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## Chinese Life in Britain

Bakalářská práce

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Bachelor paper

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Čínský Život v Británii

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Podpis

## **Abstract**

This bachelor paper is exploring the immigrants experience in a host country. The paper describes and analyzes the process of adaptation of the Chinese ethnic minority in Britain and evaluates the influence of culture, family, and education in the process of integration and assimilation. The essential terminology for this topic is explained at the beginning of the work. The following chapters introduce the period of Chinese arrivals and furthermore deal with the adaptation of the Chinese in the new society and the new life. This work is based on experience of Chinese families, reports of Chinese in Britain and extracts from Timothy Mo's novel Sour Sweet.

## **Abstrakt**

Tato bakalářská práce rozebírá životní zkušenosti imigrantů v nové zemi. Popisuje a analyzuje proces adaptace Čínské etnické menšiny ve Velké Británii. Především se zaměřuje na vliv kultury, rodiny a vzdělání v procesu integrace a asimilace. V první části této práce je vysvětlena potřebná terminologie. Ostatní kapitoly se věnují příchodu Číňanů a dále adaptaci Číňanů do společnosti a nového života. Pro analýzu byly použity zkušenosti Čínských rodin, monitorovací zprávy o čínském etniku v Británii a úryvky z díla Timothy Mo(a) Sour Sweet.

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## **1. Introduction**

Generally speaking, everyone in the world has the same needs, to eat, to drink, to sleep. As a result, the diversity among countries diminishes as majority of people long for the same values beyond the basic needs, values of a fulfilled life, establishment of a good family background, and rising kids. Everybody tries to find the harmony and balance for themselves whether they live in Prague, Hong Kong or London.

Every country carries its culture heritage and no group is that completely different from the other. British or Chinese, they all share the same conviction and belief in basic values, upholding the family and serving the community. The apparent difference is in social behaviour shaped by different culture and heritage.

Britain has become an increasingly multicultural country. People from all over the world have come and settled in Britain and have made it their new home. People from different places have brought with them various religions, cultures, and life styles. They have become very influenced by the country and vice versa.

Like any other foreigners, the Chinese in Britain are confronted by the question of how much they will adapt to the new host country, its culture and customs, while perceiving their own culture heritage and traditions.

The purpose of this paper is to explore the immigration issues that the Chinese in Britain face as they share social space with other cultural heritages and influences under new circumstances. It brings the picture of how Chinese people adapt in the British life style, interact with the British community, what are the main difficulties they have to overcome, and what on the other side help them to adapt.

This work follows the journey of many Chinese who leave China for Britain. It shows how people deal with new, often unexpected and unimaginable but how they after all manage to survive and live fulfilled, despite new, life. This work incorporates extract from a novel *Sour Sweet* by Chinese writer Timothy Mo about Chinese immigrants in London. Timothy Mo born in Hong Kong became one of the most important authors writing about the diversity of Chinese and English culture. *Sour Sweet* is reproduction of his experience. The characters of *Sour Sweet*, Mr Chen and his wife Lily immigrate to Britain. After settling down, Lily invites her sister, the only remaining relatives of her, to come and live with them in England. For many Chinese

who decide to live in a new country as Britain, it means leaving their relatives behind and settling down either alone or with a partner. Chen works as a waiter in Soho while his wife with their son stays at home, accompanied by her sister. Lily follows her strong plans and together with her husband establishes a take-away shop.

Another family which experience is compared is Cheung family. Mr Cheung leaves Hong Kong in the age of twenty-one to come to the Great Britain where his relatives help him to get work permit and find a first job. After ten years of staying in London he goes to Hong Kong for holiday to meet his future wife. Being for so long away from his home country, it is hard for him to find work. He decides to return back to England where he can find work more easily and have a better standard of living. Three months later his wife joins him and together they open their own take-away shop. Mr and Mrs Chung and their two children learn the new life, adapting them into the new life while trying to keep their Chinese culture heritage.

Although Hong Kong rather than China is the prominent point for Chinese in Britain, this paper relates to China most of the time. Hong Kong is a special administrative region of Republic of China, and between years 1842 to 1997 was a colony of the United Kingdom.



## **2. Terminology**

There are many terms connected with the topic of moving and the ways people adapt themselves. The crucial ones for understanding the topic such as migration, ethnicity, assimilation, integration, nationalism and racism are explained in this chapter.

### **2.1 Migration**

Migration means a change of residence and has never for many thousand of years been easy, nor should it be seen as a single experience. Some emigrate to avoid political or religious prosecutions, some escape from poverty, some long for a better way of life. For some people migration may seem as a form of enrichment and renewal, for some it is a way of survival.

There are two forms of migration, internal and international. The first one is within one country when people usually move for better job opportunities or to be closer to their families, from rural to urban areas and vice versa. International migration involves moving form different countries and continents. This affects the size of national population and involves mixtures of ethnicities. The international migration is further divided into immigration and emigration. Bolaffi describes immigration as a movement towards a receiving country, society or state, while emigration denotes movements away from a sending country, society and state. (179)

Migration is a big movement which brings into the country not only just excitement of new foods and music, but ideas, art, different social functions and formations and a sense of history. According to Winder, migration is the oldest action against poverty. It selects those who most want help and it helps break the balance of poverty in the country they come from. He continues:

Most migrations are in-between affairs, involving equal portions of fulfilment and regret. Encounters between strangers are rarely straightforward. The mingling of peoples has always been accompanied by fear, suspicion and animosity. (Winder, xiii)

Many migrants have to deal with the reality of this, rather negative, definition of the migration process. Many of them find a new home and a happy life if the host country, some continue their journey to other places, some return to the home of their origin.

## **2.2 Ethnicity**

According to Winder, an ethnic group can be described as one held together by common traditions based on race, religion, language, culture, and history. Or as a combination of all these factors. (Winder, 460) These traditions act as a force to maintain the unity within the group, provided by an identity which preserves against outsiders.

Concerning the ethnicity within Britain, Alibahai-Brown sheds the terms 'ethnic minority' and 'racial minority' as she feels these words do not describe the state of the country, the Great Britain. She prefers the use of 'British Asian', 'British black' and in case of Chinese people it is 'Chinese British', as she feels that the British identity is now an umbrella term which gathers under it a large number bi-racial and combined ethnicity groups including the English, Scottish, Welsh, Irish, Polish, Turkish, Jewish, Chinese, and a host of other people. She hopes one day soon it will become commonplace to use 'English British' or 'Scots British' too which would finally make all equal at least in name. (Alibahai-Brown, 73)

## **2.3 Assimilation**

Assimilation demonstrates relationship between populations and cultures. According to Bolaffi, it is a process of absorption of people from different countries and cultures, brought up together as a consequence of migration. He also interprets assimilation as a process of progressive adaptation whose final outcome is the disappearance of cultural values, natural way for migrants to adjust gradually to their new environment by absorbing the values of dominant culture.

Bolaffi sets up examples of failure and uneven assimilation. It is either caused by the unwillingness of certain group to relinquish their cultural specificity, or by

achieved assimilation in one sphere for example language but resisted in another for example religion. (Bolaffi, 19)

Scott and Marshall describe assimilation as a process by which an outsider, immigrant or a subordinate group become indistinguishably integrated into the dominant host society. It is process when the subordinate group comes to accept and internalise the values and culture of the dominant group. In this case British are seen as the dominant group while the Chinese represent the subordinate one. (Scott and Marshall, 24)

## **2.4 Integration**

Integration is usually used to contradict assimilation. While assimilation indicates process by which one group is absorb by another, integration signify the act when a group lives within the prevent society while retaining their values and traditions. Bolaffi sees the contradiction in a sense that, when a minority group is forced to abandon their behaviour in order to adapt that of the majority, the integration means process of one group becoming a part of the other.

Integration is a condition in which different ethnic groups are able to maintain group boundaries and the uniqueness while contributing to the society. To be fully integrated, the society must remove its ethnic hierarchies. As described by Bolaffi, it is an essential dynamic factor in the creation of a society based on co-operation between individual and groups which indicates the process by which division and heterogeneous factors within a society are overcome in order to create a new, whole one. (Bolaffi, 118)

## **2.5 Nationalism and Racism**

Nationalism according Bolaffi refers to an ideology which emphasizes the formation and assertion of a nation. Its forms can easily lead to a narrow-minded practice which sees countries close their doors to all foreigners or migrants. (Bolaffi, 195)

Nationalism is closely related to racism. Racism reacts to the question of race and ethnicity when one group is being excluded by another, superior group. Racism is based on prejudice, violence, stereotyping, or discrimination. According to Bolaffi it has been directed towards white and non-white groups. (Bolaffi, 275)

From the explanation, ideas of what it is to be British can be used against people who are defined as foreign and can be identified as belonging to a particular racial or ethnic group. In fact, as Abercrombie describes, the British Isles contain representatives of a large number of different cultures. Therefore, there is no such thing as a single British way of life.

Terms like ethnicity and racism are connected with others such as inequality. Concerning the British society, the differences are in social class. Abercrombie views the British society as unequal, with those at the bottom of the hierarchy having many overlapping disadvantages. She sees it is the white racism that keeps ethnic minorities at the bottom of the hierarchy and separated from white society as a whole. (Abercrombie, 53)

### **3. Arrivals of the Chinese to Britain**

Britain has a long history of immigration. Over the past hundred of years it has accommodated many ethnic minorities and various people. The British population increases every year with a new inpour of immigrants. The Central Office of Information (COI) indicates in report called “Aspects of Britain – Population” that in 1950 the number of population was 50 million, forty years later the population increased to 58 million. The current population is 60.7 million and the estimated number for 2031 according to COI 62 million.

Every year is recorded an increasing number of Chinese immigrants into Britain. Pan has followed the situation since 1989, when there has been an increase in applications for political asylum and a rise in Chinese students extending their stay. In 2001 the census identified a total Chinese population in the UK of 247,403, compared to 157,000 in 1991. This represents 0.4 per cent of the national population and 5.3 per cent of the national ethnic minority population. Of the total Chinese population, 80,203 (about 36 per cent) live in London. Almost half of London's Chinese population lives in inner London, in comparison with less than 40% on London's total population. 98 per cent of today's foreign-born population lives in England, and nearly half lives in London. (Pan, 164)

Litvinoff calculated that up to eighty per cent of the community originates from villages in the New Territories, the same area where the Chens come from. The New Territories are the more rural area of Hong Kong where the speed of life is much less frantic than in the city. Hong Kong being a British colony, Chinese coming from there have no problem gaining an entry permit into Britain. (Litvinoff, 191)

No matter, where the Chinese come from, if they originate in Hong Kong-New Territories, China, or Taiwan, they all share the same heritage from their motherland, the great land of China, but their immigrating experience is not uniform. Many people coming hurriedly, as refugees, others seeking their fortunes, some come to find better life standard or easier way finding a job. It is a notable adventure for each individual and as well as for the nation they have settled in and reshaped.

For many people, Chinese history in Britain begins with the generations of take-aways. By Litvinoff, the history of Chinese in Britain dates from 1800's and onward. The

first Chinese were seamen employed on British merchant ships and they settled in major port areas such as Liverpool, Cardiff, Bristol and London. (Litvinoff, 191)

Wah continues to describe the situation before the First World War. Besides being seamen, the Chinese followed two main occupations; running traditional chop suey houses and laundry work. The Chinese food business was not much popular at that time as British cuisine was still preferred, but the laundry work was much appreciated due to the fact that no laundry machines were invented that time.

Due to the war, the demand for seamen increased the Chinese population in Britain, yet most of them were afterward repatriated. The war also brought a development of industrial machines, such as laundry machines which had a negative impact on the Chinese occupied in laundry service as the traditional laundry work was no more profitable. On the other side the collapse of traditional agriculture and Britain's economic boom, raised the demand for restaurants and spread the Chinese all over the country. The British diet was not so traditional any more and the foreign food began to be appreciated. (Wah, 15)

Besides the Chinese concentrated in the catering sphere, there are new Chinese arrivals in Britain and British born Chinese who specialize into other occupation. The new incomers who come with high education, as Lynch observed, are interested in professional occupations such as those of lawyers, accountants or computer operators. Young Chinese born in Britain are set to bring a new dimension to the Chinese future in Britain; they are either acquiring further qualifications in a variety of studies or becoming entrepreneurs in their own right. (Lynch, 150) Majority of the Chinese incomers use their network of contacts already established among family and friends to find initial work and accommodation.

Amongst the other employees there were two distinct groups: clansmen and outsiders. Chen was an outsider. Originally the boss had only employed men from his own village, preferably relatives. He had secured work permits for them, arranged flights, found housing. (Mo, 32)

The extract by Mo shows the provided framework to the arrivals when a big number of Chinese has already been in the catering service. The kinship channel therefore has become the easy way for the Chinese to come and settle in Britain.

The situation in China country itself has had a big impact on the migration of their people. Although there have been attempts of economic modernization and large movements of people to towns and cities, the poverty in rural areas of China still remains which also leads to a large scale of unemployment and economic difficulties for many people. Mackenzie teaches that in recent years the Government has been encouraging the Chinese to migrate in order to ease urban pressures in eastern China and to promote Chinese cultural values. (Mackenzie, 67)

One may also assume that a reason for the Chinese overseas is the wish for a bigger family. Since 1979, when the one-child policy was adopted, families have been encouraged to have no more than one child as it was seen as anti-social, anti-socialist and anti-Chinese. Lynch claims this approach has not really worked as it has been ignored in many rural regions where families of five children remain common. (Lynch, 13, 14)

Peach mentions more reasons for the Chinese immigration to Britain as it is known from their migration history. Ones leave for Britain to improve their economic situations. Those who are more economically prosperous leave for better education opportunities which their home country could not provide. (Peach, 163,164)

After settling down and experiencing Britain, the Chinese face another decision concerning their future. Wah notices that with the earning, usually profits of running take-aways, some Chinese have made enough savings to get back to Hong Kong to get married. Others, for instance, build houses in the New Territories and retire there. In Hong Kong, there are now some villages called “emigrant” communities; villages that earn their money from men who are overseas working and sending money back. If only children have immigrated to Britain, they would work hard and try to establish a conventional living so they can soon send for their parents to come and join them. (Wah, 29)

To sum up this chapter, it should be said that most Chinese come to Britain to receive a good education, seek a better jobs and a good quality life. Many of them also come to join their relatives who send for them. The journey of Chinese in Britain dates from the beginning of the nineteenth century, when the Chinese worked as British seamen. The main filed of occupation yet for Chinese is catering service.

## **4. The Process of Adaptation of Chinese Immigrants in Britain**

Generally, wider cultural differences, including those involving religion, education, and family life, have an effect on the speed with which ethnic minorities become adapted to British society.

The strength of Chineseness prognosticates that the Chinese tend rather than assimilate to undergo the process of integration, as they remain their culture and customs. This belief advocates the fact that the Chinese people from Hong Kong, as Lim claims, have been hardly anglicised while the island belonged to British colony for a century and a half, compared to Indian or Caribbean people who are, besides their culture background, partly a creation of British traditions and institutions. Not only do the Chinese refuse the non-Chinese influence on themselves, they are also not interested in influencing other people. Lim sees the Chinese having a sense of identity which is absolutely confident, but not at all aggressive. (Lim, 1)

Abercrombie in her project talks about integration of black with white people which can be transferred on the Chinese minority with the British. She sees the integration possible when the ethnic minorities retreat their background. Although the culture may separate the ethnic minorities from the white community, the children of immigrants gradually become assimilated into white society, into the wider working class and some, by upward mobility, into the middle classes. (Abercrombie, 216) To the extent that black people are not assimilated into white society, the obstacle will be the way that they preserve a separate cultural identity. For example, if they refuse to allow their children to attend British schools, to not learn English, or insist on forming ethnically based work groups, their assimilation will be impeded.

The following chapters analyse the process of adaptation of the Chinese in Britain and evaluate the influence of culture, family and education in the process of integration and assimilation.



## 4.1 Attitudes to Adaptation

The only way for a family or individuals to survive and live a fulfil life in a host country is to adapt and accept changes. Without accepting changes, survival in Britain would be impossible. Hence the immigrants' adaptation requires a positive, progressive and practical attitude towards the host country.

In this chapter are compared two different attitudes toward assimilation based on the main characters of *Sour Sweet*, Lily and her husband Chen, and Mui, who cope with the new environment in their own way. They all generalise the English in their way based on their prejudice, knowledge of English and understanding.

The opening of the *Sour Sweet* brings revelation to Chens' understanding of their place in society:

The Chens had been living in the UK for four years, which was long enough to have lost their place in the society from which they had emigrated but not long enough to feel comfortable in the new. They were no longer missed...But in the UK, the land of promise, Chen was still an interloper. He regarded himself as such. (Mo, 5)

This statement already indicates the feeling of not-belonging into the society, but it will be later explained that their feeling comes from within and a positive approach can change the position.

Lily's approach is rather negative as she is very judgmental to Britain as a country as well as to the people. The only group who deserves her kind of liking are other ethnic groups for she can identify herself with. She noticeably prefers members of the Indian ethnicity to English people. The following examples show how Lily looks at the Indian minority like if she shares with them a sort of understanding of being a foreigner living in this "devil country". (Mo, 252)

"Son, make sure your bus conductor is a black person. Indian person even better." (Mo, 203)

He was friendly with Indian boys now, he told Lily. They ate the same special lunch and went round in a group. 'Nice for you, Son' she said, pleased it wasn't those monkey-looking black boys. They looked so primitive. (Mo, 255)

...unspoken complicity between himself and others like him... A huge West Indian bus conductor regularly undercharged him on his morning journey to work. He knew because the English one charged him threepence more. Chen was sure the black man's mistake was deliberate. (Mo, 5)

The third extract shows sort of a reciprocal favour of one ethnic minority to another.

The conditions of full assimilation according to Bolaffi are to develop a feeling of belonging and citizenship of the host country exclusively; absence of prejudice and finally absence of discrimination. (Bolaffi, 20) Lily instead of disengaging the prejudice always judges the English and has a superior look at them.

On the other side Mui has always been more opened to the British life and adapted herself easier into the new life. As she does not really have any discouragement, her process of adaptation is much faster than it was sometimes necessary and even overreached into unexpected consequences, for instance when she becomes pregnant.

Mui is more open to the English custom and understands the English better. She also learns to see the differences among the English faces which to Lily and Chen: "A lot of Westerns look the same." (Mo, 13) and "Lily finds it difficult to distinguish between those bland, roseate occidental faces." Mui therefore suggests Lily to look a bit harder at the English people at the television (Mo, 143) as it has been the easy way Mui has learnt about the British people. Lily could not manage to distinguish the Western people, she also judged them and called them degrading names such as "Mr Pink Face Young Devil" (Mo, 141)

The influence of television not only helps Mui to learn about the people, it also helps her to form an opinion on the society and the state forces: "The English police-force is the finest in the world." (Mo, 159) and not like Lily, Mui seemed to understand more the educational system in Britain, the strict laws and wants to obey the authority: "Laws are strict...let me arrange it...in due course, Mui announced she had official permission." (Mo, 215, 216)

Mui herself undergoes many phases through her adaptation to the host country. The first stage after her arrival is very quite and isolated. During the first week she just sat in kitchen unable to leave the flat as she had to deal with the cultural shock in her own way. Her second phase was to learn about the new life in an indirect experience by

watching television, starting with Coronation Street and Crossroads, she becomes addictive. (Mo, 13, 14) Later she uses this learnt experience in a real life, as it helps her to look at other people and distinguish their faces, it also provides her with the understanding of the host society, the law system as already demonstrated. Mui also more easily, compared to Lily and Chen, acquires the knowledge of English which eases for her the communication with other people outside their immediate community. “Mui’s English was now incomparably better than Lily’s.” (Mo, 100)

In her final stage, Mui finally finds the balance and satisfaction of British life which is no more for her an alien country but her home: “I am taking out citizenship. Naturalization. This is my home now...My aitchgevees (truck drivers) are signing for me. All of them want to sign.” (Mo, 284)

According to what has been said, the positive approach as Mui endures and the openness to the host country and its population helps to adapt into the country. In the contrary, the negativism, judgments, and prejudice, prevent from the adaptation.

## **4.2 Racism**

As foreigners often face interracial discrimination and racism, it is closely connected to migration and adapting to a host country. According to Bolaffi racism can be directed against both white and non-white groups. Exclusively in Britain it is applied on the non-white groups. (Bolaffi, 275)

In the case of the Chinese community in Britain, Lim confirms that it is rare for them to complain of racial discrimination. (Lim, 306) For those, Chinese have never really been caught in a flood of racism.

Not only has the place of origin become the subject of discrimination but also religion. Mackenzie finds out that more than half of the Chinese population claim to have no religious belief. (Mackenzie, 413) For this reason Chinese very rarely or never come into any religious conflicts. Should Chinese women come across racial discrimination, it would be likely behind the take-away counters as they are exposed to drunken customers late at night. May shares her experience with her racial abuse:

My mum insisted I stay on the counted right until we closed which is after the pubs close up to midnight...and I used to get racial abuse, sexual harassment, I used to get everything...saying we were this and that and the other...I hated it, they just used to make me feel so small. (Pan, 306)

Pan continues her research which proves how commonplace mild forms of harassment are in such interactions with drunken customers, when even fights can break out and windows get broken. (Pan, 306)

Similar experience shares the Cheung family. Compared to Chen's family which has never had to deal with racism or any kind of discrimination, the Cheung has experienced the discrimination. They have come many times across troubles in their shop, suffered broken windows and vandalism. Helplessly, the police appear powerless, leaving Mr and Mrs Cheung isolated. On the other hand, their children who are the only Chinese in their respective school never feel isolated or excluded. "In fact their friends take their being Chinese and able to speak two languages for granted." (Wah, 28)

Unfortunately not all pupils find this understanding from their classmates and often undergo some racist comments. As a sample, children from different ethnic minority groups revealed the offensive names they are being called for their origin. Although all the children have one thing in common, they all are British; they have encountered racism in Britain. These children came across names such as *Towel Head*, *Nigger*, *Paki*, *Rag Head* and the listing does not end here. Considering the Chinese, a fifteen year old Zhao Peng shares his experience with being bullied for his origin.

I was a bit shocked when I was first called names in this country. Someone in the playground called me *Chow Mein* and I was also called *Chinky*. It was horrible. I felt really small and unwanted. (Rollings, 1, 2)

As the examples of racial discrimination showed, it is no surprise that Chinese children want to leave the confines of take-away. Relatively prosperous future of leaving the catering business shows Pan in the outcome of 1991 research, of 7.3 per cent of Chinese men employed in science and engineering, and 11.3 per cent of Chinese women in health professional category. (Pan, 307)

## 5. Culture

As it has been already mentioned, culture heritage plays an important role in the adaptation in a host country. The Chinese possess one of the oldest cultures in the world; they have a strong belief in their culture and obey their customs and traditions. The Chinese carry their culture heritage with them everywhere, celebrate their ceremonies and follow their traditions even behind the borders of their home land. The Chinese culture travels and remains with them in Britain as demonstrated in the following.

Hong Kong Government officer in London Peter Ma introduces the Chinese as a hard working ethnic minority community that has established itself as a well-respected and law-abiding. But whilst they enjoy harmonious relationship with the local community, they are often seen as mysterious and belonging to a different culture. (Wah, 8)

The strong belonging to culture is crucial for Chinese and as Lim adds, Chinese culture is practical, and although it has adapted some European ideas, it has never been westernised. (Lim, 2) On the other side Mackenzie says that Chinese culture has been relatively little affected by Western influences, partly because of xenophobic disdain of inferior races and because their national identity is kept strongly in Chinese people all over the world. (Mackenzie, 56)

In spite of the strong belief in Chinese culture and abiding the traditions, there can be found cases when Chinese families pick up the influence and get westernized. Ceremonies have a vital importance to Chinese and also families in Britain try to celebrate them in the most traditional way but they have been gradually changed by the Western influence.

One of the examples that Wah introduces is the differences between celebrating birthdays in Chinese families in their home land and in the host country. The Chinese tradition of celebrating birthdays does not come every year but after reaching a life cycle of sixty years. In practise it means that the first birthday celebrations is for one month old and next is when they reach sixty years. The age of sixty is considered to have finished the life cycle. Everything is a symbol of longevity. The Western influence

brought some changes. The Chinese families in Britain are now adopting the British ways of celebrating birthdays every year.

Another influence can be seen in wedding ceremonies. The traditional colour for wedding is red. But nowadays many Chinese brides are seen in white wedding dress, the western colour for brides. (Wah, 115)

For many ethnic minorities which celebrate their holidays in a different time than the traditional western holiday, this may come into controversy. What do not fit into the British school year are Chinese holidays. Chinese New Year is the biggest and liveliest of all the Chinese festivals. The date for celebrating the festival is not fixed; it comes sometimes between January and February. It is also a holiday when most Chinese living in Britain go back China to reunion with their families. In this case, families either chose the option of celebrating holidays in western style or they abandon the Chinese tradition. Mui sees an appropriate option to adapt their Chinese celebration to the western calendar: “Why don’t we have a holiday at Christmas when English people do?” (Mo, 181) as she considers this compromise suitable for the situation.

Wah claims, the Chinese culture is very significant for Chinese. Their celebrations, ceremonies and rituals have helped the Chinese people understand and make sense of their beliefs and traditions from very early times, they have a strong regards for their heritage and culture. Wah can, also from her own experience, assert that in Britain too, the Chinese families try to preserve their traditional culture.

Although they learn to adapt themselves to the modern British culture, most Chinese in Britain also feel it is worthwhile to hold on to their own traditions and attitudes because they feel that they can cope better in a foreign country and thereby be able to preserve their identity. (Wah, 7)

Harris considers the culture as one of the basis that helps Chinese people adapt themselves. “There is a common feeling among minority ethnic groups that their traditional values are undervalued by the majority culture.” (Harris, 103) Despite the fact, that discrimination and oppression are common experience for ethnic groups, Chinese community overseas has succeeded in both maintaining the traditions and achieving the economic success.

Although many parents assume that they have shared culture and understanding between themselves and the children it is not the case as the environment heavily

influences the children. Without enough exposure to Chinese culture and traditions it is only inevitable that the children grow up to be more British than Chinese without their origin heritage. In others words, as Alibahai-Brown observed, parents are tied culturally to the old countries but the younger generations this is now only a mythical connection, or one which makes little sense. (Alibahai-Brown, 58)

Wah comments on the cultural heritage between parents and their children. Although the Chinese first arrivals and parents hold up to their culture, the younger generation do no have so strong sense to it. As Wah in her book uses an experience of the Cheung family, the children feel the influence of Chinese culture less and less as their parents spend long hours working. Celebrating the Chinese festivals such as New Year is all they celebrate. As a consequence both children feel they are Chinese on the outside but British on the inside. (Wah, 92)

This chapter has showed that although parents continue in the Chinese strong cultural traditions and customs, their children aware of their origin no more perceive the Chinese culture and rather accept the cultural changes in the new life. British influence and increased children independence only widens the gulf between parents' Chinese lives and their children own principally British lives. As a consequence, the older generations integrate into the country holding their culture while the young generations assimilate.

## 6. Family

Before comparing the British and Chinese families, it is essential to know the importance that family plays for Chinese. Chinese culture is built around the idea of a family. It is central to the lifestyle of the Chinese people. As Wilkinson observed, family is the most important thing in Chinese life and nothing is more central than the family unit. Although less today, the concept of family extends across national boundaries. Compared to individuality, self-reliance and confidence which carry the strong qualities in the Western societies, it is group and group consciousness that are the strong features of Chinese identity. Chinese like the safety of numbers and if someone has no group to back them up, things may be difficult. (Wilkinson, 222)

The importance of family also confirms the fact that Chinese has the second lowest ratio of 7.0 per cent of single parents compared to Black ethnicity with 28.1 per cent, results from the Ethnicity in the 1991 Census. (Coleman, 224)

The foundations of family unit were set a long time ago in Chinese history and it formed the basis of Chinese society. In Chinese families exist a hierarchy which brings with it advise and protections from older generation to the young one and respect with obedience from the young generation to the older, supported with discipline, stability and harmony. Wah describes the hierarchy within the family as an order of importance and precedence which arose from the time when families of whatever size or generation lived in the same house or village. (Wah, 7)

Although it may not play such an important role as it does for the Chinese, Abercrombie sees family as a central institution of modern British society, at least in the sense that almost everybody has had experience of living in a family at some time in their lives. She continues that even that most people also assume that their family experiences are normal and that all families resemble their own, in fact, there is an enormous diversity of family forms in modern Britain. (Abercrombie, 215)

In family aspect, terms such as nuclear family have been introduced. The nuclear family concerns the size of the family consisting only of parents and children. Another term is a conjugal family which emphasizes the relationship between husband and wife. Abercrombie uses these terms in views that the modern and industrialized family is relatively isolated from society, the married couple set up a new household



independently on their relatives and their responsibilities towards one another, not towards the wider family. With the requirement for the greater geographical mobility, people lose contacts with their extended kinship families and the families diminish into a nuclear family. On the other side, so called pre-industrialized family tends to be more extended and involves relatives more widely. (Abercrombie, 216) This would represent families outside Britain, often in developing countries where the size of family is extended to grandparents and other relatives. Chinese live in the wider families in their home country but the conditions in new country are suitable only for a nuclear family which is the western family size.

The social attitudes and family images between the nuclear family and wider kinship family bring various perceptions. The main differences are in keeping duties towards the elderly. For Chinese people it is the main importance to keep a family going with a remaining respect to the older generations. Although many Chinese families abroad live in a nuclear family consisted mainly from husband, wife and children, they hold a strong relationship with their parents and grandparents.

Taylor compares the structure of a Chinese family in China and Britain. The traditional Chinese family is a joint family of three generations forming one household. The shape of the family is change in Britain, especially if the break from China is seen as final; it is more likely for a family to become nuclear. It has also been proved that the family can hardly survive as a unit as older children move away from families to start their own business or household. Indeed, there are three types of Chinese families in Britain. One represents the traditional Chinese family of which there remain only a few samples and usually belong to early settlers. The second type is modern Chinese family which still adapts some traditional features of obligations to parents from their children. These families nevertheless live in nuclear units; the relatives are peripheral and friends more important. The final family is Anglicized where the individuality of family members is emphasized and no family hierarchy remains. This last type of family includes majority of British born Chinese. (Taylor, 74)

Another conception of family is a symmetrical family, introduced by Young and Willmott<sup>1</sup>, a type of a modern British family. Symmetrical family, in their opinion, does not require a domestic division of labour and the roles of men and women are less

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<sup>1</sup> Young, M. and Willmott P. The Symmetrical Family. Routledge and Kegan Paul. London. 1973

differentiated. A whole series of factors have combined to produce the change from families with a high division of labour to those in which domestic tasks are more equally shared. This may include shared household by man and women, more women in paid employment and changing attitudes about the role of man and woman. Although the older and poorer families still continue in the domestic division, the detailed empirical study proved that the great majority of married people formed the newer symmetrical family. (Abercrombie, 75)

According to the authors Young and Willmott, the symmetrical family has three main features. First of them claims that the married couple and their children are very much centred on the home, especially while the children are young, further analysed in the following chapter about isolation. This statement would also describe Chan's family. It must be taken in account that the family is still coping with adjusting themselves in the new life and find it hard to associate with the outside world. Lily's thoughts also reflect on the family: "Truly, the individual found real fulfilment and happiness only in their family." (Mo, 159) She believes in the harmony of family as it is for many Chinese. For them, the harmony and balanced life is at home.

Second feature says the extended family counts for relatively less and the immediate nuclear family for relatively more. This as described for modern British family contradicts the Chinese families in Britain. It has been already explained what importance plays the family for the Chinese and their respect for the elderly. Although the older parent generation is not living with the family in the UK, the regards and concerns still remain.

Finally the third and most vital characteristic according to Young and Willmott, the roles of men and women have become less segregated and more balanced. Many Chinese families would not belong to the category of a symmetrical family according to this feature. This is also encouraged by the Confucian, Chinese philosophy, observed by Lynch, which teaches that social harmony depends on maintaining the *san gang*, three principles that hold the society. The three relationships are: the loyalty of ministers and officials, the respect of children for their parents, and the obedience of wives to their husbands. (Lynch, 149)

Especially the third relationship shows the kind of hierarchy for women being in the lower end and that women play a subordinate role in many cases. Lynch describes

the situation in old China where, besides playing the role of a good wife, women's lives were restricted. Inequality would be presumed from arranged marriages, mostly from economic reasons, were customary and love and compatibility did not come into it. Chinese communism operated as a male-dominant system where women's rights were limited. (Lynch, 150) In the western world this would be seen unfair to female and women if their occupations were restricted only for work in factories. The situation for the Chinese has improved lately when few of the important posts have been filled by women.

The Chinese bring with them the traditional division of labour and domestic work from China just as the Chen's family. The following extract demonstrates the obeying of the husband and wife relationship:

Lily Chen always prepared an 'evening' snack for her husband to consume on his return at 1.15 a.m. This was not strictly necessary since Chen enjoyed ...employees' dinner...Lily still went ahead and prepared broth, golden-yellow with floating oily rings, and put it before her husband when he returned. She felt she would have been failing in her wifely duties otherwise. (Mo, 6)

A part of family image also depends on the assumption about the relationships of men and women inside the home. Abercrombie describes the old image like the man is a breadwinner and the woman is responsible for domestic tasks including child-care, cleaning and cooking. Women only control those areas that are strictly 'domestic' as there is a division of labour within the home. (Abercrombie, 79)

Despite these roles Lily with her sister played in the first years of their stay in London, they soon became more independent and decisive in the concerns of their career. As well as in the British families, the differentiation between men and women slowly vanishes. There are many factors that contribute on those changes. These include the rise in the proportion of married women in paid work, trend towards smaller families, and decreased number of children in the past years.

A research carried out by Wheelock<sup>2</sup> about the relationship between men's unemployment and domestic work showed a marked shift towards a less traditional

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<sup>2</sup> Wheelock, J. Husbands at Home. Routledge. London. 1990.

division of household work, with men undertaking more domestic work and childcare when they became unemployed. (Abercrombie, 83)

Interesting comparison observed most of young Asian men who complained that their sisters, and other young women in the community, were learning the bad habits of their white sisters. Alibahai-Brown's research showed the changed attitude of Asian women in the Great Britain; although those women had been raised in traditional way of their family background, they now see the new opportunities the country offers. On one side they criticise English women for they lack of knowledge of cooking and decent housework skills, on the other side they want to become more independent, and they start to desire more from life. Alibahai-Brown presents the attitude about the view of family life, with the genuine worries of future developments, by words of one of her Asian female interviewer:

They [the men] shop, clean with their partners, bathe the children, change nappies, cook ... and none of them is enough. What do white women want? They should try to live with some of our men. I sometimes feel very sorry for white men. In employment they are so powerful and I am against the way they discriminate and all that. But they are paying in their domestic lives. Married three or four times. Does that show they are happy? (Alibahai-Brown, 241)

Alibahai-Brown released a report from a conference organized by the Council of Europe where was discussed the tension between gender equality and cultural autonomy. The conference attended white and non-white Europeans from twelve countries. One of the conclusions is that many of non-white women have been able to accommodate changed aspiration within their families without causing the chaos they see in the wider community. They also claim that a lot of black and Asian women including the Chinese, rather than having an enormous sense of desperation to leave their communal settings, have the desire to change vital attitudes and behaviour from within. (Alibahai-Brown, 240)

Dummett, in the committee report, stresses the importance to improve the situation of Chinese women in Britain as they were often extremely isolated. It has been also reported that they lack command in English, therefore cannot play a part in understanding their children education. Concerning the situation with their husbands,

they are dependent on their husbands for finances and also are likely to spend only little time with their husbands due to long unsocial working hours. (Dummett, 16)

Although compared to their homeland suppressed positions, the chances and opportunities for changes of Chinese women are wider and free, they still feel their strategies and skills are invisible or incomprehensible because as immigrant women they have so little power in the way society is run and understood. (Alibahai-Brown, 205)

Abercrombie brings a report about employment of women and proportion of women who are full-time housewives which has dropped during the post-war period. Women are nowadays more in paid employment which causes the decline in the amount of time the average woman will spend during housework. The time spend with the housework also varies with women with young children who put in the greatest number of hours of total work, and women with no children the least. However, recent surveys have shown that married women typically spend more time on housework than their husbands. (Abercrombie, 87)

The situation in Chen family slightly differs to this report. In the beginning of their stay in Britain, the Chen represented the traditional model of a family, male breadwinner, full-time housewife and a child. Their family was extended to four members with Lily's younger sister Mui, who would play the role of a second child in the view of a traditional family. Lily, as a new incomer, spent all her days looking after the household and her son, while her husband went to work six days a week and shared hardly any household duties except earning money for the rent. Nevertheless, the situation changes as the Chens established their take-away business. Chen now, with no obligation to his previous work, devotes most of his time to the back yard garden and his son:

...Man Kee followed his father's example...Chen felt he had benefited from the open-air work and the girls (he felt he had better face the truth) certainly seemed happier to get on with their work in their own way. His turn to labour in the kitchen came later in the day. (Mo, 116)

Yet, according to Taylor, Chinese were reported as conscientious fathers taking physically care of their children and sharing in household activities. (Taylor, 77)

Another changing feature is in mixed marriages. The evidence of mixed marriages proves the progress of adaptation into the community of the host country. Modood releases the proportion of white partners in mixed marriages with 17 per cent of Chinese either living with or being married to a white person. There is also a significant proportion of children with white and Chinese parents of the percentage of 15. (Modood, 30) Mo's *Sour Sweet* brings an example of one parent family when Lily's younger sister Mui conceives a child with, most probably, one of the truck drivers. Lily judges her sister's action and compares her to irresponsible English young girls. (Mo, 143) As this situation may bring Mui into controversy with Chinese family ethic, she manages well the parenthood but is not encouraged by Lily who sees the harmony in cherishing the principles of family and sees this as she: "bring disgrace on our family..." (Mo, 207)

It must be stated how important, respected and well cared for are the older members in the Chinese family. Lim claims that it is seen as disgrace to Chinese to send the old people to old age homes. (Lim, 10) It comes unnatural to Chinese when old people are on the promenades of British tourist towns on their wheelchair. Lily finds it as a formidable experience she has never seen before and very distracting: "What an odd choice of place for families to send their parents and grandparents." (Mo, 167) For the Chinese it is instinctive and taught to take care of their elderly. When Chen's father is to move with them in Britain, Lily sees it as a complete structure of the family life:

She found it fulfilling: wife, mother and now dutiful daughter-in-law...Respect for age had always been a fundamental moral principle with her. She looked forward to the chance of putting her ideals into practice, the more so in this alien country where such respect was notably lacking. (Mo, 215)

This extract again shows how important is the family unit and all family relationships for the Chinese.

If the family remains split with one part in Britain and the other in China, in many cases the relationship is held by correspondence and remittance send regularly back home. The following abstract gives a closer insight: "Chen was still a conscientious about sending money to his father as when he had been single. He was a dutiful son...The remittance give the old couple a comfortable enough existence." (Mo, 65)

Even when the financial situation gets into critical stage, the importance of remittance to parents still remains.

Lily couldn't help being scandalised when he told her to stop sending the remittance to his mother and father...Even if they experienced hardship the remittance must continue to arrive regularly. She had assumed they might go without a meal or two, if necessary. How much more important to send the money when they were doing well in their modest way.

Lily didn't have to work hard to imagine the hardship Mr and Mrs Chen senior would suffer; she could all too easily see it happening to herself. One day she, too, might depend on a remittance from the family she had built up. In the end all obligations were reciprocal. (Mo, 112,113)

Modood compares the remittance between white British and Chinese population. The results show that while Chinese people more often send money to their family on special occasions, the most common destination for white people is to their children. (Modood, 56) The conclusion is that only very little of ethnic minorities give money to their children but concentrate more on the remaining family in their country of origin.

According to what has been analysed, the Chinese preservation of traditional family in Britain again remains mostly with the older generation. The younger generations tend to establish westernized type of family with less family hierarchy and more stress on individual family members. Also the division of household labour is more equal between men and women.

## **7. Education**

Education may be seen as one of the most important means, as Abercrombie presents, by which ethnic minority groups become integrated into the mainstream of white British life. As children go through the educational system, they do not just learn to speak English but also gain qualifications, which help find jobs. Beside the language, they also embrace the new country cultural values, which enable them to assimilate. (Abercrombie, 46)

Attitudes to education and education itself are closely linked to the culture and traditions of a society. The Chinese have for ever had a deepest respect for education and parents have nowadays even stronger desire for their children to flourish in education and in Britain the academic success of Chinese pupils is being increasingly recognised by the society. As stated in the Ethnicity Census, education in English schools is highly valued for Chinese because of its vital role in obtaining highly rewarded jobs, and migration to Britain were means towards better western education. (Peach, 165)

Not only have many Chinese parents bad knowledge of English, they also spend long hours in their catering business. Notwithstanding this limited help with studies from their parents, the Chinese children still achieve very good results at schools. Abercrombie's research has proven that Asian and Chinese children are more serious about education than white children. Together with East African Asians and some Indians, Chinese pupils are out-performing at school with their white peers. Asian and Chinese children are also to be found in large numbers at private schools. (Abercrombie, 48)

This statement is also supported by the results in National Statistics stating that in 2004 Chinese pupils were the most likely to achieve five or more GCSE grades A-C in England, with 79 per cent of Chinese girls and 70 per cent of Chinese boys, followed by Indian pupils achieving almost the same grades. White Irish hold the third successful position with the percentage 63 for girls and 54 for boys, and fourth position is taken by White British with just over fifty per cent for girls and slightly under fifty per cent for boys. The lowest levels of GSCE attainment were among Black Caribbean pupils, especially among boys.



Pupils from Black Caribbean, Other Black and Mixed White were among the most likely to be permanently excluded from schools in England. On the other side, the Chinese and Indian pupils had the lowest exclusion rates. These well achieved results also lead into obtaining the highest qualification. The most likely to have degrees were, in 2004, Chinese and Indian group. However, a relatively high of proportion twenty per cent of Chinese people has no qualifications compared to fifteen per cent of White British. (Alibahai-Brown, 61)

One of the reasons why Chinese Britons are doing really well at schools may be because most of them are from the middle classes. Alan Hall, Bradford head teacher claims:

The biggest single advantage they gain from their family background is that they are seldom cynical about school, teachers and education in the way that white teenagers can be. They are hard-working and polite partly because of their culture and partly because they know the value of getting on at school. (Abercrombie, 167)

Mr and Mrs Cheung are sharing the same view considering the importance of education. They are becoming anxious as they believe their children should work harder at work to receive a good education and succeed in academically to in order to achieve a good professional job. The Cheung family often feels isolated as they spend most of their time in their takeaway shop. Their children also got used to the routine of working in the shop after school. Compared to the duties of Chinese children, their school mates do not need to work in the afternoon and therefore have more time for themselves and their hobbies. As they look back to their own childhood and the fact that they hardly went out. For this is hard for them to understand the necessity of freedom that their children desire. (Wah, 53)

There also exist many differences between the Chinese and British form of education and the school. To point out samples of the distinction, Lily's view at the education will play an important role. She was surprised and in a way disappointed that her son never came home with any homework or a work for lessons to prepare. Although Mui explained that her son at the age of five was too young for after school work, Lily disapproved of Mui's laxity as she would like to teach him at an early age so

he can learn the fundamentals of the business. From her own experience, she had received her lessons from her father in early age. On the other side, she was hoping to bring her own child up rather more leniently.

What also came quite surprising to Lily, were the teachers' attitudes and teachers themselves: "Young and kindly faced, that was not Lily's idea of a teacher." (Mo, 177) The other surprising is that teachers in Britain actually long to meet the parents of the pupils. For this, Lim explains that there was a need to educate Chinese parents about the British educational system. Although the usually opportunity to meet the parents was when some problem appears, she points out that there should me made more attempts to contact parents even without any problem. (Lim, 16)

Wah comments on this issue that many Chinese parents wonder why there exist such emphases on play in the teaching in Britain. As she says they regret that there is not enough of rigid studying as compared to Chinese. A strong sense of discipline and work ethic are expected from Chinese children since early ages. (Wah, 53) Lim again stresses the need to explain the British educational system to the parents, especially the teaching methodology. (Lim, 16)

Although the stunning performing of Chinese children at schools, as mentioned by Abercrombie, many white parents still choose to keep their children out of multiracial schools. Some make this decision from their prejudice reasons, others in order to maintain their privileged position and particular view of the world which they do not want to challenged, others still base their actions on their own ignorance. Still Abercrombie comes across people whose teenagers have a much deeper awareness of different religions and cultures than they themselves do. (Abercrombie, 169)

Once Chinese parents accept the British educational system, some of them still insist on their children attending Chinese schools beside British. They are aware of the adaptation of their children to the new British life but they also do not want them to be alienated from their own culture but want for them to maintain the Chinese heritage. Many British born children with Chinese origin need to undergo the Chinese education from beginning.

As it has been already explained, the cultural heritage bears an enormous importance for Chinese and thus Chinese tried to ensure that their children maintain the Chinese language and therefore established Chinese Sunday schools. The main purposes

of these schools are to teach children the language of their parents and pass on them the cultural heritage.

Many parents insist their children attending Chinese Sunday Schools as want Chen for their son: “Man Kee must go to supplementary Chinese classes straight away...Let the boy learn about the things which belong to him.”(Mo, 243) Chen here stresses the heritage and knowledge that should be transferred onto their son.

Wah also adds that besides Chinese children, also non-Chinese children attend the Sunday Chinese schools. If it is for their friends who are Chinese or for their own wish to learn about Chinese culture and share their experience. (Wah, 57)

The existence of Chinese Sunday schools with non-Chinese also visiting the classes and Chinese children in English schools show the British acceptance of Chinese and Chinese adaptation into the host community.

The education chapter has showed that the Chinese children well adapt themselves in the British education system and moreover achieve excellent results compared to the rest of the pupils. Either to the wish to their parents or from their own conviction, they also attend supplementary Chinese schools where they receive the additional education from the country of their origin.

## 8. Job

In general, ethnic minorities are concentrated in certain industries, such as manufacturing industries, distribution, hotels, catering, transport services and health services. According to Abercrombie, their jobs are lower down on the socio-economic scale and also tend to have lower earnings than the white minority. (Abercrombie, 38)

The most widespread catering service is the main form of business amongst the Chinese. Pan released the result from ethnic minorities survey in 1985, when ninety per cent of Chinese in Britain were in the catering or related trades, and sixty per cent of them in family-owned take-away business. The amount of catering employed Chinese has decreased but still it plays an important role of dependence of the majority of the Chinese families. (Pan, 305) Catering trade is very demanding for long working hours and sometimes it means seven days a week in an extremely tiring environment. Therefore the work dominates their lives and life styles.

Again one of the main reasons of profitable success of these businesses is in the strength of the family unit therefore it is the whole family that works in the shop. According to Wah, the reasons are to make as much profit as possible and to provide fast and quality service with saving on hiring extra help from outside the family. Children after returning home from school have to participate on the work in the shop as well. The importance of children in the business is to introduce them into the business world and teach them to pick up a new responsibility. (Wah, 56) As Lily describes, having her five-year-old son in the shop with her was this: "Number One priority – Son was learning the business; Number Two – under present circumstances any help she got was worth having." (Mo, 201) Due to the long hours, the children stay in the shop till late hours, yet their help becomes most useful at night when the shop is full of customers.

The work in the catering service is very demanding especially on working hours. Even though for those Chinese who do not run their own business but work in restaurants the amount of responsibility may lower, the working hours are the same or even longer as they often have to travel to work. As there are not any jobs in their own locality, with the travelling to work the hours may be from mid morning to three or four the following morning. Work like this may be very tiring but as Wah claims, to the

Chinese men and women it is nothing strange, they accept it and try to make the most of it. (Wah, 58)

Lim analyzes the occupation situation for the Chinese and finds out ambition, shares by the parents and the children, for children to get a job outside the catering service. (Lim, 3) This segregation from the catering business greatly depends on the education achievements of Chinese children. Lim also corresponds with this thesis as she claims that young Chinese want to move into greater variety of jobs that has been available to them. (Lim, 3)

In sum, generally ethnic minorities are concentrated in certain work spheres, which represents the catering service for the Chinese. With wider perception and a greater variety of jobs that Britain offers, the younger generations of Chinese now have the ambitions to get jobs outside the catering service.

## **9. Consequence of Adaptation**

There has been showed many various factor such as family background, cultural heritage, education, occupation, society, and all these form the individuals and minorities who enter and a new country and want to create their life there. All the circumstances participate on the process of adaptation of the new arrivals. Every individual copes with the new situation differently therefore it is hard to evaluate the reaction of the Chinese people uniformly. Nevertheless, the following chapters disclose the phases the Chinese usually overcome in Britain.

### **9.1 Separation, Isolation**

It has been already stated that the Chinese preserve a strong hold to their culture and traditions which makes them look isolated and shows lack of adaptation into the British society. Modood sees an ethnic assertiveness which arises from the feeling not being respected or for a lack of access to public space, while the immigrants want to maintain themselves as communities. (Modood, 119) This describes the situation of Chinese immigrants in Britain as for many Chinese their life in Britain represents life in Chinatowns and lack of knowledge of English.

Many retain Chinese as their first language and live in 'Chinatowns' that have evolved in many cities throughout the world. This lack of assimilation has often caused them to be viewed as outsiders in their adopted countries and to be subject of racism. China's generally isolation stance toward much of the rest of the world has also helped to consolidate the nationalism of the Chinese people. (Mackenzie, 582)

Wah introduces the important role that Chinatowns bear for the Chinese. Sundays have become a popular leisure day for the British, and the Chinese as most of people are off work, take-ways are closed, and families gather together. Unlike the British, the Chinese take the Sunday opportunity to visit their nearest Chinatowns. This day, shops in Chinatown briskly sell magazines and newspapers from Hong Kong and China through which the Chinese living in Britain get to know all the latest news from China. London, with its biggest Chinatown in Britain, is the first one to receive the most

up to date fashions and trends from Hong Kong. There can be also found innumerable places to shop, restaurants serving food from all the different schools and traditions of Chinese cuisine. Any time the year, the Chinatown is overcrowded with the Chinese shopping and visiting the restaurants. (Wah, 7, 8) Chinatowns ergo represent one of the main places where many Chinese escape from their everyday life, for others it is everyday life. Chinatowns bear witness to the scale and importance of Chinese settlement in Britain.

Winder also sees the isolation and separation of the Chinese due to their unsocial working hours for which it has not been easy for the Chinese to join British daily life even if they wanted to. To the point of not being communicative, the Chinese are seen discreet and unassertive. Winder comments that the Chinese have also never expressed anything like racial or cultural solidarity. (Winder, 396) Wah shares the same view of the Chinese community as she claims that Chinese culture can be very inward looking and isolationist. (Wah, 17) Therefore it is sometimes difficult for foreigners to truly enter into the spirit of Chinese culture and understand Chinese people behaviour.

Although the Chinese people tend to stay isolated and socialize with families and friends of their origin, their children spend their free time among their English friends as well. Wah talks about Cheungs' daughter and son who compared to her parents have a friendlier relationship with the English. Her parents had to deal with troubles in their take-away shop finding no help from the police which made them feel isolated. The children never feel isolated or excluded even though they are the only Chinese at their schools. (Wah, 31)

Compared to the duties of Chinese children, who spent most of their free time helping in their parents' take-away shops, their school mates do not need to work in the afternoon and therefore have more time for themselves and their hobbies. The Cheung family relate on their own childhood and the fact that they hardly went out which makes it hard for them to understand the necessity of freedom that their children desire. (Wah, 28)

Another pattern which contributes to the isolation of the Chinese community is their lack of knowledge of English. Dummett explains that the major consequences of English difficulties lead to the tendency for the Chinese to self-reliance and seek mutual aid within their family and community. (Dummett, 6, 7)

The isolation affects many Chinese children in the point of language. Wah comments that in many cases, their parents have only limited knowledge of English and so the children are often used to translate for them. In certain sense, bad English can bring the child into a situation of losing his or her face. To avoid embarrassment and misunderstanding, the children sometimes stay quite in their classroom which can get them easily overlooked by the teacher. (Wah, 31) The interaction between the Chinese and the British society extends as the younger Chinese generation participates in the British education system.

Winder observes the Chinese and develops a version saying:

Their (Chinese) extreme quietness made them invisible. There was an irony here. One of the most common accusations made against immigrants was that they refused to 'fit in'. And the group of immigrants who made the least effort of all to fit in were the Chinese, who kept themselves to themselves and socialised almost entirely with their own families. Yet they were the least disliked. They kept their distance, and Britain seemed to like it just fine that way. (Winder, 398)

The cited statement could be used to sum up this topic. There exist many underlying problems such as knowledge of English, long working hours, and tendency of the Chinese to socialize with and mingle within their community. These problems form a barrier for the Chinese to fully participate in British life and extend their isolation. The take-away shops represent virtual islands of Chinese culture in Britain and function as a communication channel between Chinese and wild British society.

## **9.2 New identity**

Modood carried out a research based on belonging to an ethnic identification in an explicit pairing of being British. The purpose of this research was not to identify the self-description of origin to distinguish one from another by characteristic features of respondents, moreover not about legal status, passports or right of residence. The research was to find identification with a country, place, and its way of living.

The result showed for majority respondents, that they think of themselves as "being British". The only exceptional group to this pattern were the Chinese. Half of the respondents thought about themselves as British while the other half disagreed. The



answers reflected the view of migrants as fifteen of sixteen Chinese born in Britain thought of themselves as British. The answers show that the British born are more likely to think of themselves as being British but less identify themselves with their place of origin compared to the first generation.

The Chinese were also exceptional in identifying themselves as dissociative and acculturative. The dissociative strategy is in terms of ethnic minority group membership, not in majority group dimension. The acculturative strategy means equal self division between majority group dimension and ethnic minority group. Whereas majority of respondents of various ethnic groups identify equally with their ethnicity and with British society, the Chinese categorize themselves mainly into ethnic minority group membership. (Modood, 41, 42)

Alibahai-Brown strengthens the thesis that British born Chinese and younger generations think of themselves as being British as she claims that many children of immigrants despise the expression “immigrant” and spend their lives asserting that they are British. (Alibahai-Brown, 53)

Both features ascertain that compared to other ethnicities the Chinese are less likely to think of them as being British and tend to keep their ethnic origin. However, the younger generation is more probable to accept the recognitions of being British. Despite this, some of them still feel that they have to face a long journey before being fully accepted as British. So does a Chinese girl Sui who says:

In England you never feel a sense of belonging because...it's like the white people's place, isn't it? And if you look at yourself and think about it, you're not one of them. But then if you think... are you a Chinese person? The Chinese people reject you because, like, you're Westernized. So you don't really belong to any slot. You belong in a slot of your own in the middle ...I think we have to establish our own identity. (Pan, 306)

Lim observed that younger Chinese often assume that they will live and die in their adapted countries, in this case in Britain, as a part of the country but remaining at the same time Chinese. It has been also stated that the Chinese children who were born and brought up in Britain are normally as well-adjusted and also academically oriented as British children. (Lim, 3)

Children adapt to the new life with less difficulty than their parents and comprehend the language more easily as the following sample from *Sour Sweet* shows: “Son, providently, had not displayed any further disturbing tendency to speak English as well Cantonese.” (Mo, 174)

Although the parents may be aware that the children will learn and adapt themselves, it may come to them very surprising:

There was something new happening; something which Lily has realised was beyond her experience and from which she was forever excluded; something she could give no name to; something which separated her from her Son. She didn't like it at all. (Mo, 178)

This paragraph demonstrates how children are more steps closer to become British while their parents may still find themselves as foreigners. The Chinese parents, according to Wah, still see China as their home land but for their children it is Britain. (Wah, 90) Lim's observation brings the conclusion to this subject with the observation that the older generation dreamt of returning home and some also did. The majority of young arrivals expected to stay in Britain and finally the youngest generation of the Chinese feels that they belong to Britain. (Lim, 19) Therefore the adaptation into the British life seems to be successful and the British life fulfils the expectation of the Chinese.

### **9.3 Pro-ethnic Organizations**

Not only does the process of adaptation to a new environment depend on the immigrants, but also a big demand is put onto the host country and its society.

Dummett in the Home Affairs report points out the limitation of the state system towards the flow of immigrants. She stresses the ignorance of British law and welfare services as major consequences of language difficulties. Because of that many Chinese have difficulty claiming their rights and they are also unaware of these rights for example in respect to social security, employment, and housing. Dummett additionally observes that the Chinese suffered higher unemployment rate as other ethnic minorities compared with the rest of the population. (Dummett, 6) Since the report, there has been

monitored progress towards accommodating the ethnic communities, namely the Chinese.

Coleman offers supports to this proposition as he presents samples of the improvement of the situation. For example, the Home Office now produces leaflets in Chinese to increase the ability of the Chinese to apply for what they are entitled to. (Coleman, 240) This proves that the state administration tries to ease the adaptation of the ethnic communities into the country.

Also various organizations among the Chinese have been established to support the British life for the Chinese. They mainly concentrate on the needs of the people and their centres and their web site pages offer many helpful and useful information as well as advices, courses and trainings for adults.

For instance, one of the many organizations is London Chinese Community Centre which aims to improve the quality of life of this ethnic group. They particularly focus on people who are disadvantaged, vulnerable or isolated. Their goal is to increase understanding and awareness of the needs of Chinese communities not only locally but nationally and to provide a strong voice for the Chinese community with their views and interests. The centre is to become a leading centre for the promotion of Chinese culture and traditions and to increase the effectiveness of support services for the Chinese community. Among their number of services they provide social support, advocacy, guidance and advice service. Other services are to organize English language classes, and mediate with outside institutions for older Chinese people whose knowledge is limited. (ccv.org.uk)

The high level of demand of such services led into establishing many community and social centres all across Britain. These centres can be visited on their websites or personally in their premises.

Also education institutions play their part. Ideally, as Wah sums up, the schools prepare the children for a life in Britain, while the family passes on them their cultural heritage. Through the hard work and energy, the community has laid down roots for the future in British life. (Wah, 76)

The interaction of Chinese children with every other ethnic group in Britain is very important since the children school attendance. Compared to their parents they

have the possibility to meet and experience the world which is hidden for their parents who cannot or maybe do not want to fully assimilate to the British society. The importance of the organizations which provide services for the ethnic minorities is indisputable but a great demand is expected from the parents as they should support their children's unreservedness towards the assimilation to the British society.

## **10. Conclusion**

Britain is wholly an immigrant society and the Chinese represent a numerous ethnicity group among all the immigrants who have ever come to live in Britain. The entry of the Chinese into Britain is a typical chain of migration when first arrivals come to establish a foundation and later the kinship links support and sponsor the next arrivals.

The Chinese are highly concentrated in the catering service. Their take-aways have become popular in Britain and do not just represent the main family business for the Chinese but also a communication channel between the Chinese and the outside society. Their unsocial working hours make the Chinese look isolated and separated from the daily British life. Their rigidity to their Chinese heritage and stagnation become the main obstacle of the move forwards which is the core of survival. For this reason many state and private organizations have been established to ease the process of adaptation.

The primary thing for the Chinese no matter the place is their family. Through the strong connection in family they managed to survive wheresoever. Essential for the Chinese is the culture, traditions, rituals and ceremonies which are very vital and have always helped the Chinese people to understand and make sense of their beliefs, philosophies and traditions. Their culture together with the family provides for the Chinese a shelter to the cultural shock and a support to the adaptation into the new life.

The identity of Chinese in Britain is neither essentially Chinese nor it is essentially British. The influence from both sides of the Chinese and the British, have made the Chinese become British Chinese. Ethnic minorities have many non-ethnic features, as education, leisure time, neighbours and so on. The Chinese like any foreign people living in Britain, adapting the new customs and receiving the British influence have to confront the question of their own cultural identity. Children of emigrants usually deal with this subject much easier. Although they live in the traditional environment of their origin, they attend British schools and befriend with British children.

There are two kinds of Chinese living in Britain. The first description is mainly for older generations who stay very much isolated from the British daily life and socialize within the Chinese community and Chinatowns. Their children attend

supplementary Chinese schools to perceive Chinese culture heritage and will more likely continue in the family catering business.

The second younger group represents the Chinese who more interact with the outside community, and are more spread outside Chinatowns. They also see more opportunities that the host country offers and therefore they want to take the chances and untie the chains from the family catering business but try to get into a variation of jobs. Their family structure is more westernized with the emphasizes on individual family members with less of family hierarchy.

Also the belonging to a society is changing between generations, compared to the first arrivals to Britain and the older generations who considered the option of returning to their home country, the younger generation bears on themselves features of Britishness.

The phase of adaptation is connected with learning how to adjust effectively to the new cultural environment and learning how to make an acceptable adaptation to the new culture. Eventually all of them are slowly taking steps into the adaptation of the British life. The state organizations participate on endeavour to sustain interaction between the host country and the Chinese rather than separation and eventually achieve a bicultural British Chinese identity in a multicultural British society.

## 11. Resumé

Po staletí se lidé stěhují čili migrují z rozličných důvodů z místa na místo. Ať už se jedná o vnitrostátní migraci např. z venkova do měst za lepší práci či vzděláním, nebo jenom být na blízku rodině, nebo ať se jedná o mezinárodní migraci spojenou s míšením národností, vždycky s sebou tento jev přináší spoustu nového a nepředvídatelného. Každá etnická skupina i každý jedinec se vypořádá s novými situacemi, jež nové prostředí přináší po svém. Ovšem v každém případě se jedná o neobvyklou situaci, a mnohdy na přistěhovalce čeká kulturní šok, samota, nepochopení, ale i pozitivní věci jako například vytoužený plnohodnotný život. Všechny zkušenosti migrantů jsou jedinečné a přesto mají mnohé společné.

Tato bakalářská práce rozebírá životní zkušenosti imigrantů v nové zemi. Cílem této práce je analyzovat adaptaci Číňanů ve Velké Británii a zjistit, do jaké míry se Číňané asimilují čímž se vzdávají vlastních kulturních hodnot a tradic, nebo zda prochází procesem integrace, při které si zachovávají vlastní kulturu.

V první části práce jsou vysvětleny důležité pojmy potřebné pro porozumění, jako migrace, asimilace, integrace, etnická skupina, vlastenectví a rasismus. Poté je představeno období, kdy Číňané začali přicházet do Británie a důvody, které je k tomu vedly. U Číňanů je migrace spojena s rodinným řetězcem. První přistěhovalci vybudují základ pro život v Británii a postupně sem přizvou celou rodinu respektive její zbytek, aby se k nim připojil. Nejčastěji pak společně vedou restaurace s čínskou kuchyní.

Další kapitoly se věnují samotnému procesu adaptace Číňanů v Británii. Jak již bylo zmíněno, každý jednotlivec má vlastní přístup k životu v novém prostředí. Tyto pozitivní i negativní postoje rozebírá čtvrtá kapitola, kde jsou nejvíce využity ukázky z díla Timothy Mo(a) „Sour Sweet“. Hrdinka Mui daleko snadněji komunikuje s okolím a přizpůsobuje se novému životu než její sestra Lily, která je plná předsudků a kriticismu vůči Británii a jejím obyvatelům. Nejenom vlastní předsvědčení, ale i rasová diskriminace znemožňují adaptaci do nové země a tak se čtvrtá kapitola věnuje i tomuto tématu.

Číňané mají dlouhou historii tradičního kulturního života jež ovlivňuje jejich jednání a myšlení, proto je podstatné věnovat se vlivu, jež má čínská kultura na život Číňanů v Británii. Pátá kapitola dochází k závěru, že především starší generace dodržují

tradice a udržují si kulturní dědictví své rodné země, zatímco jejich děti si osvojují britské kulturní zvyky a tradice.

Rodina představuje pro Číňany základní a nejdůležitější součást jejich života a proto se jí věnuje celá šestá kapitola. Ačkoli si Číňané s sebou přináší do Británie tradiční pojetí rodiny, v Británii se jejich rodiny přizpůsobí západním stylu, kdy je více vyzdvihován jednotlivec a rodinná hierarchie hraje menší roli. Je zde porovnáno i rozdělení práce mezi manželi a čas rodičů strávený s dětmi.

Následující dvě kapitoly rozebírají vliv vzdělání a zaměstnání na adaptaci Číňanů v Británii. Čínské děti navštěvují Britské školy se svými spolužáky z různých etnických skupin, což má za následek snazší adaptaci čínských dětí ve společnosti oproti rodičům, kteří jsou izolováni ve svých také-aways obchodech. Dalším rozdílem je znalost angličtiny a kvalita volného času, jež odlišuje čínské děti od svých spolužáků. Mnozí rodiče trvají na tom, aby se prvky čínské kultury přenesly na jejich děti a tak mnohé navštěvují nedělní Čínské školy. V poslední době je tendence pro Číňany odpoutat se od catering sféry, která stále představuje nejrozšířenější uplatnění Čínské minority, a snaží se získat jiná kvalifikovaná zaměstnání.

Ve finální části se rozebírají druhy adaptace Číňanů v Británii. Dlouhé pracovní hodiny a dny strávené za pultem v čínských restauracích mají vliv na izolovaný životní styl Číňanů. Svoji roli také hrají tzv. Chinatowns, které představují stát ve státě, základ kulturního a společenského života Číňanů.

Poslední podkapitola také zmiňuje nesnáze, které znemožňují Číňanům adaptovat se do Britského života, a organizace, které vznikají, aby usnadnili jejich začlenění do britské společnosti.

Tato práce dochází k závěru, že mnozí Číňané a to především starší generace, se integrovali do britského života, jsou izolovanější od společnosti, udržují si svoji kulturu, a stále pomýšlí na návrat do rodné vlasti. Naproti tomu u mladší generace se projevuje jejich asimilace do společnosti, jsou otevřenější a vstřícnější novému způsobu života, snáze komunikují s okolím a přiznávají, že Británii se stala jejich domovem.

Z toho vyplývá, že vazby na zemi původu jejich rodičů nejsou pevné a Británie jim dokáže poskytnout plnohodnotný život díky své vstřícnosti, otevřenosti, a vyspělosti země vůči imigrantům.



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