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Gentrification and Local Restaurants: Chinatown District of Los Angeles In A Digital Age

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Loyola Marymount University
University Honors
Program

Gentrification and Local Restaurants: Chinatown District of Los Angeles In A Digital Age

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements of the University Honors Program
of Loyola Marymount University

by

Sky Xavier & Dr. Christopher J. Finlay
3 December 2020

Literature Review

In Chinatown, locally owned restaurants directly reflect the area's tradition and culture (Molina, 2015). Food plays a central role in Chinese tradition, as communities and families gather over shared meals (Simoons, 1991). Chinatown's business landscape, however, has changed in response to gentrification and a whiter clientele. Restaurant owners in Chinatown since the 1940s have connected to people outside of their immediate community through, "catering to the American public's interest in Chinese food, curios, and culture," (Lin, 2008, p. 112). The construction of Los Angeles's Gold Line Metro directly increased tourism to this area in 2003 (Lin, 2008), further amplifying the need to cater toward non-Chinese customers.

Although tourism drives economic growth, this trend ultimately harms locally owned Chinese restaurants and businesses that reflect authentic culture. Investors take advantage of the low property prices to start new non-Chinese businesses, in both real estate lots and business lots (Meltzer, 2016). In effect, this strips Chinatown of the locally owned businesses and forces owners of such places to move out (Lin, 2008). As the Chinese population is faced with higher property prices around Chinatown, they must move further away. Furthermore, diminishing the number of Chinese customers looking for authentic cultural foods in Chinatown. With less Chinese residents and more tourism, local business owners are faced with the decision to either exclude authentic cultural aspects of their business or to cater to a whiter clientele, or close down (Staley, 2018).

Trip review apps, such as Yelp, further promote this erasure of traditional culture (Zukin et al., 2015), as they inspire a broader range of customers to visit authentic cultural restaurants (Staley, 2018). Additionally, businesses must analyze their online presence as the demographic of their neighborhood changes. As more affluent demographics consult Yelp, Google, and other

online review platforms, local businesses may be harmed by their current representation on such platforms (Zukin et al., 2015). Foodies take to social media and online review platforms to find authentic restaurants in such areas, which may harm these businesses if they do not shift to cater towards this whiter clientele (Alkon & Cadji, 2018). Although foodies and hipsters look for these culturally authentic restaurants, they also expect such places to fit their expectations of the culture. This could speed up the effects of gentrification, as these restaurants must shift towards a whiter clientele or be replaced by new businesses that cater to this more affluent clientele (Zukin et al., 2015). Now, locally owned Chinese restaurants in Chinatown compete with larger Chinese chains serving Americanized Chinese dishes (Zukin et al., 2015). Hence why Chinese restaurants must shift away from traditional foods, as they need to cater towards what customers expect.

Analysis

Introduction

This paper analyzes the effects of gentrification and the digital age on local restaurants, specifically those in the Chinatown District of Los Angeles, California. To examine the effects of gentrification on Chinatown's local businesses, I interviewed Daniel Yin of Yang Chow restaurant over Zoom. Yang Chow has three locations, this research centers around their original location in Chinatown. Yin now manages all online communications and was previously an in-person manager. His experience in the Chinatown restaurant business provides insight into this cultural district's changing business landscape, as his family has owned this restaurant since 1977.

Yin's 4-generation legacy in Chinatown has witnessed the rise and fall of tourism within this cultural district of Los Angeles. Previously, this cultural district boomed with tourists and rich cultural experiences. Now, Chinatown faces challenges as gentrification has forced many

Chinese business owners to move East of Los Angeles and farther away from Chinatown. This paper will examine how gentrification in Chinatown pushes out both residents and local restaurant owners, which also diminishes traditional Chinese culture. Further, I analyze how trip review apps, such as Yelp, encourage such whitewashing of traditional Chinese restaurants in Chinatown and other cultural districts through a virtual ethnography.

Generational Connection to Chinatown

For generations, Los Angeles's Chinatown district has provided Chinese families with a place to both live and start their own businesses (Lin, 2008). Historically, this action has been more prominent among recent immigrants from China who, "are generally poorer, less educated, [and] less acculturated," (Lin, 2008, p. 121). This provides Chinese immigrants with an opportunity to create a living for themselves in Los Angeles. Many families who start businesses in Chinatown live there or in surrounding areas. As in Daniel Yin's family with Yang Chow restaurant, these Chinese family-owned businesses are traditionally passed down for each generation to run.

In 1977, Yin's family created Yang Chow restaurant in Los Angeles's Chinatown cultural district. Yin recalls living in Chinatown with his grandmother at 6 years old and visiting his family's restaurant, along with other locally owned businesses. At this time, Yin and his cousins worked at the restaurant to assist with daily tasks. The father of Yin's cousin ran the restaurant during this time, so Yin allowed him to take over as manager. Since then, he and his cousin have been running all three locations of Yang Chow in different capacities.

His cousin is the main manager of all three locations and splits his time between them. Daniel Yin previously held the role as an assistant manager. He would go in every Sunday to assist with operations from 2005 to 2016. Now, he acts as the online communications manager.

Yin created this position in 2000 to assist his cousin with running Yang Chow. As online communications manager, he is the fourth generation to uphold the ideal that family should inherit responsibility of their restaurant. Although Yin is unsure if his son will commit to running Yang Chow's locations in the future, he foresees the restaurant staying in the family for a fifth generation. When prompted with the question of an outsider taking over the restaurant, Daniel Yin responded with, "Uh I don't foresee that unless there's some crazy offer. Like, 'hey here's 5 million dollars we'll take the restaurant from you.'" This reveals their strong commitment to the Chinese tradition of keeping the restaurant's ownership within their family. Yet, such commitment to passing family businesses down through generations has become more difficult in Chinatown's changing landscape.

Changing Landscape of Chinatown

Now, Chinatown provides a much different experience for immigrants and local business owners. Yin recalls a change in Chinatown's clientele starting in the 80s, as this cultural district became a tourist attraction, "it was super busy, lots of people coming into shops, um coming into restaurants and stuff." As tourism became a prominent driver of Chinatown's economy, local Chinese restaurants and businesses were faced with a changing clientele. Rather than serving customers who expected traditional Chinese food, Yang chow and other local restaurants began to change their menus to match tourists' tastes. Yin refers to his father's experience with changing the menu, to explain how Chinatown restaurants began to serve a whiter clientele, "I think most of our changes in menu came in the 80s. (...) My dad tells me back in the day that our clientele was more Chinese at the very beginning." Restaurants got rid of traditional Chinese dishes and replaced them with Americanized versions, such as orange chicken.

As this shift in clientele occurred, a changing residential landscape in Chinatown and its surrounding areas simultaneously occurred. The Chinese residents in and surrounding Chinatown, many of whom owned local businesses, began to move East of the area. Yin explains that Chinatown primarily provides families with apartment housing, which eventually forced larger families out. Although Daniel Yin does not view this migration as an effect of gentrification, he recognizes the effects this had on Chinatown. While Chinese families left Chinatown for San Gabriel Valley and other East Los Angeles areas, so did their businesses.

Now, Chinese shoppers do not need to visit Chinatown to find authentic Chinese products. These Chinese restaurants, markets, and businesses have also moved to East Los Angeles, as Daniel Yin states, “now the dim sum restaurants [and seafood markets] are farther East. So anything that you need to buy or find for Chinese people can be found in the San Gabriel Valley.” This movement of Chinese-owned businesses out of Chinatown reflects both the migration of Chinese families to East LA, and the closure of businesses that did not cater to tourists’ expectations.

Once Chinese-owned restaurants began moving out of Chinatown, white-owned restaurants and art galleries began to fill these open real estate slots (Lin, 2008). Daniel Yin attributes this to low rent for businesses in Chinatown, “there are a lot of empty shops that are taken up by art galleries because rent is really cheap.” Although the rising prices did not drive out residents and local businesses, gentrification could take hold if this shift in Chinatown’s business landscape continues. With non-Chinese businesses taking over these empty properties in Chinatown, this cultural district may eventually lack any traditional Chinese culture.

This raises concern among the business owners who still remain in Chinatown. Although they have survived through changing their businesses to cater to tourists rather than Chinese

customers, Chinese businesses could be harmed if white-owned businesses continue to take over. This would shift the demographic even farther away from Chinese customers, raising concern about what Chinatown restaurants will survive in the future. Daniel Yin and his family are confident that their restaurant will not face any difficulties staying open amidst the changing business landscape of Chinatown. Yet, this proves to be a difficult subject to speak about, as Yin expressed the sadness of watching neighboring restaurants and businesses close down, “one of our close friends, family friends, closed their restaurant recently in Chinatown...Plum Tree Inn. And that’s kind of sad, but [long pause] I mean...sign of the times.” Yin’s long pause and reference to this being a sign of Chinatown’s current business landscape reveals that this has been an ongoing issue, which Chinese business owners have grappled with.

Yelp and Locally Owned Restaurants

As locally owned restaurants have struggled with this changing landscape of Chinatown, many have not been able to rely on trip review apps to bring them more business. Such apps allow customers to frame the restaurants they review with negative or positive connotations (Zukin et al., 2015). Rather than giving honest reviews to local restaurants, Daniel Yin has experienced that customers tend to utilize such platforms to threaten Yang Chow restaurant. He recalls many incidents where customers have tried to get free items from the restaurant, by threatening to leave a poor review. This can harm locally owned restaurants more than large chains, as they have a smaller budget for restaurant operations. Yin discusses how this has led to disagreements with customers, since management must be wary of such complaints, “you get customers who threaten us with a bad review (...) I mean what else are we going to do? We can’t

just give away free food.” Such threats with poor ratings can also harm businesses beyond budgets.

Locally owned restaurants rely on Yelp and other review apps to attract more customers. Many bad reviews on a locally owned restaurant will have a larger impact on their ability to gain new customers than on large chains. If a large chain restaurant has low reviews, people may be more inclined to visit a low-scoring chain that they have familiarity with than a low-scoring local restaurant that they do not recognize. As in Yang Chow’s case, Daniel Yin states, “[Yelp] hurts us more than it helps us.” Yin explains that more factors play into a review than the food itself, sometimes factors out of a restaurant’s control.

This proves to be true as Yang Chow uses the same chefs at every restaurant, yet reviews vary based on location. Yin articulated this conflict between food review apps and elements a restaurant cannot be held responsible for, as he told a story about Yang Chow’s East Pasadena location, “[outside of the restaurant] there used to be a motel, the motel is still there. And they used to have a seedier clientele at the motel where [laughs] as the party was leaving and walking back to their car, they get solicited a prostitute. So they gave us a one star rating because of that prostitution.” Clearly, the area a restaurant is located influences the ratings they receive. This raises concern for locally owned restaurants in non-gentrified areas, which could attract whiter customers through such review apps. As Zukin et al. (2015) finds, “Although not much is known about Yelp reviewers, the few details that have appeared suggest they represent prototypical demographic segments of urban gentrifiers,” (4). With whiter clientele rating local restaurants in areas they are not familiar with, restaurants could face difficulties staying in business.

When applied to Chinatown, this same effect could further damage the cultural district’s local business landscape. As businesses in Chinatown now largely survive on tourism traffic

rather than a Chinese demographic, clients may not be familiar with the area. Yin explains that Chinatown has difficult parking and is run down. If clients take into account their experience going to and from the restaurant when writing a review, local restaurants could struggle to continue attracting tourist clientele. As local restaurants face scrutiny for elements out of their control, this amplifies concern of white clients pushing out cultural restaurants.

Furthermore, Chinatown's local restaurants face the reality of continuing to alter their menu based on the shifting clientele. As Yelp apps continue to bring outsiders into Chinatown for what they consider to be traditional Chinese cuisine, the cultural authenticity of said restaurants continues to diminish. While the clientele becomes whiter, they expect an experience to cater to their expectations of a culture. If local Chinese restaurants do not meet such expectations, they could face even more scrutiny on trip review apps

Gentrification as an Opportunity

As restaurant owners in urban areas and cultural districts encounter a changing business landscape during the gentrification of their area, owners must decide how they will adapt. Many restaurant owners find it troubling to change the focus of their business, especially if they serve culturally authentic cuisine. To survive in an area undergoing gentrification, however, restaurant owners must view this as an opportunity to grow their businesses (Meltzer, 2016). Along with a change in residents comes a change in customers for these restaurants. Many lose their old clientele who slowly move out of the area, while a more affluent and whiter clientele replaces them. This requires business and restaurants to reassess what clientele they cater to.

While restaurants in these areas begin to analyze how they can change to serve a new clientele, they must understand their changing role in the community. Local restaurants in urban and cultural districts traditionally provide residents with a place to understand their place in the

community, as they interact with each other in these shared spaces—unique to the area (Molina, 2015). Molina (2015) references the local Mexican restaurant, El Nayarit, to ground this theory in context of Echo Park residents' experiences. This restaurant's role in Echo Park's Mexican community exemplifies what local restaurants resemble for many residents of other urban areas. El Nayarit provided a place for Echo Park residents and its visitors to engage with each other and come together through mutual understanding (Molina, 2015). For residents, this represents a, "ready-made social network for immigrants new to a dauntingly large, foreign city," (Molina, 2015). This exemplifies the role of local restaurants in urban and cultural districts, as it gives residents a sense of familiarity while meeting new people in and beyond their community.

When areas undergo gentrification, however, restaurants lose their ability to be place-makers for these communities. With an influx of new and wealthier residents, such local restaurants must pivot away from serving this role in their respective community. This poses restaurants with an ethical dilemma of whether to serve what is left of their old community, or to shift to cater to a wealthier and generally whiter clientele. Although faced with this difficult decision, local restaurants in areas undergoing gentrification must begin catering to a more expensive clientele to survive. Essentially, taking away the community aspect of their space and replacing it with higher class service.

To understand what some small business owners would do in this situation, I consulted the Subreddit, [r/smallbusiness](#), under the guise of a local Chinese restaurant owner in Los Angeles, "I am a small business owner of my family's Chinese restaurant. The area around us in Los Angeles is being gentrified and it has really hurt my business. I see less of my local regulars and less Chinese families coming in. (...) How did you deal with this?" Many users replied and suggested that I take advantage of this opportunity to pivot my restaurant to serve the new and

wealthier clientele. This aligns with Meltzer's (2016) claim that gentrification may provide an opportunity for local businesses and restaurants, if they chose to pivot and serve the incoming demographic.

Although restaurant owners may find this troubling, they must recognize the opportunity this provides them with. With the rise of social media and food blogging, cultural cuisines have become trendy among hipsters and foodies (Staley, 2018). People seek out restaurants in cultural districts to experience different varieties of authentic cuisines. Many times, this brings them to cultural districts undergoing gentrification. This provides local restaurant owners with an opportunity to serve a wealthier clientele, which allows them to charge more for their dishes. Burnett (2013) cites her research on Vancouver's Chinatown district to support this idea, as the restaurants which survived during gentrification did so through becoming more upscale.

Furthermore, this change can also be observed in Los Angeles's Chinatown district. Their business landscape has gone through many changes, as Chinatown and its surrounding areas have undergone gentrification (Lin, 2008). With rising tourism traffic and surrounding areas becoming more expensive, locally owned Chinese restaurants in this area have survived the change in clientele through, "catering to the American public's interest in Chinese food, curios, and culture," (Lin, 2008, p. 112). This requires shifting away from traditional Chinese dishes and serving Americanized versions of this cuisine. Through doing so, local Chinese restaurants have been able to attract new customers from the shifting clientele and turn gentrification into an opportunity to keep their business afloat.

Online Review Platforms as a Threat

While locally owned restaurants try to survive amidst gentrification by shifting to cater to a more affluent clientele, they may still face difficulties presented through online review

platforms. These online spaces, such as Yelp and Google Reviews, allow users to produce the very content they consume (Zukin et al., 2015). As “producers” (Zukin et al., 2015), clients of local restaurants have the power to shape these businesses’ online image. Often this poses a threat to restaurants, as producers threaten restaurants with bad reviews for free items in return. Local restaurants in areas undergoing gentrification already face difficult financial decisions, as they deal with rising rent in the area. Such threats place additional strain on restaurants, as they transition to cater to a more affluent clientele.

Many restaurant owners on the Subreddit, r/restaurateur, complain of bad reviews customers post in hopes of compensation. Restaurant owners on this forum explain that many of the bad reviews reflect problems that were resolved before the customer left the restaurant. Yet, the customer still posts a bad review, even if they framed it as a threat or last resort. This reflects the problem many restaurants face in the age of online review platforms and producers. Many restaurant owners express that no matter what they do, there will always be a tension between expert opinions of restaurateurs and customer opinion.

While restaurateurs advise others to take these reviews with a grain of salt, they can drastically affect a local restaurant’s ability to survive in an area undergoing gentrification. Reviewers take into consideration the area a restaurant is in, which often reflects racist undertones (Zukin et al., 2015). Generally, producers on these apps rate restaurants in urban locations lower than those in more affluent and cleaner neighborhoods (Zukin et al., 2015). Restaurant owners on the Subreddit, r/restaurateur, expressed that these apps help bring in new customers in a changing business landscape. If people rate restaurants in areas undergoing gentrification based on their surroundings, then this could potentially turn away new customers from exploring the area while its changing. This could hurt existing local businesses, as many

hipsters and foodies turn to these apps to find authentic and cultural restaurants (Staley, 2018).

The speed at which the areas around such restaurants become gentrified is out of the restaurateurs' control. If this process takes too long, then such local businesses could continue to receive bad reviews based on their surroundings. Thus, slowing a local restaurant's ability to grow their business through serving this new clientele.

Furthermore, online review platforms pose a threat to restaurants that cannot keep up with a changing business landscape during gentrification. As potential residents of such areas explore local restaurants through these online spaces, they may be attracted to the neighborhood for its authentic local restaurants (Zukin et al., 2015). Specifically, an up and coming area with authentic local restaurants attracts hipsters and foodies, who are part of this more affluent demographic. In effect, online review platforms may inadvertently speed up gentrification through attracting more potential residents and creating buzz about the area (Zukin et al., 2015). This creates a cyclical effect, as affluent foodies continue to post about authentic cuisines served at local restaurants and attract more foodies who will do the same. Ultimately, attracting potential new residents through online restaurant review platforms.

This poses a threat to restaurants that cannot keep up with a quickly changing business landscape, as these local restaurants may not have the resources to shift and cater to this new clientele quick enough. The new clientele restaurants serve during gentrification, although looking for authentic cuisine, still expect these restaurants to meet their expectations for service, quality, and aesthetic. Lin (2008) cites this phenomena, as it occurred in Los Angeles's Chinatown. Many of the local authentic Chinese restaurants in this area were forced to either quickly pivot to serve white tourists' palates, or to completely shut down (Lin, 2008). This shift in clientele requires local restaurants in urban areas and cultural districts to change how they

operate, as they generally did not serve a more-affluent clientele before gentrification began in their area. If restaurants do not make these changes quickly, they cannot compete with other restaurants that do. Thus, harming their ability to thrive in a newly gentrified area with a more affluent clientele.

Conclusion

While local restaurants in urban areas and cultural districts face a changing business landscape during gentrification, they have the opportunity to pivot and serve a new, more affluent, clientele. This reflects the positive opportunities gentrification brings to an area, as local businesses gain new customers and can charge higher prices. For restaurants that successfully keep up with this changing business landscape, they have the opportunity to grow their restaurants. This comes at the cost of their authentic cuisines, as they must match new clientele's expectations and cater to a generally whiter palate.

With the rise of food fanatics, also known as foodies, on social media, local restaurants facing gentrification must also cater to their aesthetic expectations (Zukin et al., 2015). To do so, restaurants in areas experiencing gentrification must shift their business to modernize their presentation (Burnett, 2013). This has the potential to benefit these local restaurants, as it brings attention to their business and attracts new customers. For restaurants that cannot keep up, however, this poses a threat.

Once other local restaurants begin successfully catering to this new clientele, it creates competition in person and online. On virtual review platforms, such as Yelp and Google Reviews, restaurants face scrutiny from customers if they do not meet their expectations. In effect, driving business away from some local restaurants and causing them to close. For restaurants that successfully shift with the changing business landscape, they witness large

chains and white owned restaurants take over the commercial real estate slots where locally owned restaurants once stood (Lin, 2008). Thus, reflecting the contrasting effects of gentrification on local restaurants, which is contingent upon their ability to serve a whiter and more affluent clientele.

With less Chinese residents and more tourism, Chinatown's local restaurants have shifted away from traditional meals. Now, they cater to what white tourists expect of Chinese food by serving Americanized dishes. While the traditional restaurants and food markets have left Chinatown, white owned restaurants and art galleries have taken their place. Rather than filling these spots with new Chinese businesses, these white owned businesses lessen the amount of authentic Chinese culture in Chinatown. Through attracting new white customers to the area, these white businesses further threaten the existence of local Chinese businesses.

Now, Chinatown's local Chinese restaurants face the difficulty of competing with new white businesses for white customers. This current shift must be recognized, as what is left of traditional cuisine in Chinatown could be further diminished by this competition. Through a critical lens, one must evaluate the relationship between Chinese culture and the shift away from it to stay in business. Not only does this reflect a shift in residential demographic, but it also reveals a larger cultural problem. White tourism has not only pushed out Chinese businesses, but the white lens expects traditional culture to shift and fit into its expectations of a culture. The colonizing actions of white people still threaten local cultural districts in Los Angeles to this day. This research on Chinatown's current business landscape reflects these issues, as Chinese restaurants change to cater towards a whiter clientele and compete with incoming white-owned businesses.

Appendix A: Methods

The interview research for this paper was conducted over a 1-hour Zoom interview. This Zoom interview provided a platform for dialogue and comprehensive research, but there were still drawbacks to this method. Over a virtual interview, I could not gather environmental context clues and there were a few technical difficulties.

During our interview, Daniel Yin had a virtual background of the Lakers. This signaled his pride of living in Los Angeles for a majority of his life. However, this virtual background limited the information I could gather about Yin from his surroundings. At the end of the interview I heard his wife in the background, but that was the only environmental context I could gather. I could not gather visual clues about where he was Zooming in from, which could have led me to infer about his lifestyle. If I were to interview him in person at Yang Chow, I would have been able to gather more information about the environment of this restaurant. I could have situated the physical restaurant in the context of Chinatown and its surrounding businesses. Additionally, I could have observed how the restaurant operated and the general mood of employees. This would have allowed me to better understand the current physical space of Chinatown and how its businesses are transforming.

Furthermore, there were some technological challenges before and during the interview. Daniel Yin and I originally planned a Zoom interview on October 26th. After confirming with him that morning, he forgot about the interview. We eventually rescheduled for October 28th, which the interview took place on. Once we began the interview, my internet cut out four times. This created interruption in some of the questions and occasionally caused Daniel Yin to go off topic. Without these technical difficulties, the interview could have flowed smoother.

Throughout my virtual ethnography, I faced one ongoing issue. All of the restaurant forums and groups I joined had many posts that focused on the impact of COVID-19 on the

restaurant industry. Although informative, this information did not directly relate to my research topic. This added many hours of sifting through such posts onto my ethnography work.

However, this encouraged me to dig deeper into these forums than I would have. I had to read through more posts, which helped me understand the different culture and etiquette guidelines of each forum. One theme I picked up on throughout the forums and groups was frustration. Many restaurant owners seemed frustrated about Yelp, delivery apps, and local COVID-19 restrictions. Understanding this helped me formulate my posts and comments in a similar frustrated tone to those restaurant owners I observed.

During all interactions, I posed as either a restaurant owner or a daughter of a restaurant owner. On reddit, I remained completely anonymous as many other users did. This allowed me to disguise myself as a local Chinese restaurant owner in Los Angeles. In my post on r/smallbusiness, I specified that I wanted my restaurant and identity to remain anonymous. Most users were respectful of this. One user, however, asked for my restaurant's exact location. This was the only comment on my post I didn't reply to, as I did not want to give away my identity.

On Facebook, I used my personal profile. The groups I joined asked screening questions required for admission regarding my personal involvement in the restaurant industry and how I would use the group. To join, I lied by saying that my family owns a local restaurant and I help them run it occasionally. Nobody questioned my answers, so I joined without any difficulties. On the Facebook groups, I decided to lurk since I used my personal profile. I did not want anybody to click on my profile from a post or comment, to later discover neither my family nor myself are involved in the restaurant business.

To present my findings, I chose to focus on two main themes and their respective subthemes. I decided to focus on the potential benefits of gentrification for local restaurants and

online review platforms, as these were prevalent themes throughout all forums and groups I interacted with. I chose to take the approach that gentrification can present growth opportunities for local restaurants in such areas, as it reflects the complexities of gentrification's effects. This allowed me to analyze the benefits for those businesses that can survive, but also contrast this argument with the fact that many businesses cannot shift to cater to a new clientele. Furthermore, this relates to my first paper, as I discussed how Yang Chow restaurant in Chinatown survived a shifting business landscape and the new clientele that comes with this. Analyzing this theme allowed me to argue a new and more complex take on this effect that local restaurants see during gentrification in their area.

Additionally, I presented my findings regarding online review platforms and their relationship to local restaurants. For this paper, I focused specifically on Yelp and Google Reviews because these two platforms came up most frequently during my research. Through analyzing their relationship to local restaurants, I analyzed the more complex effects of gentrification through these virtual spaces. This connected well to my argument about benefits and risks businesses face during gentrification, as these online review platforms can amplify such effects. The role of producers and social media play a large role in everyday operations for restaurants today, which needed to be addressed through this paper.

Through discussing these two themes and their subthemes, I analyzed the complex effects of gentrification on communities and their local restaurants. This allowed me to present my findings through forming a comprehensive argument about the complex relationship between communities and their locally owned businesses. I chose to present most of my scholarly sources before the interview to set context for the analysis. From a critical research lens, the audience must have background information on gentrification and how it can harm local cultural

businesses. This allowed me to analyze the interview in the context of gentrification's intersection with culture and whitewashing. Throughout this analysis, I chose to pull specific quotes to reveal Yin's emotional response and personal anecdotes. This allowed me to convey to readers that gentrification affects families personally and has lasting impacts that span generations.

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