization, but a lifeline to the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora. It was my grandma's passion for cooking for loved ones that swept her into the community. The Tsung Tsin festival was held annually in August. When we went to Tsung Tsin festivals, my grandma would have multiple cassava puddings

Figure 11. Cassava pudding mixture in two pans.

ready on the table. To me, this signifies that the quantity of the recipe is designed for a community as it is way more dessert than one family unit can consume. This coincides with my

Figure 12. Cassava pudding plated.

finding regarding the communal value of unity amongst Hakka and Chinese-Jamaican diasporas.

The day of the event, I remember getting to the festival grounds at 5:00 a.m., meeting up with Ella's Chinese-Jamaican friends, and setting up our booth. My

grandma was an extremely hard worker, which is a result of

the entrepreneurial discourse of the Chinese-Jamaican people despite barriers they overcame in Jamaica such as being indentured into unjust labour, The Alien Restriction Law that prevented Chinese immigration and the riots protesting Chinese-Jamaican entrepreneurship in 1918 and 1938 (Lai & Tan, 2010; Phillips et al., 2012). Her father taught her what hard work meant. Ella used this intergenerational grit to overcome extreme resilience when starting a life in Canada. She immigrated on her own without any connections in Canada and worked for at the Fairmont Hotel to be an eligible sponsor for her two sons and husband. In the August heat she would sweat over the hot oil pot frying fritters (fritters and Jamaican roti were the two hottest items at the Tsung Tsin festival). The popularity of fritters for festival-goers is no surprise as codfish fritters are known to be a crowd-pleasing favourite snack food shared amongst the broader Caribbean community (Janer, 2007). It is an African-inspired delight sold by street vendors (mainly women) and restaurants eaten as a quick snack—affording the colloquial nickname “stamp and go” (Harris, 2013, p. 110). Cod fritters are shared amongst island people and all similarly include salted cod, water and flour but vary in name and regional ingredients. In Trinidad, fritters are called “accra”, in Barbados, “codfish cakes”, in Puerto Rico, “bacalái'tos”, and in Haiti,

“marinades” (Harris, 2013, p. 109-110). My grandma never complained about the hard work. Rather, she was more concerned about making sure everyone was having fun and everything was operationally sound. One year, I remember there was an issue getting the mobile burners started. People wanted their fritters right at 9:00 a.m. and there was only one person able to get their burner started. There was a line that, as a little kid, mirrored the length of a football field. I remember my grandma was fairly stressed but managed the situation. She grabbed extra food tickets and gave them out to people in line so they were able to get more food for the inconvenience.

Reflecting on it now, I have an enormous amount of respect for the care my grandma put into the festival and the food. The service she provided to her community was that of a five-star restaurant. No five-star restaurant could beat the community-feel and home-cooked flavour that came from the Tsung Tsin festival. The festival is a space that holds great significance in the Chinese-Jamaican Toronto community. The site reproduces Hakka, Chinese-Jamaican discursive practice that values tight knit community networks, entrepreneurial spirit, and family narratives (Leung, 2015; Lu & Steele, 2018; Phillips et al., 2012). The ambition of Ella and other Tsung Tsin committee members is driven by the need to carry on Chinese-Jamaican traditions for future generations.

Reflections on Cooking with/out Grandma

In a Canadian context, people with multi-ethnic identity may feel the need to make a concerted effort to learn about two or more of their ethnic backgrounds to negotiate a sense of belonging. Chinese-Jamaican cultural discourse in Toronto can be characterized by historical Hakka Chinese and Jamaican values of maintaining a tight knit community via entrepreneurship, community organizing and informal communication. This cultural discourse is evident when analyzing the endeavors of my ancestors. My great grandfather exercised tough love towards my grandma and her siblings, teaching them that one must work hard to earn a celebratory time. My grandma's work ethic is what propelled her to become a member of the Board of Director for the Tsung Tsin festival—a time where the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora in Toronto could re-connect through delicious homemade food, games, raffles and pageants. These cultural community events in Toronto reproduce and maintain the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora intergenerationally because it provides a headquarters for those of a similar ethnic background to cross paths. The T&T supermarket in Toronto also resembles Chinese-Jamaican diasporic value of hard work and entrepreneurship. My experience in the store acted as a direct contrast to scholarship that discussed the over-homogenization of national food products. Instead, offering a variety of cassava options and having a Filipino-specific bakery illustrates that T&T caters to the nuanced needs of diverse cultural diasporas in Ontario. Polvorosa's (2012) "middle-man theory" echoes this finding within a Toronto context. He notes that historically, Chinese people in Southeast Asia have carried their entrepreneurial drive with them when migrating to Canada by playing the "middleman" for the Filipino diaspora. He explains, "Filipino food, DVDs, and toiletries can be found in Chinese supermarkets" (Polvorosa, 2012, p. 185). Speaking of diverse ethnicities,

cultural food in Canada should not be overly homogenized. Instead, the national food landscape should mindfully incorporate a spectrum of foods. Both people of colour and white-passing people have the individual autonomy to consume foods from a range of ethnic backgrounds not voyeuristically, but as a welcoming invitation to genuinely learn about Toronto's diverse cultural landscape (Mills, 2019).

Food can be a strong signifier of cultural identity for second and third-generation migrant children in Canada to connect with their heritage. The frequency of engagement one chooses to have with family recipes is a personal choice. One's ethnic identity can be better understood through cooking family recipes, but it does not add or subtract from their core phenotypic traits they were born with that make up their ethnic background. For example, if I choose to make rice and peas once a year for Christmas, I should not be considered "less Chinese-Jamaican" in identity politics discourse than someone who cooks rice and peas weekly. As a multi-ethnic person, I can empathize with the challenge participants Paul and George faced to foster a sense of belonging with their Chinese and Irish/British cultures (Song & Hashem, 2010). Thankfully, this study showed me that family recipes are accessible tools to have a physical and spiritual connection with my Chinese-Jamaican heritage. When thinking about the motivation Millennials and Generation Z may have to connect with their heritage through food in comparison to generations before, it is important to consider intergenerational differences. Younger generations have increased engagement with digital food culture and cosmopolitan culture which may prompt them to eat at restaurants to try transnational dishes opposed to cooking familiar flavours at home (Rousseau, 2012). Eating at restaurants benefits global capital by transforming individuals with rich food histories into people that turn to external food offerings to seek meaning and fulfillment. This MRP highlights the need to reclaim ancestral histories and nurture

family food traditions to cultivate the "peopleness" of a culture and the unique differences that separate us from "others" and bind us to our "kin."

Personally, my food memory has enabled me to experience a sense of overall belonging with my Chinese-Jamaican heritage and a deeper understanding of Ella's migration process. The visceral sensations I experienced materialized food memories from the past, into the present. Since the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora is characterized as welcoming of diverse social identities (not exclusive) and open to sharing, I felt welcome to cook and carry on the spiritual, matrilineal lineage (Chukwu & Gingell, 2005) within the Chong family. Although my grandma and I both find a sense of belonging in rice and peas and cassava pudding, our food memories with the dishes differ. While my grandma grew up eating rice and peas as a part of her daily bread, like the grandchildren in the literature reviewed, I characterized rice and peas as a treat food. During COVID-19, my grandma felt a loss of "home" when losing access to her weekly dose of rice and peas. In contrast, I am content cooking the recipes bi-annually to mark a special occasion. While rice and peas and cassava pudding recipes were ingrained into my grandma's food memory, my lack of expertise was emphasized by my constant need to check the recipe to continue the cooking process. Feelings of belonging derive from taking family customs and individualizing them to meet acquired tastes. For example, unlike my grandma who views pork as a staple in rice and peas, I developed a vegetarian version which met my craving for a nostalgic dish. Eating my creations permitted me to step out of a nutritional paradigm of eating. This reveals that the cooking as inquiry research method may be an effective mechanism to counter the "healthy food" discourse which only places value on nutrient-dense food. Family recipes nurture spiritual and subjective well-being which is equally important to taking care of physical health; I recommend those struggling with disordered eating patterns to attempt cooking family recipes to

mindfully focus on the sentimental value behind the food—treating it as a ceremony—rather than the biological benefits.

This MRP was an instrument for spiritual healing for me. It pushed me to be vulnerable, admitting my unease with belonging to the cultural backgrounds that comprise my DNA. I put myself in my grandma's shoes, inherently learning about the hardships that her and her ancestors endured throughout the Chinese-Jamaican migration story and the new challenges she faces navigating the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora while facing aging barriers. Cooking as inquiry highlighted how precious time is with our elders. I have a new appetite to continue learning about how my grandma navigates the world to continue the matrilineal chain of knowledge within the Chong family lineage. The next recipe I will cook is a vegetarian version of Ella's beef, carrot and dumpling stew because it was my mom's favourite.

Potential Areas for Future Research

Exploring the Supermarket as Multicultural Foodscape

A potential opportunity for future research on food identity, culture and diaspora is to conduct an in-depth autoethnographic account of the multicultural grocery store space. Similar to Roncero-Bellido (2018) who conducted a testimonio in an American supermarket to explore discourse on Mexican food items, it would be unique to walk through T&T grocery store, capture discourse used, and conduct a content discourse analysis of several messages to further confirm if T&T grocery store labels homogenize cultural food groups as Roncero-Bellido (2018) found, or if the discourse is more inclusive of various cultural foods, bringing cultural diasporas to Toronto as a “middle-man” like Polvorosa (2012) suggests.

Interest in Cooking Family Recipes for Younger Generations

Rousseau’s (2012) study on Millennial and Generation Z tendencies to share food on social media might compel us to ask whether younger generations desire to cook family recipes considering their tendency to engage with online food culture. Future mixed method studies comparing and contrasting Millennial and/or Generation Z engagement with family recipes versus engagement with online restaurant and food culture to determine the likelihood of youth passing down family recipes would be a unique contribution to this research area.

Limitations

Limiting this study to two of my grandma's recipes, rice and peas and cassava pudding, was feasible considering the MRP requirements and restrictions due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Two recipes were a reasonable number taking into account the length of time needed to cook, reflect on and unpack the dishes within the Master of Professional Communication third semester timeline. Further recipes would require quality analysis which would likely exceed the MRP page length requirements.

Relatedly, engaging in a two-way dialogue with my grandma to receive feedback on the accuracy of the recipes would have been ideal to enhance the intergenerational perspective that this study aims to capture. Due to Markhaven Home for Seniors' COVID-19 health and safety regulations, I was unable to visit my grandma in-person to deliver my creations for a taste test. Although it is not an identical experience to eating rice and peas fresh out of the pot, I froze a batch for my grandma to try when it is safe to do so.

Lastly, as a multi-ethnic person, it is important to note that this reflective MRP is only an account of my experience with my Chinese-Jamaican heritage, not a representation of my whole identity. I chose to explore my food identity through my grandma's Chinese-Jamaican foodway because I was exposed to her national cooking most frequently during childhood. Considering that my vegetarian influence began whilst living with my Jewish grandparents (otherwise known as Bube and Zayde), investigating my family's Ashkenazi Jewish foodway in a future study would be pertinent to understand my food identity more holistically.

Conclusion

This autoethnographic study sought to explore how cooking family recipes transfer a unique cultural identity over generations. Using cooking as inquiry (Brady, 2011) as my primary research method, I re-created vegetarian versions of grandma Ella's rice and peas and cassava pudding recipes. My grandmother's instructions revealed that migrant families may choose to use everyday homeware as cooking tools in the host country to create a negotiated sense of habitus, defying ideologies of "professional" cookware. I personally enjoyed using houseware and similar to Ella, will begin to adopt them into my routine cooking practices, thus passing down family customs. Hakka Chinese and Jamaican values such as entrepreneurship, community unification and informal communication likely translate into the Chinese-Jamaican diaspora in Markham, Ontario. This diasporic culture is maintained and passed down intergenerationally through Tsung Tsin Association community events. Sensual communication modes (i.e., taste, sight, smell, touch and sound/oral communication) were used throughout the experience to elicit food memories growing up with my grandma allowing me to remember my cultural roots, and gain confidence in my Chinese-Jamaican identity today. While I felt a close connection to my grandma's sense of habitus, our habitus differs by our expertise cooking the dishes, memories with the dishes and dietary modifications. I aim to continue cooking Ella's recipes to plant seeds of my Chinese-Jamaican heritage into my lifestyle with the hopes of passing it on to future descendants.

Appendix A: Ella Chong's Rice and Peas Recipe

Ingredients and Cookware

- White rice. Ensure it is parboiled—it comes in a box—wash rice very well (see Figure 13)
- Pimento seed
- Tin kidney bean—peeled—Grace brand because it is popular and well known in Jamaica, but if you cannot afford Grace, whatever brand is cheapest at the grocery store is satisfactory
 - When you open the tin don't throw the
- Thyme little bit 3-4 pieces
- Whole garlic 3-4 pegs
- Green onion 5-6 strings
- 1 tin coconut milk
- Piece of butter—quarter of brick
- Salt to taste at the beginning when it boils up
- Black pepper
- Medium pot

Figure 13. Washing rice.

Instructions

1. In a medium pot, put little past halfway water
2. Add salt small tablespoon, garlic, 4-5 pimento seeds, 3-4 strings of thyme and green onion
3. Boil water, turn down to medium heat
4. Add in the butter and coconut milk stir with a big spoon
5. Add in peas with the red water
6. Slow cook for a half hour
7. After the first 15 minutes, take the big spoon to stir so the peas don't stick to pot
8. Taste the liquid to see the taste and add more salt if needed
9. Take out garlic cloves, pimento seeds, thyme and green onion (see Figure 14)
10. Let the water boil again
11. Throw in the rice slowly—keep stirring so it doesn't stick
12. When the rice comes to boil put on medium heat
13. When the rice is cooking in the last 20 to 30 minutes, open the pot to stir, take out rice to see how it is. You can add a little more butter at the top
14. Turn down to medium to let the rice get softer
15. Cover up the pot and turn it down to 3 (low heat) for 20 to 30 minutes
16. When you open the pot to check for “complete rice” try rice again. If it has any “tough” it is not ready
17. If it is drying too fast sprinkle a little water and simmer until it is done to taste

Figure 14. Ingredients extracted from the pot.

Appendix B: Ella Chong's Cassava Pudding Recipe

Ingredients and Cookware

- 3 pack of cassava (frozen grated cassava)
 - NoFrills usually has it. If not, T&T has it in the frozen section. Jamaicans do not want to go to expensive grocery stores to purchase it because they know the product is not worth the cost
 - The brand that tastes the best has a white pack frozen with green writing on it
 - 1 ½ cup sugar
 - 4 eggs beaten slightly—put it in a bowl and beat it a little, not too hard
 - 2 tins coconut milk—Grace brand
 - 1 tin evaporated milk
 - Half tin condensed milk
 - Approximately 2 tbsp butter – melt in the microwave
 - 1 tsp vanilla
 - 1 tsp cinnamon
 - 1 tsp nutmeg
 - 1 tsp salt
1. Get all ingredients out when you're cooking anything so you have it on hand, so you don't have to run up and down while cooking
 2. If you're baking the cassava in the morning, defrost it on a plate the night before. For the Tsung Tsin Festival, grandma Ella always made the puddings the night before
 3. Get a big bowl ready to mix ingredients and a big tray, approximately 4 inches
 4. Put coconut milk, evaporated milk and condensed milk in the mixing bowl
 5. Add cassava (see Figure 16), beaten egg and vanilla. Mix all the wet ingredients together well using a whisk (see Figure 17). Make sure you stir enough so everything incorporates well. If the grated cassava looks lumpy, take a fork and press it
 6. Add in all dry ingredients and mix well
 7. Preheat the oven to 325 degrees if your oven is high functioning

Figure 15. Cassava pudding ingredients.

Figure 16. Pudding cassava into a bowl.

Figure 17. Mixing wet and dry ingredients.

8. Place mixture in baking tins. You don't have to grease your tin because there is butter in the recipe
9. After an hour, test it with a knife and if it comes out clean it's ready. Sometimes it bakes with a little custard on top, or sometimes it bakes firm. But if it is a custard, you have to serve it in a dish because you can't hold it. You know it is ready when the top has a golden-brown colour from the cinnamon, nutmeg, etc.; the top sometimes "look pretty"
The texture should be "not too tough, but firm"

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