Chinese Immigrants in Barbados

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1. Introduction

Barbados, a small island nation in the Caribbean, has a long and complex history that has shaped its demographics, economics, and politics. The island was colonized by the British in the 17th century and became a centre for the Triangular Trade, which had a lasting impact on the island's population. Today, Barbados is a multicultural society, with a population of approximately 290,000 people. The majority of the population is of African descent, with approximately 90% identifying as black or mixed-race. The remaining 10% of the population is comprised of people of European, Indian, and other ethnicities. Barbados has a mixed economy, which is primarily based on the tourism sector. The island is known for its stunning beaches, vibrant culture, and warm hospitality, which has made it a popular destination for tourists around the world. Compared to other Caribbean countries, Barbados is a parliamentary democracy with a stable political system, which has been a factor in its favorable economic and social conditions. This also makes Barbados an attractive destination for immigration.

The immigrant population in Barbados is diverse and includes people from various neighbouring countries such as Guyana, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, Venezuela. In recent years, Chinese immigrants have settled in Barbados in increasing numbers, primarily working in the restaurant industry. Despite their growing presence in the country, there has been limited research conducted on the experiences of Chinese immigrants in Barbados. This paper aims to fill this gap in the literature by exploring the factors that have contributed to the settlement of Chinese immigrants in Barbados, the challenges they face, and the ways in which they have integrated into Barbadian society. This paper will ground these questions in a review of literature of overseas Chinese and isolated immigrant communities, and seek to answer this question with our own research consisting of formal and informal conversations/interviews with Chinese living in Barbados. By doing so, this paper will contribute to a deeper understanding of the experiences of Chinese immigrants in Barbados and shed light on the factors that shape immigration and settlement patterns in the country.

2. Literature Review

To complement and ground the research aim of this paper, a narrative literature review of academic articles from peer-reviewed journals was conducted. We sought current information

about several subtopics of interest that would give further insight into the motivations and experiences of the Chinese ethnic community on Barbados.

- First, we identify relevant migration theories and frameworks to better discern migration determinants, migration patterns, and how migration, migration processes and the migrant have been conceptualized and theorized. This is particularly relevant as accelerating globalization has transformed the meaning of mobilities, movement, and borders.
- Next, we turned to the overseas Chinese community, situating it in the earlier theories, while examining the evolving nature of the Chinese diaspora. Given the extremely global presence of the diaspora, we prioritized the experiences of similarly sized Chinese diasporas.
- Lastly, we narrowed our focus and strictly reviewed the Caribbean Chinese Community.

Migration Theory

Migration does not occur in isolation, nor is it random. Migration is a transformative and historical process that is as old as human society. Thanks in part to sensational media coverage, misconceptions of contemporary migration trends are commonplace, and migration is problematized as a security threat that must be controlled. In fact, global migration levels have remained relatively stable (De Haas et al., 2019). According to De Haas et al. (2019), the main global migration trends involve: the diversification of global migrant origins, the shift in the labour frontier of migrant workers, the transition of Western Europe from a source to a destination, as well as a greater concentration of international migrants to a limited number of major migration destinations.

Regarding the drivers of migration, they generally include: political and economic upheavals, labour demands, and economic growth in destination countries (De Haas et al., 2019). Some 19th and 20th century migration models asserted by migration scholars still resonate as notions of push and pull factors, that migration perpetuates wage inequalities, and that migration continues along its well worn paths persist (Piore, 1979 as cited in De Haas et al., 2019; Lee, 1966 as cited in Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016).

However, there is increasing recognition that these determinants remain western-oriented. Subsequently, Mavroudi and Nagel detail the “growing sensitivity to the power relationships–household, workplace, state institutions, and global economy, that shape migration flows” which

are determined with consideration of "gender, age, race, class, and legal/political hierarchies" (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016, p. 20). Furthermore, there is heightened awareness of migrant agency within these processes (Mavroudi and Nagel, 2016).

Alongside these changes, migration studies have undergone a theoretical shift. Due to the globalization of migration, past attention on economic motivations and population geography has diminished (King, 2012). Part of the larger turn in the social sciences, this cultural pivot marked the usage of ethnographic methods as "a valid approach" for the field (King, 2012, p. 142). As a result, contemporary migration theory utilizes approaches centred around "culture and the role of consciousness and human agency" (King, 2012, p. 142).

At the intersection of humanities and sciences, geography is ideally placed to carry out this interdisciplinary migration research and advance the field. In order to better understand the Chinese community on Barbados, we investigate dominant contemporary paradigms such as: the mobilities turn, transnationalism, and diaspora studies which seek to explain and conceptualize these epistemological developments.

The millions of border crossings happening every day have ushered in a new era of global mobility. Although many of these are on a temporary basis, they mark a dramatic change from historically static and sedentary societies. The mobilities turn, seeks to capture this transformation examining the spatial patterns and processes related to the diverse political, economic, and social dynamics that in turn shape migrants' mobility (King, 2012). This paradigm shift suggests a more flexible conception of migration, wherein sedentarism has evolved into nomadism and everyone is a migrant (King, 2012).

However, it is still important to look beyond misconceptions of universal mobility that divert attention from real people (King, 2012). This concern is exemplified by the priority developed countries have placed on selecting the "right migrants" (De Haas et al., 2019, p. 905). While the movement of highly skilled workers is considered desirable and economically efficient, unskilled workers are wanted but not welcomed and their movement is impeded. Therefore, while mobility can challenge social inequalities, it can also reinforce disadvantages and compound inequality (De Haas et al., 2019).

Transnationalism is intertwined with this mobilities change, as the leading paradigm in migration research over the past decades (King, 2012). Per King, transnationalism is the process through which migrants develop and sustain 'multi-stranded relationships – familial, economic,

social, religious and political – that span borders and link their societies of origin and settlement (King, 2012, p. 144). No longer is migration linear. Instead, migration scholars like Carling and Collins conceptualize migrants as "distinct geographical entities, distributed across borders" (Carling and Collins, 2018, p. 912). The migrant is located in transnational channels, and maneuvers and wields control over migration processes and outcomes (Findlay and Li, 1998, as cited in Carling and Collins, 2018).

Moreover, according to transnationalism, individuals' lives can no longer be fully understood within the boundaries of a single nation-state (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Instead, migrants are embedded in transnational social fields, linking migrants and their homeland ties and networks (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Levitt and Schiller (2004) assert that because these individuals have some connection to a way of belonging, that they can enter these fields whenever they choose to. These connections exist thanks to ever increasing "flows of media, capital, and people" (Levitt and Schiller, 2004, p. 1007). Thus, individuals live increasingly fluid and hybrid lives.

Like the rest of the discipline, contemporary understandings of diaspora have shifted significantly. While the original meaning of diaspora signified forced exile or displacement, current understandings are more in line with with the notion of transnational communities, being 'a migrant community that maintains material or sentimental linkages with its home country, while adapting to the environment and institutions of its host society' (King, 2012, p. 145).

Increasingly, and like migrants themselves, diaspora is recognized and approached as a "process of becoming" (Mavroudi, 2019, p. 281). However, tensions within the discourse prevail as it is also seen as something incomplete, fluid yet connected (Mavroudi, 2019). While diaspora is process, it is also something performed and negotiated, wherein how you are seen is what you become (Mavroudi, 2019). Accordingly, defining who does/doesn't belong has become customary (Mavroudi, 2019).

In addition, diaspora has growing political associations as states strategically embrace their communities abroad (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). As a result, there must be caution in confining diaspora to just one interpretation grounded in places and the power of the nation state. There must be space to express the malleability and dynamism of diaspora identities as for some homeland is not a given entity. Moreover, an over-emphasis on boundaries threatens to ignore virtual diasporas, as well as diasporic cities (Mavroudi, 2019). Consequently, there has been

growing criticism of the term as being reductive, diminishing the diversity of identity and culture (Shih, 2010). Furthermore, because its use is so popularized, academics argue that the word has lost its utility for careful and precise academic analysis (Hu-DeHart, 2015).

The Overseas Chinese Community

The International Organization for Migration estimates that the contemporary overseas Chinese population numbers over 60 million Chinese (including descendants) (UNESCO, n.d.). This diaspora is characterized by its unevenness, diversity, and lengthy and complex history. While migration began in the twelfth century, flows were limited and concentrated within intra-Asian mercantile networks, until the 19th century when global mass migration took place (Lai, 2004).

The current phase of Chinese migration, beginning in the 1960s, is connected to a new phase of globalisation, linked with liberal migration policies in addition to the ascent of East Asia (Lai, 2004). As a result, mobility patterns have transformed in significant ways. Unlike earlier periods, movement is dynamic and fluid circular and return migrations occurring. As a result, the overseas Chinese population has spread throughout the world.

Lai (2004) characterizes this migration as being mainly directed to urban centres, rather than developing outer regions. Moreover, the educational background, socio-economic status, and occupations of Chinese migrants is diversified due to immigration policy criteria (Lai, 2004). These developments have created substantial subgroup differences of Chineseness as individuals have different citizenship, language, immigrant category, occupation, education background, socio-economic status, religion, and social and political systems (Lai, 2004).

Lesser Known Overseas Chinese Communities

In line with Levitt and Schiller (2004), the hyperdiversity of the experiences of overseas Chinese has produced different ways of being and belonging:

- Ways of being refers to the actual social relations and practices that individuals engage in rather than to the identities associated with their actions.
- Ways of belonging refers to practices that signal or enact an identity which demonstrates a conscious connection to a particular group.

According to historian Wang Gungwu, characteristics of their destination country such as, “their state of economic development, the racial composition of their populations, the overall

combination of options, opportunities and constraints confronting the immigrants result in marked differences in levels of wealth acquisition, social status and acceptability" (Lai, 2004, p. 4). Furthermore, these factors produce specific local barriers and greatly impact options and responses to overcome these (Lai, 2004).

This is epitomized by the experiences of lesser known Overseas Chinese communities. Communities with limited Chinese populations, like those in French Polynesia, Pakistan, and Mauritius, must continuously negotiate their identities. Although all these communities' presence span multiple generations, the fluidity of cultural and ethnic boundaries in each of the host countries vary. As a result, these communities engage in the negotiation of multiple identities shaped by their own experiences as well as the unique social, economic, and religious developments of the country they reside in. These attitudes and practices involve pragmatic strategies of social integration.

- In Pakistan, Chinese-Pakistanis are "twice again" migrants with multiple homelands (Lin, 2017, p. 133). They originally migrated to the Indian subcontinent while it was under British colonial rule (Lin, 2017). When independence was declared in 1947, the community was split into Chinese-Indians and Chinese-Pakistanis (Lin, 2017). Despite living in a Muslim-majority society, Pakistani-Chinese have largely chosen to convert to Christianity (Lin, 2017). Lin contends that this decision, "reconstructs a more palatable identity in a social context that does not promote preservation of other divergent beliefs" (Lin, 2017, p. 140). As Buddhism is not recognized in Pakistan, their conversion allows less questions in a society that "only permits a small, discrete amount of this otherness" (Lin, 2017, p. 144). Moreover, in doing so community members are able to discreetly hold onto Chinese customs like ancestor veneration (Lin, 2017).
- In French Polynesia, Trémon (2009) examines the impact of lingering political divisions from the 1911 Revolution in China. The community's structure remains split between those who supported Sun Yat-sen, and those in favour of the reformists (Trémon, 2009). This division only intensified after the PRC's establishment, and both sides still call each other 'fascists' and 'communists' (Trémon, 2009, p. 122). Consequently, Trémon characterizes Chinese identifications as consisting of a 'local' and a 'cosmopolitan' identity, "while the 'locals' express a sense of belonging to a 'Polynesia' that happens to be 'French', the latter express a sense of belonging to a 'Polynesia' insofar as it is 'French'" (Trémon, 2009, p.

105). Yet, threatened by an "increasing racialization of the notion of autochthony in politics", the cosmopolitans have promoted the existence of a distinct Chinese ethnic community even though most descendants of Chinese migrants do not share their commitment (Trémon, 2009, p. 107). Through these efforts, the elite of the community has gained visibility as well as legitimized its position in the economic and in the political spheres (Trémon, 2009).

- In Mauritius, one must differentiate between the 'old' and 'new' Chinese when speaking of the Chinese community (Guccini and Zhang, 2021). While the 'old' population arrived in the 19th century as indentured labourers and merchants, the 'new' population is composed of temporary migrants working in the infrastructure construction, commercial and educational sectors (Guccini and Zhang, 2021). Practices among the 'old' Chinese population greatly differ from those of the 'new' Chinese, and they do not have frequent interactions (Guccini and Zhang, 2021, p. 106). Guccini and Zhang present the pertinent example of divergences in modes of networking and communication: while the 'old' population uses WhatsApp or Facebook, conversing mostly in English and French, the 'new' population uses WeChat to connect with other Chinese citizens in Mauritius, and converses in Mandarin (Guccini and Zhang, 2021, p. 106).

Overseas Chinese communities clearly stand on shifting ground with regard to what it means to be Chinese. While communities like the 'locals' of French Polynesia have chosen strategies of assimilation, the cosmopolitans have opted for a promotion of Chinese ethnicity, and the community in Pakistan favors remigration. These communities are not homogenous entities and highlight the nuance of Chineseness according to internal ethnic, migratory, language, political, and cultural variations.

However, the limited size of these communities has also resulted in shared characteristics like defined spheres/occupations, tangible ethnic boundaries, and an influx of Chinese labour migrants. Moreover, all are the target of various efforts made by the Chinese Government to unite and reform Chinese diasporas. For example, efforts like the PRC's official language policy aimed at creating a sense of Chinese linguistic citizenship enable and promote widely perpetuated generalizations about the nature of the Chinese diaspora and undermine efforts to recognize the diversity of Chinese Overseas Communities (Guccini and Zhang, 2021).

The Chinese Caribbean Community

To better understand the context of the Chinese community of Barbados, it is essential to have a grasp of the history of Chinese migration within the region itself. Chinese migrants to the British Caribbean first arrived on the islands of Jamaica, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago in the 19th century following labour shortages on plantation sites following emancipation (Crawford, 2006). These migrants who came over as indentured labourers were predominantly Hakka speakers from Guangdong province (Shibata, 2006). But they did not stay on the plantations long. After the completion of their contracts, they relocated throughout the Caribbean in pursuit of better opportunities (Crawford, 2006). In Jamaica, Bohr emphasizes the rapid success of their transition into retail trade, which created the "impression of a Chinese monopoly in Jamaica's retail sector" to the extent that later migrants solely came for the purpose of joining this trade (Bohr, 2004, p. 50).

The entrepreneurial success put the Chinese among "the richest and the best educated of West Indian ethnic groups" in the 1960s (as cited in Crawford, 2006, p. 67). According to Crawford, "the average Chinese income was almost five times that of blacks and thrice that of coloured Jamaicans in 1960, and the Chinese of Trinidad and Suriname similarly prospered" (Crawford, 2006, p. 67). As a result, the Chinese communities were particularly visible as members like the first President of Guyana, Arthur Chung, and Guyana's Governor General Solomon Hochoy rose to positions of power. However, Black Power Movements throughout the Caribbean in the 1960s and 1970s led to outmigration, as many moved to the United States and Canada (Crawford, 2006). For example, while the Chinese population in Jamaica numbered 11,710 in 1970, this figure fell to 5,320 in 1982 (Crawford, 2006).

Nonetheless, these communities have persisted despite many difficulties over the years, undergoing significant and imperative changes. Since their arrival, Chinese were subjected to the norms of the majority, but "they could be left alone as long as they did not cross lawful boundaries" (Shibata, 2006, p. 52). As a result, they made their own space to express cultural traditions, even altering them and creating something new (Shibata, 2006). Today, these communities would be described as integrated and well-established. Yet, their "marginalized position in their cultural representation" is not forgotten (Shibata, 2006, p. 71). Shibata concludes that, "with considerable achievements in society, contemporary focus has shifted to cultural revitalization, if not

restoration, which was previously given up for the sake of integration and assimilation as a visible ethnic minority." (Shibata, 2006, p. 52).

3. Methodology

Our methods for primary data collection consisted entirely of key informant interviews with restaurant owners and activists from the Chinese community in Barbados (Pinto et al., 2015). The interviews were semi-structured in nature and consisted of prepared questions to guide the conversation (see Appendix A), but our discussions were not limited to those topics (Dunn, 2016). We employed a modified snowball sampling strategy, starting with the restaurant owner of a Chinese restaurant we visited in Holetown. His contacts and knowledge helped launch the springboard for our investigation. This method of sampling was supplemented with convenience sampling, wherein we went to Chinese restaurants we found on Google Maps along H7 from Bridgetown to Oistins (see Map). Using this method was appropriate because of the short time frame given for research, the small population of Chinese Barbadians, and the importance of restaurant businesses in the Chinese community on the island. We do recognize, however, the limitations of this strategy (see Section 6: Challenges and Limitations). Some interviews were recorded and others were not based on the setting and the length. After conducting our interviews, we transcribed the recorded ones and curated notes on the non-recorded ones. The interview data was then summarized in Section 4: Results (see below).

4. Results

4.1 Overview

Our study conducted interviews with Chinese immigrants who currently reside in Barbados, with the goal of exploring their experiences and perceptions of living and working in the country. A total of seven interviews were conducted, consisting of individuals who operate Chinese restaurants in Barbados, one government advisor, and one farmer. The interviews were conducted using a semi-structured approach, with a set of open-ended questions used as a guide. The questions were designed to gather information on a range of topics, including the participants' and

their family background, their motivations for immigrating to Barbados, their perceptions of the local culture, their experiences of running a business in Barbados and the impact of COVID-19.

Some interviews were conducted in person at a location convenient to the participants, and the remaining were conducted through WeChat. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were analyzed using a thematic analysis approach to identify patterns and themes that emerged from the data. Prior to conducting the interviews, ethical considerations were carefully considered and implemented to ensure that participants' privacy and confidentiality were respected throughout the study. Participants were informed of the purpose of the study and the nature of their involvement.

The findings from the interviews provide insights into the experiences of Chinese immigrants in Barbados, including their challenges and successes in running a business and adapting to the local culture, the importance of family support and community networks, and the experiences of discrimination and cultural differences. Overall, by utilizing a mixed-methods approach, the study was able to capture a range of perspectives and experiences, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Chinese immigrants in Barbados.

4.2 Chinese in Barbados: A Small Community

The scope of investigation for Chinese immigrants includes temporary Chinese workers holding overseas contracts, first and second-generation Chinese immigrants who have settled in Barbados. The Chinese immigrant community in Barbados is relatively small, with a total population of around 200 individuals. Many of these individuals came from the Guangdong province in Baiyun District, a region in southern China known for its economic development and bustling manufacturing industry. Others come from Fujian Province, Liaoning Province, Shandong Province and other parts of China. It is noteworthy that they mostly come from China's coastal provinces, which is consistent with the distribution of Chinese overseas immigrants in other countries, with fewer Chinese people coming from inland provinces. Most of the Chinese immigrants have been residing in Barbados for more than ten years, with some having been in Barbados for over 20 years. In terms of age, the Chinese immigrant community in Barbados is predominantly composed of individuals who are in their 40s or older. Among our interviewees, only one of our respondents is under 40, who is a second-generation Chinese immigrant, all the others are first-generation Chinese immigrants. This may be due to the fact that many of these

individuals came to Barbados to start businesses or find employment opportunities, which typically require a certain level of experience and expertise.

Most of the Chinese immigrants in Barbados arrived in the country through personal networks, such as friends and relatives who were already settled down in Barbados. This highlights the importance of social connections and networks for immigrant communities, particularly in the absence of formal support systems. Our findings also revealed that the Chinese immigrant community in Barbados is primarily composed of male individuals who are married, and half of our respondents had spouses and children outside of Barbados, including in China or Canada. This gender and marital status distribution may be related to the types of businesses that many Chinese immigrants operate in Barbados, such as restaurants and farms, which often require a significant amount of time and effort to run successfully.

Table 1. Demographics Information of Study Participants （N = 7)

Demographic variables	**Range**	**n(%)**
Sex		
Male	-	6 (85.71%)
Female	-	1 (14.29%)
Age (years)	-	
Under 40	Second-generation	1 (14.29%)
Over 40	First-generation	6 (85.71%)
Length of residence in Barbados (years)		
Under 5	-	1 (14.29%)
5 - 15	-	2 (28.58%)
Over 15	-	4 (57.14%)
Place of origin		
Mainland China (Guangdong Province)	-	4 (57.14%)
Mainland China (Other Provinces)	-	2 (28.58%)
Jamaica		1 (14.29%)

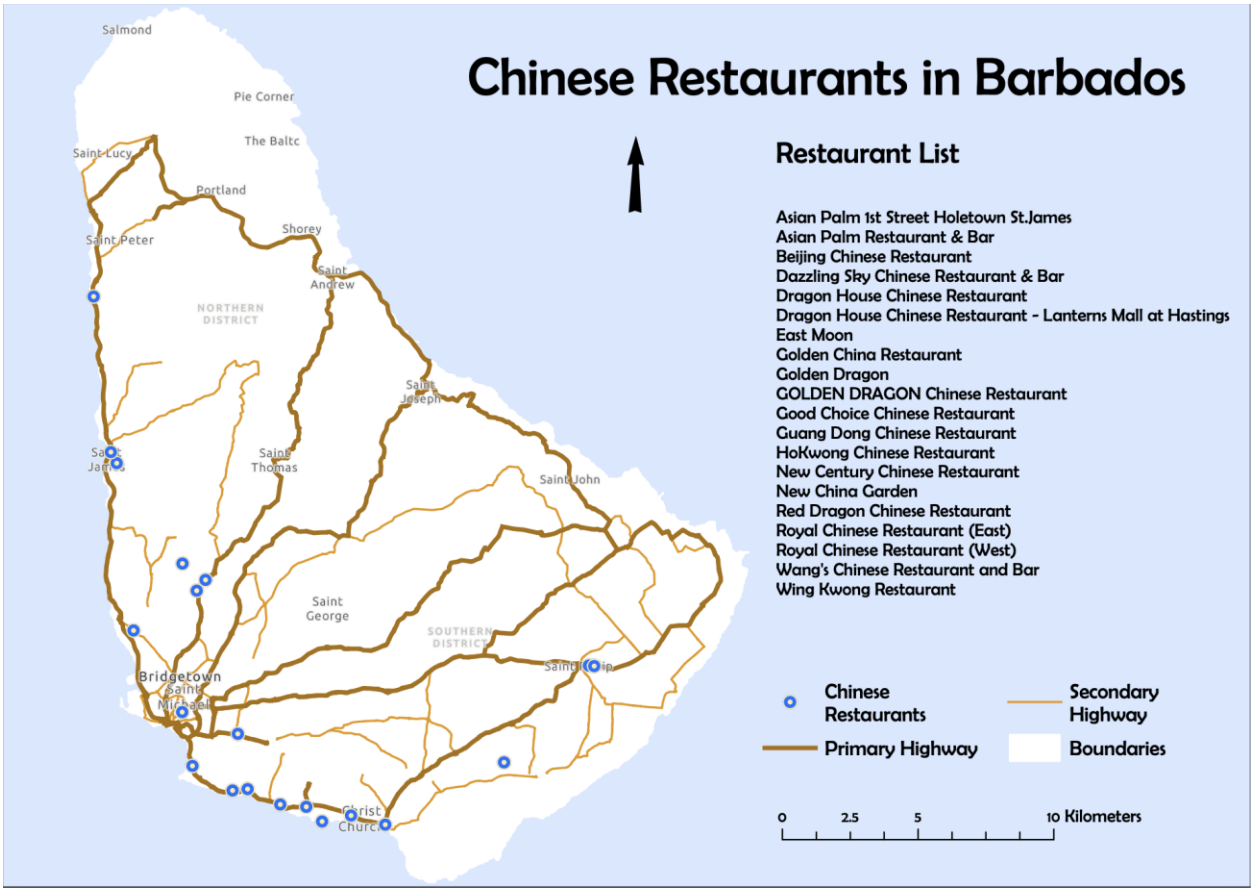

Figure 1. Chinese Restaurants in Barbados

4.3 Motivation and Occupation

The motivations and occupations of Chinese Barbadians are varied but follow several key archetypes and patterns. First, the vast majority of Chinese immigrants we spoke to were involved or had been involved in the restaurant industry. Our participants estimated that there were between 20-25 Chinese restaurants on the island and approximately 200-300 Chinese people. Thus, the ratio of Chinese restaurants to the overall population is quite high. However, there is also a group of Chinese that came to work in various capacities on Chinese-funded construction projects on the island. Many of these migrants are more temporary and go back to China after their work is complete. Finally, there have also been Chinese medical teams sent to Barbados as part of China's international health aid over the years; these expatriate nurses are more temporary immigrants and we did not encounter any during our time in Barbados, although we did hear about them (Sun, et al., 2022). Many Chinese immigrants in Barbados mentioned that the weather and climate of Barbados were major factors in attracting them to come, as well as what they perceived as a more relaxed work culture than China.

The population of Chinese immigrants is also quite varied in regard to their future plans, with some immigrants saying they hope to go back to China while others plan on staying in Barbados and eventually bringing over their families from China. Some respondents mentioned that they really enjoy the lifestyle in Barbados, while others did not emphasize this aspect much. None of our respondents seemed to have an overall negative impression of Barbados, although they all mentioned various challenges and difficulties (see section 4.5).

4.4 Connections to China and Other Chinese in Barbados

Our respondents noted very different levels of connections to people back in China and to other Chinese in Barbados. None of the respondents characterized the Chinese community in Barbados as being particularly tight-knit, but the respondents from Guangdong province in general had more contact with each other, as well as those who had been there longer. One respondent from Northern China mentioned feeling on the outside of the group due to not being able to speak Cantonese; he had also arrived in Barbados much more recently than many of the others.

Some participants mentioned sending remittances back to their families in China; this was to be expected, as many immigrants were men who came by themselves and left their families back in China. Many respondents mentioned that they had not been back to China since before the pandemic, and even before the pandemic some had gone as many as six years without returning, remarking on the vast changes that occurred in that timeframe. Thus, many participants may be disconnected from the current trends of domestic Chinese society. One participant mentioned that he planned on bringing his wife and children to Barbados one day, whereas another one mentioned he plans to save enough money in Barbados and then return to China. Both men are currently restaurateurs.

4.5 Challenges

Barbadian citizenship: A long way to go

The process of obtaining citizenship in Barbados for Chinese immigrants is a significant challenge. Despite their contributions to the local economy, the strict immigration laws make it difficult for Chinese immigrants to become citizens. The majority of Chinese immigrants in Barbados do not hold Barbadian citizenship. In order to hold Barbadian citizenship, they must go through a rigorous process that takes more than fifteen years on average. This process includes obtaining tourist visas, work permits, and green cards while providing evidence that their work will not negatively impact the job market for local Barbadians. Although Barbados promotes itself

as having a lenient immigration policy, our respondents describe a different reality. One of the individuals we interviewed mentioned that she had been living in Barbados for 21 years, and she was only granted citizenship last year. Another interviewee who has been living in Barbados for 20 years still only holds a green card status. This highlights the challenges and limitations faced by immigrant communities in accessing citizenship and the formal legal status needed to fully participate in the social and political life of their host country.

Language Barrier: A hurdle few tried to cross

The language barrier is a significant obstacle for Chinese immigrants when they move to foreign countries. As English is the official language in Barbados, it poses a challenge for Chinese immigrants, especially the first generation who do not speak English fluently. This group of immigrants is typically over 40 years old and did not have English as a mandatory subject during their education. As a result, they lack solid English education compared to younger Chinese immigrants.

Countries such as Canada and the United States have language policies that help immigrants become involved in society. The Canadian government provides free French and English training courses to immigrants who need to improve their language skills. However, the Barbados Government does not offer free language courses. To learn English, one must have a strong motivation to teach themselves or pay for an English course. Given immigrants are busy at work, rarely people would be willing to pay for learning English during their spare time, which makes them less motivated to learn. Moreover, churches in other developed countries also often take on some of the social responsibilities. For example, Chinese churches in Canada offer language classes and serve as community hubs for new immigrants. Unfortunately, there is no Chinese church in Barbados, and the Barbados Chinese Association does not offer such opportunities. This limits the possibilities for first-generation Chinese immigrants to learn English.

Out of all the interviewees, except one second-generation Chinese immigrant, who grew up in Jamaica and spoke fluent English, only one respondent mentioned that he taught himself English in order to integrate into the local community. He is fluent in English and volunteered to be interviewed in English. However, all other interviewees reported that their English was not good, which led to communication barriers with the locals. The lack of language support and resources in Barbados makes it difficult for Chinese immigrants to integrate and fully participate in the local community.

The Diminished Safety of Chinese Immigrants in Barbados

Barbados is widely regarded as a safe country when compared to other Caribbean nations, with a lower crime rate and crime mainly consisting of petty theft and burglary. However, the safety of Chinese immigrants in Barbados has diminished over time, with reports of incidents climbing in recent years. One example is the case of one female respondent who was robbed multiple times, with the most serious incident involving a robber who trespassed into her bedroom and waited for her. It is noteworthy that when we asked about the challenges they faced in their daily lives, none of the interviewees mentioned safety as a concern at first. However, upon further questioning, some restaurant owners revealed that they considered robbery to be a common occurrence. They also held the view that calling the police after a robbery is often futile, as they do not respond adequately to resolve the issue. In the event of a robbery, the embassy would typically issue a warning through WeChat groups to remind caution, but that was the extent of the support provided. The restaurant owners stated that they did not perceive robbery as a serious threat, as robbers would typically only take the cash earned for that day or week, and there was little risk to their personal safety. This suggests that more needs to be done to raise awareness among Chinese immigrants about the potential dangers. The government should also take steps to improve the police response to incidents and provide more resources to support victims of crime targeting minorities.

The difference in culture between Chinese people and local Barbadians was noted by several participants as well. However, this issue was heavily interlinked to the issue of language, although it often goes beyond this. Our second-generation respondent noted that:

> But, if you can connect to someone that can appreciate it, who doesn't have the typical stereotypes of eating dog, they're more sensitive because they've been there and seen it. This creates an even stronger bond and appreciation which increases welcomeness. People feel more understood, because they know not everyone is making snap assumptions based on their race.
>
> -- quote from key informant interview

Another respondent, the farm-owner, noted that:

> Sometimes I think things are so different, they're working very very slow, wanna go fast [sic]. But if you are following these steps, you wouldn't have everything good [sic]. If you know some people, it will go smoother, a lot of things happen under the table [sic]
>
> -- quote from key informant interview

The challenges presented by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have also greatly challenged the Chinese community on Barbados. While the pandemic situation has improved in many ways and the restrictions have been lifted, the economic and social impact on the community is felt. For immigrants such as one participant who arrived in Barbados in 2019, the pandemic totally disrupted his restaurant business and his ability to integrate into Bajan society; he said that his restaurant revenue went from $600 to $30 USD a day because of the pandemic. The pandemic also has limited the opportunities for many Chinese to gather together and forge community ties, although these are starting to recover somewhat.

One of the biggest challenges facing the Chinese community in Barbados is discrimination. Many Chinese businesses in Barbados have been targeted due to perceived submissiveness (温顺). For example, one of our informants, a female restaurateur, was robbed several times, both at her business and at home. However, she did not volunteer this information, even when asked what her biggest difficulties in Barbados were. This information was mentioned to us by several other key informants when discussing the issue of security on the island. Our second-generation informant told us that another reason for the targeting of Chinese is that Chinese businesses are known to carry lots of cash.

The isolation and feeling of being a perpetual foreigner also greatly impacts Barbados' Chinese community. One key informant expressed the frustration of being treated as different and having to answer for his whole country, good or bad:

> Because, an example here, whenever something happens in China, people talking, 'oh, you are China!' [sic] Everything put on myself, good or bad. They don't care about your feelings because it's 'my country, why you here?' [sic] Everywhere you go, people want to push you out. Everywhere, when you talk, you're Chinese, you're different.
>
> --quote from key informant

However, the Chinese community on Barbados continues to persist and fight for its place in the island's cultural, social, and economic ecosystem. Our sole second-generation participant described how the Fish and Dragon Festival "aims to show the fusion between Chinese and

Barbadian culture." He expressed the hope that the response of the average Barbadian will continue to evolve and change to the point "where the average Barbadian doesn't see a Chinese person as completely separate and foreign to the locale and that it becomes more fused." Thus, while undeniable differences remain between the Chinese population and the majority-Black Bajan population, the harsh divides between the two are slowly being eroded, at least for the younger generations. However, this optimism was not always shared by the older participants. Experiences of and thus responses to discrimination have been shaped by the different participants' life experiences and backgrounds, and often mediated based on English proficiency.

5. Discussion

The Chinese community of Barbados has not received much academic attention. This paper was our attempt to change that, and we were able to integrate a review of available relevant literature with our key informant interviews of Chinese people living in Barbados to further the understanding of this small but incredibly complex and economically present community. Most previous literature has focused on the economic nature of this community, but we conducted our investigation with the aim of moving beyond this to understand the social and cultural experiences and dynamics of this community.

Our research on the Chinese community in Barbados revealed many of the manifestations of underlying processes explained by migration literature, such as transnationalism. Chinese Barbadians cannot be fully understood within the boundaries of a single nation-state, confirming the idea of transnationalism in conceiving of migration beyond linear and one-dimensional movements. Many of our Chinese Barbadian respondents came to the country via other countries, notably Canada, Jamaica, and Guyana. Some of the respondents also expressed the hope to go back to China in the future, again demonstrating the fluid and hybrid lives and the multi-directional flows brought about by migration in the 21st Century.

The Chinese community on Barbados is unique, but it is also similar in many ways to other smaller overseas Chinese communities, as mentioned above in the literature review section. From the "twice again" migration status of Chinese immigrants in Pakistan (similar to those in Barbados who first settled in Canada, Jamaica, and Guyana) to the "old" and "new" Chinese of Mauritius -- also a small island developing state (SIDS) -- we found in our research that the

Chinese community of Barbados exhibits some similar dynamics and patterns to other Chinese communities. One interpersonal consequence of this dynamic was, in our estimation, the great warmth, excitement, and kindness with which we were received by the Chinese informants with whom we spoke. Many restaurateurs treated us to free food and drinks when we spoke to them because they were so excited to talk with another Chinese person who was interested in their restaurant. These kinds of experiences would not be as common in large cities where large Chinese communities are established.

On a more macro-level, we see the Chinese government using its connections to connect with the small but significant diaspora and harness the power of this community. This is one of the key themes of modern migration research, particularly related to China, and we found it reflected in Barbados in the way that relationships were built with the Embassy and the Confucius Institute, as well as with the delegation to China in which one of our respondents had participated. We also saw the linkages between the Chinese community on Barbados and the other Chinese Caribbean communities, particularly in Jamaica, Trinidad, and Guyana. However, there was also a clear contrast mentioned regarding Jamaica due to its size (the Chinese community in Jamaica is many hundreds times larger than in Barbados).

6. Challenges and Limitations

Despite obtaining many useful and interesting results from our study, our study was also limited in several key areas. First, the most severe constraint we faced was the short timeframe we had to conduct fieldwork. We only had three days, two of which were weekend days when certain businesses, organizations, and restaurants were closed. If we had had more time to conduct fieldwork, it would have been possible to, for example, visit the archives of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, and speak to an archivist working there who is working on compiling a file of all information related to Chinese immigrants to Barbados. We would have also been able to interview more people. Second, another major obstacle was not being able to speak Cantonese. Since a significant majority of the Chinese community in Barbados are Cantonese speakers, not being able to speak Cantonese presented a barrier in communicating with them. While we were able to communicate with them, mostly using Mandarin but also in

English, we were able to tell in our interactions with them that speaking Cantonese would have helped us gather more in-depth responses and built more trust and closeness with Cantonese-speaking participants. Third, we did not speak with more recent immigrants involved with the construction industry or the hospital. Our sampling of key informants was heavily biased towards the restaurant industry. This was necessary due to our other constraints, namely time and resources, but may have biased our results. Nonetheless, we maintain that our results from talking to key informants in the restaurant industry (as well as a younger second-generation immigrant and an older farm owner) still provided incredibly valuable insight into the Chinese community of Barbados. Fourth, the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in Barbados told us that they would only disclose detailed information to students studying at Chinese universities, not foreign schools such as McGill. Finally, many potential informants with whom we had made contact and arranged remote interviews did not respond to our questions or did not contact us. This helped us understand the power of in-person connections, as those who we talked to in person were much more likely to actually give us full and detailed responses that we could use in our paper.

7. Conclusion

Throughout our study of the Chinese community in Barbados, several key themes emerged in addition to the mosaic of details and academic background that filled in our understanding. First, the community is divided along several different axes, primarily language (Cantonese vs Mandarin), occupation (restaurant vs construction vs medicine), generation (different migration waves), and region (Northern vs Southern Chinese). There was also some diversity in the key motivators, but most were united by the hope for good weather, a relaxed working environment, and better business opportunities. The community has faced several challenges, mostly related to language, identity/belonging, and security, but has responded in resilient ways and continues to fight for its place in subtle but powerful ways. The community is getting smaller, with outmigration prevalent, especially after COVID-19. However, there is still a remarkable presence of organizations such as the Beijing to Bridgetown Project (in collaboration with the Barbados Museum and Historical Society), the Confucius Institute, and the Chinese Association of Barbados.

We see the contradictions inherent in any diaspora, which shows that our way of thinking about migrant communities may be outdated. Even among such a small community (estimates range from 200-400 Chinese Barbadians, with most putting the number close to 200), there is tremendous diversity and it is impossible to speak of a single Chinese experience in Barbados, despite the presence of some common unifying aspects. In some ways, the Chinese community of Barbados is a perfect encapsulation of the overseas Chinese experience; but in others, it could not be more different from the dynamics of Chinese communities in countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, or Canada.

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Appendix A: Question List

Part 1. Basic Immigration Information

1.Name? Age? Where are you from in China?

2.What time did you move to Barbados? What are your motivations for migrating? How? What did you do before you came to Barbados?

3. Where do you live now?

4. Did you know anyone who came here before you?

5. Do you plan to stay in Barbados for a short or long time?

Part 2. Family

2.1 Did you come to Barbados alone or as a family? Where is your family now? How do you stay in touch with your network in China?

2.2 What are your connections with China? How do you stay connected with your culture? Do you go back to China often?

Part 3. Work

What is your main business/occupation?

Who is your customer base? (locals vs tourists)

Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic?

Have you felt exploited by your employers/workplace?

How many employees do you have? What is their salary?

Part 4. Chinese Community

Immigrant Profile? Connection with the Chinese Embassy?

Connection with the Chinese Association in Barbados? Any other connection?

Is the Chinese community tight-knit and cohesive?

Do you think the Chinese community is growing?

Part 5. Feelings

What are the most attractive aspects of Barbados?

What are your relationships with locals? Do you feel that you are a part of Bajan society?

What are some of the difficulties you've faced?

Do you feel isolated?