

## **Eating Outside The Lines: Exploring Bidirectional Cultural Adaptation Through Immigrant Cuisine In France And The US**

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### **Abstract**

Within the study of immigrant assimilation, the theory of “bidirectional adaptation” recognizes that any sustained contact between two cultures alters them both. The academic literature, however, remains relatively silent on how host societies adapt to the immigration populations within their borders. This research addresses the dearth by analyzing how immigrant cultures influence their host society, specifically in regard to the prevalence of immigrant cuisine in France and the United States. Past studies comparing the attitudes of French and Americans toward immigrant populations suggest that France places a higher priority on assimilation. But how is this difference reflected the presence of immigrant restaurants in these countries’ food landscape (“food-scape”)? To answer, the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Île-de-France is compared those in Los Angeles. Data were collected by identifying 12 neighborhoods in each city with comparable percentages of foreign-born residents. Then both neighborhoods were searched in cityvox.com and yelp.com, and the first 30 restaurants were categorized by ethnicity. The results confirmed the hypothesis that immigrant cuisine is more prevalent in Los Angeles than in Paris. Comparative descriptive statistics demonstrate that 62.5% of the restaurants surveyed in Île-de-France serve French cuisine, whereas only 32.5% of Los Angeles restaurants cook American food. Additionally, the restaurants available in each neighborhood were incredibly diverse in Los Angeles, but homogeneous in Île-de-France. The implication of these findings is that while bidirectional adaptation accurately describes the two-way nature of cultural interaction, France – at least the French food-scape – is less permeable to the influence of immigrant populations than America’s food-scape. One explanation is that France’s long history of coupling national identity and national cuisine has created a relatively inelastic food-scape in comparison to America’s recent codification of ‘American food,’ which historically has been and continues to be shaped by waves of immigration. Such a theory encourages further academic studies that relate France’s and America’s different histories of immigration to their perceptions of national cuisine and identity.

**Keywords: Immigration, Cuisine, France**

### **1. Introduction**

Within the study of immigrant assimilation, the theory of “bidirectional adaptation” recognizes that any sustained contact between two cultures alters them both. The academic literature, however, remains relatively silent on how host societies adapt to the immigration populations within their borders.<sup>1</sup> This research addresses the dearth by analyzing how immigrant cultures influence their host society, specifically in regard to the prevalence of immigrant cuisine in France and the United States. Previous research comparing the attitudes of French and Americans toward national cuisine and immigration suggest that the French place a higher priority on culinary identity and immigrant assimilation. But how is this difference reflected in the presence of immigrant restaurants in the two countries’ food landscapes (food-scapes)?<sup>2</sup>

Food acts as a vessel of cultural identity, and the study of immigrant restaurants provides a quantifiable lens to examine cultural diffusion. To discern the cultural footprint of immigrants in the food-scape of France and America, the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Île-de-France is compared with the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Los Angeles (LA). To approximate the percentage of ethnic restaurants, twelve neighborhoods in each city were chosen and searched in [cityvox.com](http://cityvox.com) and [yelp.com](http://yelp.com). The first thirty restaurants per neighborhood were recorded and subsequently categorized by ethnicity, using the world regions recognized by the United Nations.

The results confirmed the hypothesis that immigrant cuisine is more prevalent in Los Angeles than Paris. Comparative descriptive statistics demonstrate that 62.5% of the restaurants surveyed in Île-de-France serve French cuisine, whereas only 32.5% of Los Angeles restaurants cook American food. Additionally, the types of cuisine available in each neighborhood were diverse in LA but homogeneous in Île-de-France. The findings align with the narrative that France's long history of coupling national identity and national cuisine has created a relatively fixed food-scape in comparison to America's recent codification of 'American food,' which historically has been and continues to be shaped by waves of immigration. In other words, the limited presence of ethnic restaurants in France may reflect its emphasis on immigrant assimilation and renowned national cuisine. Conversely, the contributions of immigrants to American culture are evidenced by the prevalence of ethnic restaurants.

The implication of these findings is twofold. Firstly, while previous literature documents the long-time establishment of France's culinary tradition, this study quantifies the limited impact of immigrant restaurants on Paris' food-scape in comparison to Los Angeles. Secondly, it proposes a modification to the theory of bidirectional cultural adaptation. Namely, while bidirectional adaptation accurately describes the two-way nature of cultural interaction, it does not apply equally in all contexts; for France – at least, the French food-scape – is less permeable to the influence of immigrant populations than America's food-scape. Such a theory encourages further academic studies that qualitatively capture the perspective of French and Americans toward immigrant food.

## 2. Theoretical Frameworks

This investigation aims to evaluate the impact of immigrant cultures on French and American host societies through these countries' differing levels of receptivity to immigrant cuisine. First, this review of the academic literature establishes the value a bidirectional adaptation framework, which asserts that immigrant and host cultures mutually adjust to one another. It then demonstrates that cuisine is a legitimate vehicle for studying national identity, while affirming that France and the United States have national cuisines that can be compared. Finally, it presents the dichotomy of French and American views on immigration and culinary identity as described by the academic literature, framing the discussion for the research question.

In the field of migration, most academics analyze push and pull factors (what draws migrants out of one nation and into another) or cultural integration (how migrants adjust to the host society once they arrive). Even within the study of integration, assimilations, founded by Milton M. Gordon, have long dominated the academic dialogue. Gordon, writing in 1964, distinguished "structural assimilation," which he defined as the minority group participating in the institutions of and entering into relationship with the majority group, from "identity assimilation," which is when the minority group takes on the identity of the majority group.<sup>3</sup> Yet, as Richard Alba and Victor Nee point out in their article "Rethinking assimilation theory for a new era of immigration," Gordon views both types of assimilation as "largely a one-way process."<sup>4</sup> In other words, this model of cross-cultural interaction only provides a framework for how the minority group becomes like the majority, but it does not theorize the interaction between groups.

One substitute often proposed for assimilation is multiculturalism. This model, initiated by Wille Kymlicka's emphasis on "group-differentiated rights," celebrates diversity and encourages host nations to preserve the cultural identity of their immigrants.<sup>5</sup> However, in terms of understanding intercultural interaction, multiculturalism fares no better than assimilation, as multiculturalism also views cultures as static and invulnerable to the power of cultural diffusion. In his article, "Beyond Assimilation and Multiculturalism: A Critical Review of the Debate on Managing Diversity," Dan Rodriguez-Garcia provides an intellectually sound alternative. Though he writes mainly in the context of informing policy, not with the intent of studying intercultural interactions, he does note that there is a delicate balance between celebrating diversity and promoting social cohesion. He writes, "There is increasing consensus that the management of diversity in multicultural democracies should be an interculturalist process of bidirectional adaptation, or of mutual accommodation."<sup>6</sup> Applying this reasoning to theory instead of policy, it is more accurate to conceive cultural interaction as a two-way street, with the immigrant culture impacting and being impacted by the host culture.

While Dan Rodriguez-Garcia introduces a new framework for understanding the cultural interaction between an immigration population and the host society, the academic community has yet to put it to the test. In regards to

immigration in France and the United States, past studies largely focus on the degree to which immigrants integrate in both countries. For example, Evelyn Ersanilli and Ruud Koopmans compare the socio-cultural integration of Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands, France and Germany. Measuring the immigrant's self-professed identity, their language acquisition, and relationships with natives, Ersanilli and Koopmans determine that immigrants to France exhibited the highest level of integration across all indicators.<sup>7</sup> Their study, once again, describes the interaction between the host culture and the immigrants as the first influencing the second, and not vice versa. This present investigation of the prevalence of immigrant cuisine in France and the United States breaks new ground by examining how immigrant communities have impacted French and American society.

Beyond employing Rodriguez-Garcia's "bidirectional adaptation" as its framework for host-immigrant interaction, this study builds on the understanding that cuisine is an expression of the cultural identity of a population or nation. As Massimo Montanari argues in *Food Is Culture*, humans transform food into a cultural artifact as it is produced, prepared and eaten. He considers cuisine to be "a decisive element of human identity and one of the most effective means of expressing and communicating that identity."<sup>8</sup> Food also shows the interaction of culture, as immigrants bring a piece of home with them by opening restaurants in their new countries. When two societies meet, food is one of the first indicators of culture to cross ethnic boundaries, as one does not need to know how to speak a second language to eat.

Although both France and America have culinary identities, their formation occurred at different points in history. France has a long-established national cuisine. Indeed, many of the foundational food studies texts that link cuisine with national identity showcase France as the shining example. Most notably, Priscilla Ferguson's classic, *Accounting for Taste: The Triumph of French Cuisine*, illuminates the nineteenth-century process by which French food came to embody the essence of French identity, and by extension, French superiority. She defines cuisine as "the properly cultural construct that systematizes culinary practices and transmutes the spontaneous culinary gesture into a stable cultural code."<sup>9</sup> She delves into what differentiates food from cuisine arguing that, "French cuisine is French at least in part because so many have written so much to insist upon the connection."<sup>10</sup> She uncovers the development of French cuisine to show that French food became the symbol of French identity that it is today through an intense process of codification.

Evidence of this codification lies in the ease with which any food-lover could, on the spot, describe French food. And even if he could not name any dishes, he could certainly testify to the great love French have of their cuisine. It is not so easy to name quintessential American dishes, however, and for that reason, scholars such as Sidney Mintz are skeptical of its existence. In his book, *Tasting Food, Tasting Freedom*, Mintz argues that there is no American cuisine because American regional dishes, brought by waves of immigrants throughout the decades, lack larger systemic coherence and temporal continuity.<sup>11</sup>

And yet, Krishnendu Ray's research, *Nation and Cuisine. The Evidence from American Newspapers Ca. 1830-2003*, presents evidence to counter Mintz's claims and affirm the existence of a national American cuisine. Drawing on Ferguson's argumentation that a cuisine exists, in part, because it is discussed, Ray turns to American newspapers, specifically the New York Times from 1830-2003, to model its coverage of food-related stories. He observed a sharp increase in the American public discourse about restaurants throughout this time. While initially foreign establishments were primarily discussed, by the early 2000s, the term "American cuisine" was used more than any other ethnic cuisine.<sup>12</sup> Today, the solidification of American food is visible in online blogs that feature the best American restaurants in a given city, such as nyc.com's *Best American Restaurants in New York*.<sup>13</sup> These findings signify that while American food has only recently become tied to American identity, America, like France, has a national cuisine. Furthermore, Ray's confirmation of the existence of an American cuisine permits the use of French and American restaurants as a vehicle to measure the influence of immigrant cultures. The dining landscape of both countries contains the host culture's cuisine as well as immigrant restaurants, and the strength of this foreign culinary presence is a means to evaluate the cultural impact of immigrants in Paris and Los Angeles.

France's and the United States' differing immigration histories and national cuisines make an interesting case to study 'bidirectional adaptation' through ethnic restaurants. As referenced in the Ersanilli and Koopmans study, France places high value on immigration integration into the host culture. The work of Jack Citrin and John Sides confirms this finding, showing that French citizens find homogenous national identity beneficial whereas Americans do not. They report that the majority of the United States public surveyed did not support the statement "It is better for a country almost everyone shares the same customs and traditions," whereas most French answered affirmatively.<sup>14</sup>

Citrin and Sides explain this by highlighting the different role immigration has played in the United States and in France. They notice that the presence of racist immigration legislation in the United States, such as the Exclusion Act of 1924, most citizens are the descendants of immigrants, creating a greater tolerance of cultural variation. European countries, on the other hand, have experienced immigration as a newer phenomenon, specifically after WWII, and it therefore may be seen as a threat to cultural homogeneity of the nation.

When these differing histories of immigration are combined with the aforementioned discussion of national cuisine, a clear dichotomy begins to emerge. On one hand there is France, a society that value cultural homogeneity, which has clearly codified national cuisine and is experiencing relatively new exposure to immigrant populations. On the other hand, we have to United States, where waves of immigration have shaped American national identity to the point that no national cuisine was claimed until the 1970's, and some debate its existence unto this day.

Therefore, this study means to finally test the notion of bicultural adaptation on the disparate restaurant cultures of France and America. It examines how the French and American reaction to immigrants is reflected in their acceptance of immigrant cuisine, given that food is vessel to study the dissemination of culture. Based on their differing histories of immigration and strength of national cuisine, this research evaluates how the acceptance of immigrant cuisine differs in France and the United States.

### 3. Methodology

This research analyses how immigrant cultures influence their host society, specifically in regard to the presence of immigrant cuisine in France and in the United States. As previously stated, the existing literature portrays France as having an established culinary tradition and a strong emphasis on immigrant assimilation. In contrast, Americans place less value on creating a homogenous national identity, and they boast an eclectic national palate. This dichotomy prompts further exploration into the reach of immigrant cuisine in both countries. Since “immigrant cuisine” occurs at a variety of plains, from home cooked meals to ethnic supermarkets, the scope of analysis is limited to restaurants, and more specifically, the ratio of immigrant to native restaurants. Therefore, given previous studies and the scope of this project, the guiding research question asks, “How is the difference in France’s and America’s beliefs about immigration and culinary identity reflected in the prevalence of immigrant restaurants in the food-scape of Los Angeles and Paris?” If the academic literature is correct in its differing portrayals of France and the United States, the proportion of ethnic restaurants should be higher in LA than Paris. Thus, the null hypothesis to be tested is as follows:  $H_0$  : There is no difference in the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Los Angeles and Paris.

Restaurants as a unit of measure were chosen because they are relatively easy to quantify and categorize by the ethnicity of the cuisine. For the sake of this analysis, an “immigrant restaurant” is defined as one that serves a cuisine other than that of the host nation, regardless of the nationality of the owners. The study assumes that the presence of many, thriving ethnic restaurants indicates that the host population has embraced the cuisine of its immigrant populations.

This assumption is somewhat problematic. Just because a French person goes to a Moroccan restaurant or an American orders Mexican food does not mean that the culinary preferences of the host culture have been substantially altered. After all, Indian restaurants exist in Paris and Americans eat Thai food, but neither community appears very high on the immigration charts. Additionally, immigration occurs in waves, and the presence of an ethnic restaurant now may be the result of immigration from past generations or the institutional framework for immigration. Nevertheless, the quantity of ethnic restaurants in France and the United States, especially when compared to the number of other native restaurants in those same countries, should give a sense of the cuisine diffusion of immigrant communities. And even if an ethnic restaurant is not owned by an immigrant family, it still shows the acceptance of this cuisine by the host culture.

This study compares a “gateway” city in each country – a term coined by the Brookings Institution in Washington DC in the report *The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways*, which represent points of entry for immigrant communities. According to the Institut D’Aménagement et D’Urbanisme, from the 2006 report, *Les immigrés et leur familles en Île-de-France*, the greater Paris area receives the greatest influx of immigrants. Even in 1999, approximately 40% of all immigrants to France made their home in Paris and the surrounding neighborhoods, also known as Île-de-France, and the number is only increasing today.<sup>15</sup> In the United States, Los Angeles serves as a gateway city, with a population that was 35.1% foreign born in 2009.<sup>16</sup>

The percentage of ethnic and native restaurants is compared across twelve neighborhoods in Île-de-France and Los Angeles. In LA, these neighborhoods were chosen with the help of the Log Angeles Times’ “Mapping L.A. Project,” which numbered Los Angeles’ 272 neighborhoods. A random number generator was used to select 12. While randomness is the simplest way to ensure variation, it may not generate a representative sample. Wealthier neighborhoods may attract a different caliber of restaurants, and the presence of major infrastructure, such as highways, may similarly alter the type of restaurants present. Nevertheless, to avoid biasing the ethnic to native restaurant ratio by over- or under-including LA neighborhoods with high concentrations of immigrants, neighborhoods were selected using a random number generator. Île-de-France is more complicated, as the Paris is divided into 20 “arrondissements, » and the surrounding suburbs are made of “communes” grouped into larger “départements.” Paris

has fewer immigrants than Los Angeles, and the immigrants who live in Paris are reputed to live in certain suburbs. For example, Seine-Saint-Denis, the French département with the greatest number of immigrants, has a population that is 26.5% foreign born. In Los Angeles, however, 165 neighborhoods have an equivalent or higher percentage of foreign born residents.<sup>17</sup> As a result, in Île-de-France, three communes were randomly chosen (or arrondissements, in the case of Paris) from each of the following départements: two known for having a high percent foreign born, Paris proper, and another department at random. While this introduces a slight sample bias into the communes/arrondissements selected, it ensures there is variation in the percent of the population that is foreign born.

Restaurant data come from two popular websites that French and American locals use to find recommended restaurants. For French dining, the website Cityvox, found at [www.cityvox.fr](http://www.cityvox.fr), provided the names and locations of restaurants reviewed by other customers. It is possible to view comments and ratings, out of a scale of 5 stars. The American equivalent, Yelp, found at [www.yelp.com](http://www.yelp.com), similarly compiles reviewed restaurants in each city. According to [ignitesocialmedia.com](http://ignitesocialmedia.com), a website which evaluates the statistics of individuals visiting social media sites, nearly 87.5% of yelp.com users have attended university. They tend to be between 35 and 44 and earn between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per year.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, most yelp.com users are adult, educated, and in the middle to upper-middle class – in many ways representative of the middle class of the “host” population. Although there is no way to guarantee this, as the Internet is not exclusive, the relative wealth of their user-base and the fact that Cityvox and Yelp are in French and English respectively suggests that those who post and review restaurants are either members of the host society or well integrated. As the study aims to discern the degree of receptiveness to immigrant cuisine in Paris in LA, these sites provide an approximation of native residents’ awareness of restaurants in their city.

One limitation to this data source is such websites do not include all the restaurants in a given area, but only those that customers have taken the time to review. This may introduce some bias, as only customers who had a strongly positive or negative experience are likely to post a comment; however, voluntary response bias occurs for native and immigrant restaurants alike. Additionally, it does not threaten the integrity of this investigation that some ethnic restaurants are not included, as the purpose is to determine the host population’s awareness and acceptance of the immigrant cuisine, not to generate a comprehensive list of restaurants.

In the case of France, the word “restaurants” are entered into the Cityvox search box as well as the number assigned to the “départements.” The commune is then chosen from the dropdown menu. Cityvox.com displays the restaurants in order of pertinence, and the first 30 restaurants are recorded for each commune/arrondissement. This number was chosen because some neighborhoods only had 30 results, plus or minus two, depending on the availability of data. Eateries were categorized based on the United Nation systems for labeling geographic region. Although cityvox.com distinguishes between categories such as “Restaurant Français,” “Crêperie,” and “Bistrot/Basserie,” this investigation records them all as French restaurants. Table 1 on the following page shows the classification system used to categories the restaurants by region.

A similar procedure is followed with yelp.com, by entering the neighborhood along with the general search term “restaurants.” The first 30 (+/- two) hits are recorded, and the results are listed by the website in order of relevance. No franchised restaurants, such as McDonalds or Kentucky Fried Chicken, are recorded in order to differentiate between fast food and sit down restaurants. Some judgment was involved in the process of classification, as genres such as “Tex-Mex” could fit into multiple categories. Table 2 on the following page shows the categorization of the ethnicities of restaurants that appear in LA.

Table 1. classification of Paris restaurants by ethnicity

Classification of Paris Restaurants by Ethnicity									
French	N & W Euro	S Euro	W & S Asia	E & SE Asia	N Afri	SS Afri	Mex/C Amer	S Amer	Carr
Français	Irlandais	Italien	Libanais	Japonais	Marocain	Afrique-Noir	Tex-Mex	Sud-Américain	Iles
Bistrot	Portugais	Pizzeria	Turc	Chinois	Algérien			Argentin	Cubain
Crêperie	Belge	Grec	Moyen-Orient	Coréen					
Sandwicherie		Méditerranéen	Indien	Vietnamien					
Fondue				Thaïlandais					
Poissons/Fruits de mer				Asiatique					
Vielles et grillades									
Bar									
Café									
Saladerie									
Brasserie									
Salle de concerts									
Auvergnat									
Basque									
Corse									
Bourguignon									
Sud-Ouest									
Lyonnais									
Aveyronnais									

Table 2. classification of Los Angeles restaurants by ethnicity

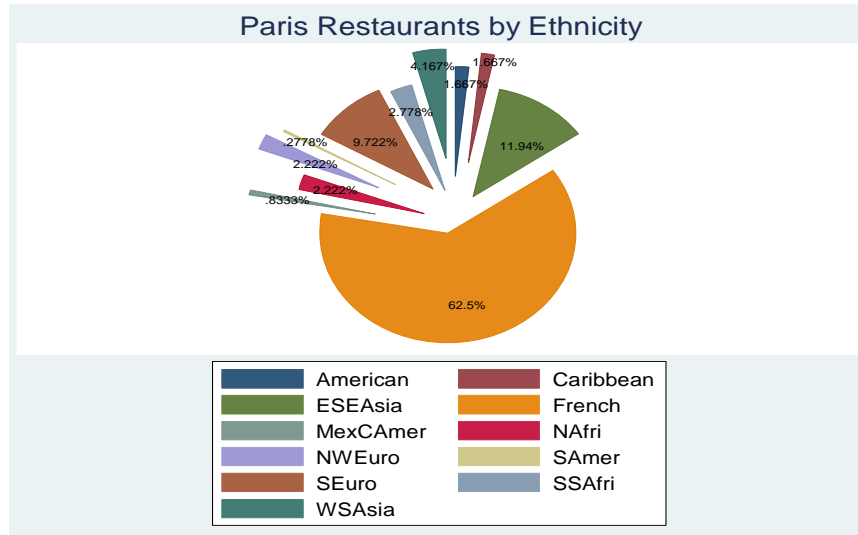
Classification of Los Angeles Restaurants by Ethnicity									
American	N & W Euro	S Euro	W & S Asia	E & SE Asia	N Afri	SS Afri	Mex/C Amer	S Amer	Carr
Traditional	British	Italian	Middle-	Chinese	Moroccan	Ethiopian	Mexican	Peruvian	Cuban
Steakhouse	Pub	Pizza	Eastern	Japanese	Algerian		Salvadorian	Brazilian	Cajun
Bar	French	Greek	Kosher	Seafood			Latin	Argentine	Caribbean
Bed &	Spanish	Mediterranean	Indian	Sushi Bar			American		
Breakfast	German		Persian	Asian Fusion			Tex/Mex		
Burgers &	Creperie		Afghan	Dim Sum					
Hot Dogs				Taiwanese					
Delis				Korean					
Barbeque				Thai					
Bakery				Vietnamese					
Hawaiian				Filipino					
Go Go Juice				Indonesian					
Diners				Burmese					
Fast Food									
Southern									
Winebar									
Sea Food									
Café									
Ice Cream									
& FroYo									
Soul Food									
Food Truck									

#### 4. Results and Data Analysis

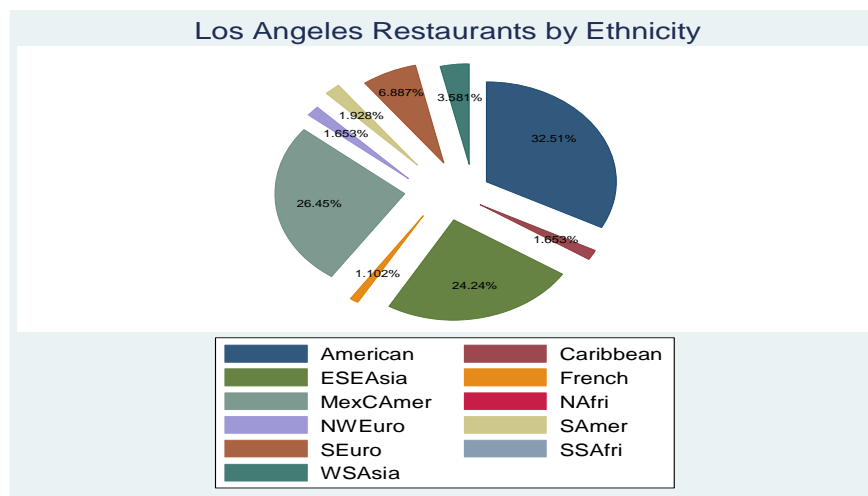
The results confirm the hypothesis that immigrant restaurants are more prevalent in the United States than in Paris, leading to a rejection of the null hypothesis. Of the 361 restaurants sampled in Île-de-France, 226 served French cuisine, compared to 119 American restaurants out of 364 in Los Angeles. Additionally, the ethnic breakdown of restaurants per country paints a striking picture. In France, 62.5% of the restaurants are French, while the second largest ethnic representation was East and Southeast Asian restaurants at 12%. This is notable because the East and Southeast Asian immigrant community in Île-de-France is not large, as INSEE did not list an official statistic.<sup>19</sup> This suggests that the type of food available – even ethnic food – is not determined by the presence of immigrants. These findings support academia’s portrayal of France as maintaining a emphasizing assimilation, since the cuisine of immigrants are only marginally present.

The lack of ethnic cuisine is especially notable in the case of North African immigrants, who emigrate from Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, etc. Comprising 17% of all immigrants to France, they are the population that receives the greatest media attention, some of which includes fear that their presence dilutes French culture in general and secular values in particular.<sup>20</sup> Nevertheless, they have little impact on the restaurant industry, as only 2.2% of restaurants surveyed in Île-de-France serve North African cuisine. The small percentage of restaurants seems to indicate that the French, the host culture, have not altered their dining preferences to include the Maghreb food, the cuisine of one dominant immigrant culture.

Conversely, American food is only one of many cuisines available in Los Angeles, suggesting a greater degree of receptivity to immigrant cuisine. As in Paris, Asian food has a strong presence, making up 24% of the surveyed restaurants. But contrary to Paris, individuals born in East or Southeast Asia comprise 68,851 of the 364,793 foreign-born residents, or 18.9% of the population in the neighborhoods selected.<sup>21</sup> Immigrants from Mexico and Central America comprise the largest immigrant population, and their cuisine is served at 26% of all the restaurants surveyed. It is conceivable that only immigrants enjoy these ethnic eateries, but the user base of Yelp.com decreases this possibility. Regardless of the patronage, it is clear that immigrant restaurants are more prevalent in Los Angeles than Paris. This result conforms to expectations that America is more accepting of immigrant food, as France’s culinary legacy has produced a codified national cuisine whereas American food has traditionally been eclectic and immigrant-inspired.



Graph 1. Paris restaurants by ethnicity



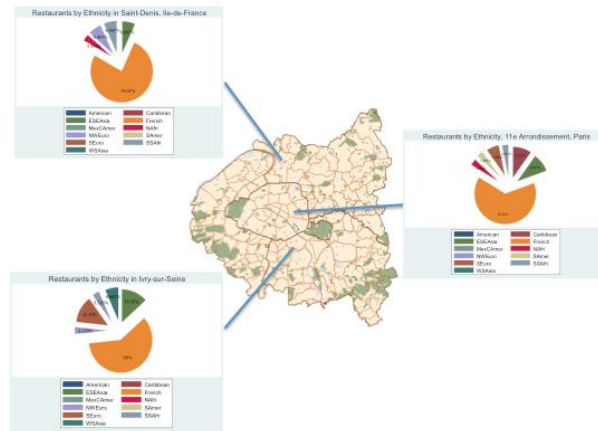
Graph 2. Los Angeles restaurants by ethnicity

The difference in the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Paris (37.4%) and Los Angeles (67.2%) is statistically significant with a t-value of -7.43. However, the difference in immigrant population is also statistically significant ( $t = -5.36$ ). 36.6% of the population from the neighborhoods surveyed in LA is foreign born, while only 15.2% of people living in the Parisian neighborhoods surveyed were born in another country. This gives rise to the question: What if the difference in immigrant restaurant prevalence observed is due to the size of immigrant populations and not differing levels of host acceptance of immigrant cuisine?

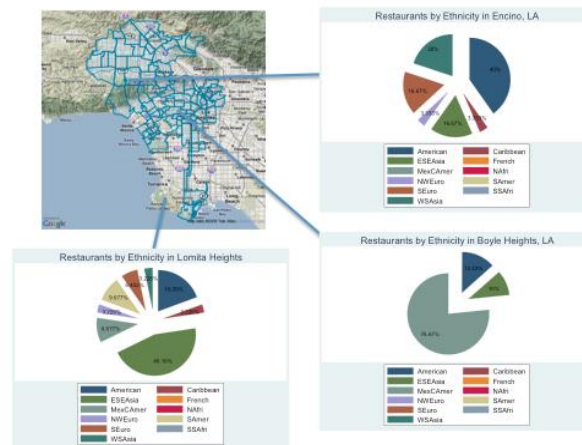
To address this concern, the ethnic distribution of restaurants is examined across each city. If the percentage of immigrant restaurants is a mere reflection of population, one would expect to see variation in the percentage of ethnic restaurants per neighborhood depending on the population of foreign born residents. This is the case in Los Angeles but not in Paris. The restaurants in Île-de-France appear to be fairly homogenous by neighborhood. Each arrondissement or commune serves a majority of French food and then a smattering of other ethnic cuisines, usually with a strong representation of East Asian and South European restaurants. It seems as if wherever one goes, roughly the same ethnicities of food are available. The map and pie charts below show the distribution of the ethnicities of restaurants in three neighborhoods in Île-de-France – Saint-Denis, Ivry-sur-Seine, and the 11e Arrondissement –

chosen for their geographic diversity. Even though Saint-Denis has the highest concentration of immigrants, at 27% foreign-born, it has the highest proportion of French restaurants (74%).

In Los Angeles, however, the ethnicity of restaurants available varies based on location. In the three examples highlighted, the ethnicity with the largest representation does not repeat. In Boyle Heights, located in the heart of Los Angeles, 76% of restaurants serve Mexican and Central American food, whereas 45% of Lomita Height restaurants serve East and Southeast Asian cuisine. What is striking in Encino is the presence of Caribbean and West and Central Asian restaurants, since this cuisine is underrepresented elsewhere. This great variation in restaurant offerings in Los Angeles indicates that immigrants have a greater ability to shape the “foodscape” of the neighborhood where they live in Los Angeles than in Paris. In Paris immigrant restaurants are underrepresented, and the percentage of French restaurants remains consistently high despite the size of the immigrant population. This suggests that Parisians are less receptive to immigrant cuisine than their counterparts in Los Angeles.



Map 1. Paris; restaurants by ethnicity in Saint-Denis, Ivry-sur-Seine, 11e arrondissement



Map 2. Los Angeles; restaurants by ethnicity in Encino, Lomita Heights, Boyle Heights

## 5. Conclusion

This research sought to investigate how French and American host communities were influenced by the immigrant populations within their borders, specifically in the realm of food. Recognizing that France has a stronger value for cultural homogeneity than America as well as France’s longer-established food tradition, the research aimed to



determine how these differences were reflected in the prevalence of immigrant cuisine in Île-de-France and Los Angeles via comparative statistics. The hypothesis was that immigrant cuisine would have a weaker presence in Paris, as indicated by a lower percentage of ethnic restaurants.

The results of the analysis confirmed the hypothesis that Paris has a significantly smaller percentage of restaurants than Los Angeles. Moreover, each neighborhood sampled has a similar array of cuisines available, in direct contrast to Los Angeles, where restaurant offerings vary drastically by neighborhood. This discrepancy suggests that Paris is less receptive to the cuisine of immigrants than Los Angeles. Since the data was collected using Yelp and Cityvox, sites primarily run by the natives of both countries, the lack of ethnic eateries in Paris implies that Parisians are not aware of immigrant restaurants, they do not frequent them, or they do not exist. It is notable that the size of the immigrant population in Paris has little bearing on the type of restaurants available. This demonstrates that the foreign-born in France do not primarily open restaurants that serve food from their country and perhaps that French natives dominate the restaurant industry.

To relate this back to the existing scholarly literature, one possible explanation for the prevalence of immigrant cuisine in Los Angeles is that America does not emphasize immigrant assimilation in the same way or to the extent that the French do, and its food-scape has long been dominated by immigrant chefs. This study does not establish a causal link between orientation toward immigration and food with the presence of ethnic cuisine. Nevertheless, one would predict that a country with a strong national cuisine as well as a value of cultural homogeneity would have fewer ethnic restaurants than a country with a newly founded national cuisine and a long history of diversity brought by immigrants. And this is the exact result of comparing of the percentage of ethnic restaurants in Paris and Los Angeles. Therefore, the greater receptiveness toward ethnic food in Los Angeles and Paris may reflect a difference in orientation toward immigration and national cuisine in America and France.

This conclusion challenges a blanket reading of bidirectional adaptation. It remains true that immigrant populations do not only assimilate to become like their host culture, but they leave a cultural imprint on their host culture as well. However, host cultures do not always display the same level of receptivity to the cultural contribution offered by immigrants, which in this case is food. As the results show, the food-scape in Paris is significantly less populated with immigrant restaurants, suggesting that Parisians prefer their own food and are less receptive to immigrant cuisine than Americans in Los Angeles.

While these findings are significant, further regression analysis is needed to substantiate the claim that the presence of ethnic restaurants is related to the size of the immigrant population in Paris but not in LA. Future studies may also consider the impact of immigrant wealth or education level on their capacity to open restaurants. The price and/or quality of immigrant restaurants might predict the ability of immigrant restaurants to flourish in their host country since if they are consistently rated poorly, they might fail to compete with native restaurants. Finally, the wealth of neighborhoods may also be predictive of the percentage of ethnic restaurants.

Additionally, there remains ways of interpreting the data that have not yet been explored. This analysis draws parallels between the orientation of the host societies towards immigrants and national cuisine and the prevalence of immigrant restaurants. This interpretation attributes responsibility for the lack of ethnic eateries to the host culture, in this case, France. However, it may be that France is receptive toward immigrant cuisine, but the immigrants themselves do not wish to open restaurants. Perhaps the majority of foreign-born residents in France come to pursue their studies, or perhaps immigrant laborers believe that other industries will be more lucrative.

Therefore, between the need for more statistical analysis and the potential for multiple interpretations, this puzzle requires further exploration. More specifically, qualitative analysis would reinforce or reject the notion that the host culture's relationship with immigrants and their own cuisine determines the degree to which they accept immigrant food. Like the Citrin and Sides study, researchers could ask French and American nationals to what extent they agree with the statement "I enjoy trying immigrant food and would eat at a non-French/non-America restaurant if one opened in my neighborhood," or more generally, "It is preferable to have restaurants that serve immigrant cuisine as well as French/American restaurants in this city." Such a study would help ascertain the true feelings of host cultures toward immigrant food.

Moreover, similar research could be conducted among the immigrants themselves. Asking about a restaurant owners' clientele gives a sense if it is only immigrants or immigrants and natives who enjoy the food there. It would be worthwhile to ask immigrants in other industries if they would consider opening a restaurant and why or why not. Another possibility is to interview immigrant school children, asking about their experience eating food from home at school. If immigrant children do not feel comfortable eating their own food in a public environment, it is unlikely their parents would risk their livelihood to sell it.

While this study affirms the need for future research, it breaks ground in two distinct ways. First, it utilizes restaurants as a measure of cultural diffusion and thereby establishes the limited impact of immigrant cuisine in Paris as compared to Los Angeles. Second, this study adds nuance to the theory of bidirectional adaptation. While this

theory accurately describes the phenomenon of cultural exchange, some host societies are more willing, in the case with food, to develop new tastes than others. Ultimately, this research affirms that cultural exchange is a two-way street, but only if the host culture receives new traditions and passes on its own.

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