RURAL CHINESE RESTAURANTS:
CURRENT PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY AND BUSINESS STRUCTURE

A Thesis Submitted to Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Sociology

University of Regina

By

Julie Shu Ying Yu
Regina, Saskatchewan
December 2013

Copyright 2013: J. Yu
UNIVERSITY OF REGINA
FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Julie Shu Ying Yu, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology, has presented a thesis titled, *Rural Chinese Restaurants: Current Perspectives on Family and Business Structure*, in an oral examination held on April 26, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Carol Schick, Faculty of Education

Supervisor: Dr. Henry P. H. Chow, Department of Sociology & Social Studies

Committee Member: Dr. John Conway, Department of Sociology & Social Studies

Committee Member: Dr. Harry P. Diaz, Department of Sociology & Social Studies

Chair of Defense: Dr. Yuan Ren, Department of Religious Studies

*Not present at defense*
ABSTRACT

Chinese immigrants have been a presence in Canada since the mid-1800s. Early immigrants faced numerous barriers due to race, limited work skills, and a lack of English-language fluency. Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship in the restaurant industry emerged as response to these barriers. Although current Chinese immigrant restaurant owners possess higher skill levels and more English-language facility, Chinese restaurant entrepreneurship continues. The restaurants allow immigrant entrepreneurs to build relationships in the communities as well as to provide a service. This research presents a current perspective on Chinese immigrant labour in the rural restaurant industry.

This study addresses the role of family and the business structure in rural Chinese restaurants in Saskatchewan. This study looked at the rural entrepreneur experience, the roles of each of the family members, and business operations, in order to gain insight into the continued prevalence of rural Chinese restaurants.

Eight in-depth interviews were conducted and a partial critical realist perspective was used for analyzing the data. This study explored ethnic enclaves, blocked mobility thesis, institutional completeness, and apprenticeship theory as theoretical concepts. The rural Chinese restaurateurs interviewed did not demonstrate enclave characteristics due to a lack of an ethnic Chinese population in their communities. Respondents in this study did not specify racism as a factor blocking social mobility and described a lack of experience in other industries as the major factor for staying within the restaurant business. Although racism was not viewed as a structure by respondents, this does not negate that fact that these businesses continue to operate under an ethnic model. Most
respondents had immigrated to Canada with the goal of eventually operating their own restaurants.

The power of the business model of rural Chinese restaurants stems from the family unit mobilizing to work for the greater success of the business. Using the family as a resource does have liabilities of self-exploitation and the loss of quality family time together. The business becomes the driving focus of the family limiting the flexibility of the family to participate in other activities. The business model has not changed over time but the motivations for operating a rural restaurant have shifted from a lack of other opportunities to a profit-seeking endeavour.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been a journey towards a better understanding of a topic that is very dear to me. Dr. Henry Chow, as my Master’s Supervisor, has helped with his support and knowledge on ethnicity and race. He has also helped by providing me with theoretical direction and practical advice. During my time in this Master’s Program, the members of my advisory committee, Dr. Harry Diaz and Dr. John Conway, have provided me with guidance, support and knowledge to help me build my project. My committee as a whole helped me to advance my research knowledge and to narrow down my ideas so that I could effectively capture my concept for this thesis.

This thesis project would not have been possible without financial support from the Sociology and Social Studies Department through the travel budget. The Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Regina also graciously provided me with funding though a Graduate Teaching Assistantship and a Graduate Research Award.

I would like to thank all the participants in this study who took time away from their businesses. As the translator for their words, I hope to have captured their meanings in a way truly brings to light their experiences.

I would also like to extend my appreciation to Dr. Thomas Kemple and Dr. John Xiros Cooper at the University of British Columbia, who supported me through an undergraduate degree with their patience and wise words. I am grateful for their encouragement and suggestion that I continue forward in my education. Without them, I would not have been able to make the leap towards a Master’s degree.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to those who supported me by lending a listening ear or by me giving me the time and space to work on my thesis. I especially thank my family but specifically my partner Daniel Jorgensen and my mother Ching Hsia Yu, who both thought that this project had stories worth sharing. I would also like to dedicate this thesis to my comrades in the Sociology Department, Cassie Ozog and Sean Sunley for helping me shape my ideas through conversation and coffee. Nor would I have been able to accomplish this project without three individuals who were not able to see me through it, but whom I know would have been proud and supportive had they been here: Xiu Zhen Yu, John Yu and Kelly Ferguson. I feel privileged to have had so many people in my life to help me forward, especially during those times when the end seemed too far away.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT ................................................. I

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ............................... III

DEDICATION ........................................ IV

1. THE CHINESE IN CANADA: AN INTRODUCTION ....... 1
   - Background – the Chinese in Canada ............. 1
   - Current perspectives .......................... 3
   - Purpose of the study .......................... 5
   - Major research questions ..................... 6
   - Significance of the study ..................... 6
   - Racism as a factor .......................... 8

2. LITERATURE REVIEW ............................. 12
   Part one: Ethnic entrepreneurship ................. 12
      - 1.1 Motivations for immigrant/ethnic entrepreneurship .... 12
      - 1.2 Characteristics of ethnic entrepreneurship .......... 15
         Discrimination in ethnic entrepreneurship ....... 16
      - 1.3 Theories in ethnic entrepreneurship .......... 17
         Middleman Minority Theory .................. 17
         Ethnic Enclave ................................ 18
         Blocked Mobility Theory .................... 19
         Institutional Completeness .................. 20
         Apprenticeship Theory ...................... 21
      - 1.4 Family operations and ethnic family restaurants .... 22
         Ethnic restaurant business ................ 24
   Part two: Chinese entrepreneurism and the restaurant business ........ 26
      - 2.1 Chinese entrepreneurism .................. 26
      - 2.2 Characteristics of Chinese entrepreneurism .......... 26
         Chinese diaspora and social space ............ 26
         Chinese transnationalism .................... 28
         Close family ties, work ethic and filial piety ........ 29
      - 2.3 International literature on Chinese restaurants .... 30
      - 2.4 Canadian literature on Chinese restaurants ...... 33
         Motivations for immigration rural destinations .... 33
         Chinese restaurant experience in Canada .......... 34
   Limitations of the literature .................. 38
   Part three: Research study and conceptual model .... 39
      - 3.1 Research objectives ..................... 39
         Motivations .................................. 40
         Family participation ........................ 41
         Business structure and obstacles ............ 41
3.2 Conceptual model

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCHER’S EXPERIENCE 47
   Critical Realism 47
   Domains of reality 48
   Structure and agency 48
   Events and experiences 51
   Researcher’s experience (general narrative) 52
   Researcher’s bias and limitations 53
   Sample method 53
   Recruitment method 54
   Interview schedule and method of analysis 54

4. INTERVIEW RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION 58
   Individual restaurant owner profiles 58
   Motivations for opening a Chinese restaurant 60
   Family participation and division of labour 63
      Extended family 65
      Business structure 67
      Business and restaurant knowledge 68
      Benefits and consequences of rural business 69
      Restaurant experience and future goals 71
   Critical realist analysis 72
   Placing the study into current research on Chinese restaurants 76
   Structural obstacles 79
   Immigration 81
   Theoretical applications to the results—similarities and limitations 83
   Multicultural perspective 86

5. CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY OF CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH 87
   Key research findings 87
      Business structure 87
      Family participation 88
      Structures 89
      Restaurant experience—current perspectives 90
   Summary of Contributions 91
   Directions for future research 92
      The critical realist perspective 92
      Immigration to rural Canada 94
      Concepts and the rural perspective 94
      Chinese restaurants, successful and unsuccessful 95
      Second generation children 96
   Conclusion 96

REFERENCES 98
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Domains of reality 48
Table 4.1 Background information of respondents 59

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 Interactive model of ethnic business development 13
Figure 2.2 S. Gordon Redding’s framework of analysis 43
Figure 2.3 Conceptual model 46
Figure 4.1 Map of Saskatchewan and interviewed restaurants 60
Figure 4.2 Structural analysis of the Chinese restaurant emergence 73
Figure 4.3 Structural analysis of Chinese restaurant continuance 74
Figure 4.4 Layering the historical experience and combining the strata 76
Figure 4.5 Structural Obstacles and the proceeding events 81

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Restaurant profiles and researcher’s experience 106
Appendix B: Thesis interview questions 118
Appendix C: University of Regina Ethics Approval 121
Appendix D: Letter of consent (English) 122
Appendix E: Letter of consent (Chinese) 123
Appendix F: Interview schedule 124
1. THE CHINESE IN CANADA: AN INTRODUCTION

Background — the Chinese in Canada

Canada has had a history of Chinese immigration since the mid-to-late 1800s, beginning with Chinese men coming to work on the Canadian Pacific Railway, and to mine for gold (Fong and Luk 2007: passim). At that time China was facing a rural crisis and political unrest, especially in Southern China. These factors, along with overpopulation, land shortages and poor climates, led many Chinese to seek opportunities overseas (Chan 1983: 29, Tan and Roy 1985: 3). Upon coming to Canada, Chinese were viewed as foreign and inassimilable and Chinese immigrants faced social racism and violence (Chan 1983: 139–40, Lai 1988: 34), leading to institutional racism. In this case, institutional racism refers to the legislative control which governments placed on the Chinese. Chinese immigrants provided cheap labour and were viewed as an inferior race. Chinese immigrants were limited in occupational possibilities to laborious and menial occupations other Canadians were unwilling to accept (Li 1998: 47). Although deemed undesirable and inferior, Chinese immigrants were still viewed as a viable low cost labour force (Chan 1983: 17, Li 1992: 266).

Canada’s institutional racism towards Chinese, including the Head Tax and the Chinese Immigration Act, led Chinese immigrants already in Canada to move towards whatever industries were open to them. The Head Tax was put in place by the Canadian government in 1885 at $50.00 and by 1903 had risen to $500.00 per Chinese person entering Canada (Con et al. 1982: 55–56, 83, Li 1992: 266). This tax was specific to Chinese immigrants and stemmed from the widespread anti-Chinese sentiment among the public. The 1923 Chinese Immigration Act banned Chinese immigration. It was a major strategy of the government to limit the Chinese in Canada. These anti-Chinese sentiments
were also reflected through the controls that were placed on the employment options for Chinese immigrants.

Chinese immigrants faced cultural barriers due to limited English language ability and lack of awareness of many Western customs (Lai 1988: 35). They adapted by turning to self-employment, most commonly opening laundries and restaurants. The low start-up cost of these ventures made them a popular entrepreneurial choice for immigrants seeking self-employment (Li 1998: 57). Restaurants and laundromats allowed Chinese immigrants with minimal skills and language ability to adapt in a workplace that did not require high levels of either. This entrepreneurial shift by Chinese immigrants led the government to put controls on Chinese businesses, including limiting their hours of operation and prohibiting the employment of white women in Chinese-owned restaurants (Li 1992: 33). These institutional restrictions occurred between 1870 to 1939 (Li 1992: 50, 53).

Racial tensions led Chinese immigrants into segregated ethnic urban spaces known as “Chinatowns.” Chinese restaurants were often located in these neighbourhoods due to marginalization, but also for the cultural social support offered by their residents (Fong and Luk 2007: passim). Chinatowns, as an ethnic space, were often viewed with widespread racist dialogue. The racial dialogue then framed these enclaves as undesirable spaces (Lin 1998: 1). Since racism was prevalent, Chinese immigrants needed survival strategies to cope with the hostility. Chinese entrepreneurs entered and operated in business sectors (such as restaurants) for which they would not face overt backlash from the community. Restaurants found popularity among Chinese entrepreneurs for they did not require any special skills or advanced language abilities. Entering service sectors
requiring minimal knowledge was the gateway for many Chinese immigrants to advance socioeconomically (Fong and Lee 2007: 5). Operating businesses in Chinatowns also enabled Chinese immigrants to provide services targeting the needs of Chinese immigrants (Lai 1988: 35). Since hostility towards Chinese immigrants was so prevalent in British Columbia, many Chinese decided to move East towards the prairies where the racial tension was less prevalent and less violent. Moving allowed Chinese entrepreneurs to seek opportunities in smaller locations where there was less market competition (Lai 1988: 61). Chinese immigrants opened restaurants in rural towns near industrial and business areas, and near the railway. These locations were chosen due to their accessibility. By setting up business the restaurant could cater to industrial workers and those coming or going on the railway. The families in these rural towns were often the only Chinese in the community and therefore lacked a cultural community for social support. The benefit, however, was less competition from other Chinese restaurants. By the 1947 the Chinese Immigration Act was lifted and by the 1950s many discriminatory laws against the Chinese were lifted as well. At this point many self-employed Chinese had found success and thus a Chinese middle class had emerged (Li 1992: 268–272).

Current perspectives

In the past thirty years, the Chinese immigrant population has shifted to business migrants. These new Chinese immigrants possess more education and capital, unlike the previous generations coming to Canada hoping to escape poverty in their homeland. Chinese immigration dramatically surged from 1980 to 1999.

According to the 2001 Census, the Chinese community is framed as those who identified as having Chinese origins. Currently the Chinese community in Canada
continues to be concentrated in Vancouver and Toronto (Lindsay 2001: 11), and new immigrants tend to settle in these larger urban centres (Wang and Lo 2005: 8). The population is younger than the Canadian average. The Chinese population in Canada possesses higher levels of education, in contrast to Chinese immigrants who first immigrated to Canada as labourers (Lindsay 2001:14, Wang and Lo 2005: 14). In the 2006 Census, the Chinese had become the highest population under the visible minority status in Canada, with 1,269,000 (3.9%) of the country’s total population (32,522,000) (Statistics Canada 2010). In Saskatchewan (33,900 out of a population of 99,950), ethnic Chinese represented almost a third of the total visible minority population (33,900 of 99,950) (Statistics Canada 2008). According to the 2006 Census, there are 1,570 ethnic Chinese living in rural Saskatchewan (Statistics Canada 2006).

Similar to Chinese immigrants of the past, new Chinese immigrants continue to move to Canada to seek higher economic returns for their work (Wang and Lo 2004: 4). The majority of immigrants to Canada see their decision to immigration as positive, resulting in a greater quality of life (Picot 2008: 20–21). This continues to be especially true for Chinese immigrants that come to Canada in order to seek a more favourable life. Many studies have contributed insights on Chinese ethnic businesses, such as the family relations within Chinese take-aways in the United Kingdom (Song 1999: passim), Chinese family business in terms of family inheritance (Zheng 2010: passim), and looking at new Chinese entrepreneurs in Toronto (Saleff, Greve and Wong 2009: passim). Although some research on Chinese ethnic businesses in Canada has been conducted, very little research has been focused on Chinese ethnic businesses, especially restaurants, on Canadian Prairies. The current research on Chinese ethnic businesses has
found that overseas Chinese follow the Confucian ethic and the concept of close family ties. Both reflect ideas of the importance of family and the familial unit in order for a business operation to succeed. The family business is viewed as a holistic effort by each family member (Fong and Luk 2007: 3). Each family participates in operating the business in order for the business to be successful.

**Purpose of the study**

Chinese immigrants began entering self-employment through restaurants to avoid anti-Chinese sentiment and minimal employment opportunities. Anti-Chinese sentiment meant Chinese immigrants faced the realities of lower wages, poor work conditions, long hours, and racial segregation. This forced many Chinese to create ethnic enclaves away from mainstream society. The concept of entering self-employment appealed to Chinese immigrants since it gave them self-control in terms of employment. Since Canada has a long history of Chinese immigrants as well as Chinese restaurants, this study aims to address the structures that have facilitated the conditions that continue to make Chinese restaurants, specifically in rural Saskatchewan, a success. This is done by using interviews that focus on motivations for entrepreneurship, importance of family and business structure and then relating these experiences to structures and conditions that led to them.

Restaurants stemmed from the dominant society’s racism against Chinese. Opening a restaurant away from ethnic social support suggests another factor was involved in the drive to open a business. The present study addresses the current conditions and structures that motivated rural Saskatchewan restaurant owners to pursue restaurant businesses in rural Saskatchewan. This study will also explore the business
structure in terms of being ethnically based and also as family operated. These restaurants derived from clan operations where men with the same last name would come together to open businesses; as families were reunited these businesses progressed to family operations. Historically, the style of a “family-run” business continues today, and the present study will also look at the way that close family ties continues to be a major aspect of the rural Chinese restaurant.

**Major research questions**

This thesis has three objectives when analyzing the rural Chinese restaurants in Saskatchewan. First, this study determines the motivations for operating a rural restaurant. Second, the study looks at the role the family plays in contributing to the operations of the restaurant business. Third this study seeks to understand the experiences of ethnic business owners and the structural obstacles they face, operating in rural communities. These three objectives aim to access the full cultural and personal experiences of rural restaurant entrepreneurship by Chinese immigrants in order to understand what structures and events may have contributed to the experiences. Ultimately these objectives contribute to the goal of understanding the conditions that led to the continued prominence of Chinese restaurant entrepreneurship in rural Saskatchewan.

**Significance of this study**

Major cities have seen an increased presence of ethnic businesses. The ethnic business sector has seen ethnic groups dominating traditional enterprises such as grocery stores and restaurants, and more recently large enterprises such as ethnic malls and financial institutions. The majority of the existing literature on ethnic business focuses on
ethnic entrepreneurs in larger urban centres (Fong and Luk 2007: 1). Ethnic business exists beyond the urban space and current and past literature on ethnic entrepreneurism lacks examination on ethnic business in rural areas.

The literature addresses factors conducive to the participation of ethnic groups in entrepreneurism, and their business structure and operations (Fong and Luk 2007: 1, Light 1972: passim). Using the ideas associated with urban Chinese restaurants this study adds to the ethnic business literature by focusing on rural ethnic business, using Chinese restaurants in rural Saskatchewan as a case study. This study uses qualitative interviews with Chinese restaurateurs. By addressing the rural ethnic business perspective through interviews, the study sheds light on the way that ethnic groups have integrated into communities where they lack cultural community ties. Addressing the rural context also enables a compare and contrast to the existing literature on urban Chinese restaurant experiences.

This study addresses the mechanisms and conditions that were once involved in leading many Chinese immigrants to open Chinese restaurants. Using a series of case studies and current literature, this study examines the mechanisms at play in current society maintaining the success of rural Chinese restaurants in Saskatchewan. An outlining of the relationship of structures and agency will also be discussed in order to describe the way that structures exist and continue to exist where people reproduce them (Sayer 1992: 93).

It has been argued that ethnic businesses do not vary from other small businesses. Rather, they share similarities of family operation and long working hours (Ram et al. 2000: 497). Although those aspects may be true, the differences arise from the origin of
the Chinese restaurant emergence. Ethnically based Chinese restaurants emerged from specific structures acting together: racism, economic market and the Chinese family model. The success of these businesses required them to overcome and/or adapt to racial divides. These restaurants are significant reflections of the dynamic of small family business in a context of racial social tensions. The rural restaurant was an adaptive strategy to avoid the concentrated forms of racism found in urban areas. These restaurants continue to exist as an ethnic business, maintaining the culturally based framework. Today, many of these restaurants continue to be owned and operated by Chinese immigrants, which raises the question of what existing conditions fuel this ethnic industry.

Historical analyses on ethnic businesses often see them in relation to ethnic enclaves, as ethnic groups serving their own communities and/or as a result of racial tension from the dominant society. This study addresses the historical motivations for Chinese in Canada to enter the restaurant industry, as a basis for examining the current motivations of Chinese restaurant owners in rural Saskatchewan for continuing to do so. Business structure and the involvement of family are also addressed in terms of past research, current research and the results of this study. This research is the first sociological study examining the experiences of Saskatchewan rural Chinese restaurant owners. This study builds on and adds to the research on rural Chinese ethnic business in Canada.

**Racism as a factor**

Chinese immigrants continue to immigrate to Canada to seek a more favourable lifestyle. As new Chinese immigrants are coming with higher levels of education, greater
economic means and immigration policies changing; the Chinese restaurant industry continues to be a pursued venture (Leung 2003: 103). Historically, the restaurant industry acted as a means of leaving the dominant society and away from direct and overt racism. Currently, policy changes and social views no longer accept such overt forms of racism, yet this business continues to operate under an ethnic business model.

Although racism is not the focus of this study, it should be mentioned these businesses act as ethnic businesses with a racialized past (Cho 2010: 77). For the purposes of this study, racism will be defined as,

“any dislike of others because of who they are (biology); a disliking of others on principle (ideology); disliking people for what they do (cultural); and a dislike of others because of their status as threats to privilege and wealth (power)” (Fleras and Elliot 2003:59).

The Chinese in Canada have faced all aspects of this definition. On a biological and ideological level they were viewed as an inferior race that was inassimilable (Fleras and Elliot 2003: 255). Chinese immigrants were seen as a threat to Canadian society by taking away employment opportunities and for not reflecting Canadian cultural values (Fleras 2003: 256). Formal employment barriers have now been removed as well as racist immigration policies lifted but the racist history cannot be fully removed, especially from these ethnic restaurant spaces.

These restaurants continue to feed a need in rural communities. They act as symbols of the past while existing in the present. Rural Canada has been facing vast out-migration and communities need to seek immigration to stay populated (Bollman, Beshiri and Clemenson 2007: 9, Reimer 2007: 3). Rural communities need to be populated to
survive and keeping services such as restaurants open, work to benefit the community (Reimer 2007: 3-4). New Chinese immigrants with more education, more language and greater skills continue to take over these restaurants and their acceptance by the community may be due to the service they provide and the history of these restaurants in the community. Rural communities face issues of limited resources for addressing new immigrants and often they reflect a cultural and social uniformity that can lead to prejudice and discrimination (Reimer 2007: 6). The symbolic nature of the Chinese restaurant owned by a Chinese family also continues this image of the hard working Chinese immigrant family that possesses a particular set of positive characteristics for labour (Li 1998: 9, Redding 1993: 205). The acceptance of the image of a Chinese restaurateur in a small town allows new Chinese immigrants to continue to operate these businesses, for it frames their existence through a racialized lens. At the same time, however, their higher levels of skill and language could suggest that they face less overt racism.

Chinese immigrants may have acceptance in this niche market but it does not necessarily mean that all immigrants would be welcomed and accepted in rural communities the same way. Immigrants continue to enter self-employment at levels higher than their Canadian counterparts (Hou and Wang 2011: 3). Immigrants have cited lack of job opportunities and labour market difficulties as factors that have led to self-employment (Hou and Wang 2011: 7). This suggests that although direct policies may not be hindering immigrant employment, the job market may be less favorable towards immigrants. In rural communities, immigrants are facing issues of lack of education recognition and a lack of English language ability (Lai and Huffey 2007: 125-126). The
research on employment discrimination has found that Chinese immigrants are affected in ways that require greater efforts to be made than the European immigrants in order to find acceptance (Lai and Huffey 2007: 124, Li 1982: 527-540).

Current Chinese immigrants are arriving with more education and greater skills, yet the Chinese restaurant industry remains a popular form of self-employment. Overt employment barriers have been lifted; however, this does not address potential racist sentiments and the systemic racism that may be preventing Chinese immigrants from entering other employment avenues. Chinese restaurants reflect an accepted opportunity for Chinese immigrants (Ward and Jenkins 1984: 47). The trend of Chinese immigrants entering this industry has continued, and their networks within this industry contribute to the continued existence of Chinese immigrants working or self-employing in this industry (Chan 1992: 120). This study recognizes that ethnic identity and an ethnic business model maintain that these businesses operate under a racialized umbrella. As these restaurants continue to operate under the ethnic business model, it should be noted that they reproduce a racialized space that reflects the structure that created it. They continue to operate as primarily spaces popularized by the dominant white community. They continue to act as a representation of the past and serve fare that maintains the idea of a small town Chinese restaurant fusing a Chinese/Canadianess that is neither one or the other (Cho 2010: 78). While recognizing that these spaces operate under a racialized structure, the focus of this study will be on other dominating structures that may be contributing to the continuance of rural Chinese restaurants.
2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on ethnic entrepreneurship will first address the ethnic aspect and, second, the entrepreneurship aspect, in order to address the way that ethnicity has been linked with certain types of entrepreneurship. By examining the ethnic group involved, studies are addressing the motivations of specific ethnic groups to seek self-employment. Entrepreneurship is addressed second in terms of a business sector that specific ethnic groups seek (i.e., restaurants, stores, etc.). This literature review discusses ethnic entrepreneurship in general terms. The focus will then turn towards Chinese entrepreneurship, specifically Chinese restaurants. Dominant theories on minority business will be outlined within ethnic entrepreneurship. Theories specifically addressing Chinese ethnic businesses are then explored while examining Chinese entrepreneurship. Finally a conceptual model is used to assist in applying the theories to this research.

Part one: Ethnic entrepreneurship

1.1 Motivations for immigrant/ethnic entrepreneurship

Motivations for immigrant/ethnic entrepreneurship often stem from a lack of employment opportunities in the mainstream economy. Figure 1.1 reflects Waldinger et al.’s Interactive Model of Ethnic Business Development that shows the opportunity structures and characteristics that may lead to self-employment prospects (1990: 21–22). This model proposes that ethnic business development reflects a combination of opportunity structures and group characteristics that come together to make an ideal environment for ethnic business success. These structures and characteristics play out through needs and gaps in the market in terms of products, services and ownership opportunities. Specific characteristics of an ethnic group, such as their resource
mobilization and the historical conditions experienced by a group during their time of immigration, also contribute to the potential for business development (Waldinger et al. 1990: 21, 32).

Immigrant groups which experience blocked mobility or immigrants who aspire to more independence in the labour market are more likely to enter entrepreneurship (Waldinger et al. 1990: 21, Wong and Ng 1998: 66). Immigrants under these conditions are also more likely to take greater risks through self-employment since economic mobility is of greater value than social status (Waldinger et al. 1990: 33, Wong, Reynolds, and Wong 1992: 367). The strive for economic gain is of greater value than attempting to gain social status within the society.

![Interactive model of ethnic business development](image)

Figure 2.1 Interactive model of ethnic business development
Limited opportunities can be a result of various predisposing factors, including: low education and prejudice/racism (Ward and Jenkins 1984: 46). These motivating factors are often split between two areas—internal and external. From an internal perspective, there are cultural influences and opportunity structures within certain ethnic groups. These are what Waldinger et al. regard as group characteristics. Ethnic entrepreneurs tend to utilize accessible labour in the form of family members, or other ethnic labourers with minimal employment opportunities. Accessible labour is often nepotistic and co-ethnics may go as far as hiring only those of their own ethnic status, excluding non-ethnics (Light and Gold 2000: 17–21). The restaurant owner can use this social capital to create connections for getting jobs and making more contacts within the ethnic community (Light and Gold 2000: 91). Continued presence of ethnic businesses has a lot to do with success. Using social capital to make the business successful raises the appeal of self-employment and the increased productivity and a cheap labour pool increase profits.

External influences motivating self-employment include the “simple disadvantage” and the “labour market disadvantage” hypotheses. Based on Waldinger et al.’s model these would be the opportunity structures. Immigrant means and motives contribute to entrepreneurship. Those who do not have the skills to succeed in the market of the host society may be motivated to enter self-employment (Light and Gold 2000: 97, 217). Labour market disadvantage suggests that groups face discrimination and are not being employed to match the abilities required in the market (Light and Gold 2000: 200). Historically Chinese immigrants were socially viewed as inferior. This, along with a lack of language ability and low to no education, meant they experienced disadvantages that
led to diminished employment opportunities (Parris 2005: 56–57). Performance differs among ethnic groups and therefore experiences vary as well (Masurel et al. 2002: 238). Performance and experience vary due to many factors that may include social capital, education, economic resources and/or discrimination. Since immigrants often face social disadvantages compared to Canadians, immigrants are more likely to enter self-employment due to lack of available employment (Hou and Wang 2011: 7).

1.2 Characteristics of ethnic entrepreneurship

Ethnic business is often associated with new immigrants and less so with existing visible minority groups. Self-employment has historically acted as a method used by new immigrants to fill economic gaps not always covered by members of the dominant society. This was also a way for new immigrants to avoid racist attitudes by entering a workforce that did not involve employment competition with the host society (Song 1999: 5).

A common mistake when looking at ethnic business has been to dichotomise the focus to ethnic versus non-ethnic. The method homogenizes ethnic groups and treats groups based on similar experiences. Looking at ethnic business as either being ethnically driven or just as an individual’s entrepreneurial venture fails to address the nuances within ethnic businesses. Different ethnic groups are found to operate businesses differently (Ram et al. 2000: 498) and have different motivations and structures affecting their position. Ethnic business motivations derive from multiple factors and the goals for the business are not always the same (i.e. seeking independence, social capital, financial gain).
Ethnicity has been linked to business by connecting ethnic entrepreneurship to ethnic solidarity (Song 1999: 18). Studies have suggested that due to entrepreneurial values, human capital and communal/familial support, many South Asians are able to find success in entrepreneurial ventures (Ram et al. 2000: 495). It has also been suggested that certain cultural attributes may be linked to entrepreneurialism (Ram et al. 2000: 496). Unfortunately this suggested connection supports an abstract idea of possessing specific traits for success. It fails to address the mechanism and potential structures that might affect specific ethnic groups such as reactions to racism and/or capitalism (Ram et al. 2000: 496).

**Discrimination in ethnic entrepreneurship**

Systemic discrimination, stereotyping and racism have a history of affecting new immigrants and visible minorities. According to the 2001 Canadian census, 34% of the Chinese community in Canada reported having experienced discrimination or unfair treatment (Lindsay 2007: 17). Lai and Huffey’s study of 19 visible minority individuals in rural southern Alberta found that language differences, lack of recognition and differential treatment were dominant themes affecting racial minorities (2007: 125).

A major issue raised by participants in Lai and Huffey’s study was the perception that a lack of English proficiency was a barrier to employment advancement. In addition, foreign credentials and experience outside of Canada were not recognized in current positions. Although some participants felt they were welcome and accepted in their communities, some form of discrimination was experienced by the majority (Lai and Huffey 2007: 126). Discrimination was often minimized or accepted as an unalterable reality by respondents. Participants saw it as ignorance, narrow-mindedness and a lack of
knowledge on the part of the dominant community. This minimization of the discrimination was viewed by Lai and Huffey (2007: 126) as potentially a result of participants being more willing to deny than to accept discrimination as a problem. Discrimination was also potentially less of a problem since participants’ living standards and employment were satisfactory.

1.3 Theories in ethnic entrepreneurship

Studies on ethnic entrepreneurship use many concepts with specific reference to particular ethnic groups. There are two dominant theories in ethnic entrepreneurship—Bonacich’s Middleman Minority theory (1973) and Ethnic Enclave theory (Wilson and Portes 1980). Additionally, there are three other theories applicable to Chinese ethnic entrepreneurship—Block Mobility theory, Breton’s Institutional Completeness, and Apprenticeship theory.

Middleman minority theory

Ethnic groups often referred to in Middleman Minority literature are groups with a history of sojourning, such as the Chinese (Light and Bonacich 1988:18). Bonacich refined the Middleman Minority theory to encompass more than just groups with sojourning histories. The theory describes the way some ethnic minority groups occupy a middle ground position between the higher classes and mass society through service positions (Blalock 1967: 79–84, Bonacich 1973: 583, Bonacich and Light 1988: 17, Parkinson 1999: 12). Characteristics of middleman minorities involve strong solidarity within the group and the involvement of family as the labor force for the business (Parkinson 1999: 12).
Expanding the theory to immigrant entrepreneurs was to expand the narrative beyond those groups possessing a sojourning history. This emphasises how specific ethnic groups use their particular skills, solidarity, knowledge and cultural values for social advancement (Light and Bonacich 1988: 18). Using social and cultural capital for advancement is not a new phenomenon, when looking at specific immigrant groups. The support network created stems from the social and cultural resources of the group. The immigrant entrepreneur concept also expands the focus to examine the possibility that external structures might lead immigrant groups to self-employment. This concept facilitates a discussion around the over-representation of certain ethnic groups in ethnic business. The theory is very broad and refers to everyone within the ethnic minority with business-owning status. Light and Bonacich expanded the terminology of the theory, by adding the term “immigrant entrepreneur” to foreign-born immigrant groups who are involved in self-employment at greater rates than the general population (Light and Bonacich 1988: 18).

**Ethnic enclave**

Portes and Bach suggest that an ethnic enclave involves the networking around immigrant small business (1985: 339). The success of enclaves involved entrepreneurial experience in the homeland (Portes and Bach 1985: 340). This may have more to do with the Middleman Minority Thesis (Light and Bonacich 1988: 17) and the Blocked Mobility Thesis discussed later. Characteristically ethnic enclaves are ethnic neighborhoods that are traditionally located within cities, reflecting a specific ethnic affiliation partially segregated from the host society (Chacko 2003: 22). These communities operate as micro
societies within the dominant society, reflecting the cultural identity of the ethnicity population within them.

The term “ethnic enclave” emerged primarily to describe immigrant groups deemed inferior to the host society. The ethnic enclave was not only a segregated space but emerged as a cultural community of individuals with shared experiences (Chacko 2003: 22). The enclave refers to a physical territory of space that is usually within a greater space. The enclave is not just a residential space but also a space, allowing for the emergence of ethnic businesses that utilize resources of family solidarity and cheap labour (Light and Bonacich 1988: 354). The ethnic enclave acts as a space for cultural support that can provide networking for new immigrants to the community. The enclave often provides community and companionship. Such informal relations can help newcomers adjust to the host society and provide formal resources such as professional, religious and welfare support (Breton 1964: 194). The ethnic enclave operates as a space for social and cultural needs, as well as setting up entrepreneurial and employment opportunities. This theory was included in order to discuss whether ethnic enclaves and ethnic spaces exist in rural areas for Chinese restaurateurs. By raising the idea of ethnic enclaves and their importance in the literature on ethnic business, this study will explore the way that ethnic entrepreneurs have adapted socially to their environments in the absence of direct cultural relations characteristic of rural areas.

**Blocked Mobility Theory**

Blocked Mobility theory links the political and economic power of the dominant ethnic majority with the racialization of the ethnic minority (Chen 2000: 31). This thesis was proposed by John Porter, who documented socio-economic hierarchies in society that
also reflect themselves within ethnic groups through religion, class and date of arrival (time of immigration) (Liodakis 2002: 26, Porter 1993: 73). This stratification between and within ethnic groups reflects how social divisions move beyond the majority versus minority narrative.

The Blocked Mobility theory examines the power relations of dominant ethnic majorities and the blocking of the ethnic minority from advancing in the labour market (Chen 2000: 30, Li 1998: 48–49). Racism and discrimination act as the overarching structure that leads ethnic minorities to face disadvantaged positions in the labour market. By focusing on the conditions and socio-economic structures in the society, this theory turns attention away from a focus on a transplanted culture issue that suggests certain ethnic groups possess certain cultural traits (Chen 2000: 30, Li 1993: 221).

This theory helps to address the way many racialized minority groups with low socio-economic status have turned to small business operations as an alternative to seeking employment within the ethnic majority (Chen 2000: 37). The dominant ethnic majority has the power to block the ethnic minority from moving up the socio-economic ladder by racializing and segregating the minority from the labour market. The effects result in the unfavored ethnic minorities turning towards self-employment (Teixeira 2001: 2057).

**Institutional Completeness**

Raymond Breton proposes that it is possible for immigrants without direct ethnic ties within their communities to seek ties away from their communities, such as in urban centres or neighbouring communities (Breton 1964: 193). Breton suggests the more organizations and associations that exist for the ethnic group within the community, the
more integrated into the community, the members of the group become (Breton 1964: 197). However, when structured ethnic organizations and associations are not available it was found that immigrants were more likely to integrate and associate with those in the community that do not share the same ethnic roots (Breton 1964: 198). Without close ethnic ties within the community, immigrants became more involved with other members of the community and develop relationships with the existing community regardless of ethnicity. Breton’s writing addresses the way the immigrant integrates into the community and by building relationships that are not ethnically based.

**Apprenticeship Theory**

This theory describes the way ethnic minority workers may enter an industry in order to gain knowledge for eventual self-employment in the industry. The employment as a worker becomes a training ground for moving upwards in the industry (Ram, Abbas, Sanghera, Barlow and Jones 2000: 356). In Ram et al.’s study, the theory was not confirmed. Interviews with ethnic minority workers in urban independent restaurants found that of the 86 employees interviewed in 37 restaurants, employees were not interested in many of the issues faced by employers. Employees did not want to make the shift to employer due to factors such as loyalty/personal ties to their current employer, not wanting to change jobs, and the hyper-competitive nature of the market environment (2000: 362–364).

The apprenticeship theory was evident in Light and Bonacich’s study of Korean entrepreneurship in Los Angeles, USA. Korean immigrants utilized an entrepreneurial chain where workers would learn the business and proceed to open their own business
This created an overrepresentation of certain Koreans in industries in the market.

1.4 Family operations and ethnic family restaurants

Family operations tend to have similar attributes to one another. They tend to involve the family as a whole and work involves long hours to manage the operation. The idea of a family business and an ethnic family business needs to be defined separately due to a racialized element that appears in the ethnic family business. Although family operations and ethnic family businesses tend to reflect similar characteristics, the variance derives from this path in which a particular ethnic group may have arrived at self-employment. The factors that lead a particular ethnic group towards self-employment often vary from the motivations that mainstream society has towards potentially entering a self-employment position. An ethnic group’s motivating factors involve the historical experiences of that group, the mechanisms and events that contribute to the decision for self-employment.

Alexander Chayanov examined theories about family farms. Family labour farms employed few to no non-family members and they tended not to have wage contracts (Chibnik 1984: 335, Smith 1979: 477-478). These characteristics are similar to the ethnic family business model and especially the Chinese restaurant model. His theories on family farming suggested two main ideas. The number of workers would affect the amount of production, the more workers; the less work each performs since there is a finite amount of work in the operation (Chibnik 1984: 335). He also theorized these families worked more to achieve a living rather than to maximize profits (Millar 1970: 221).
Chayanov’s theory on the family working to maintain a living (Millar 1970: 221) works well with the early events that led to Chinese ethnic entrepreneurship in restaurants. As Chinese entrepreneurs entered self-employment to seek a livelihood and to remove themselves from a labour market that devalued them, this was reflective of a survival mentality. Self-employment was a way to use what skills these immigrants possessed, and to create employment for other members of the ethnic group. The alternative was to work for an employer at lower wages in a society that viewed Chinese immigrants as inferior, and thus to face discrimination and exclusion (Li 1998: 47, 49, 56). Self-employment became more of a survival strategy for making a living away from the discrimination and exclusion and less about profit maximization.

Theoretically, the volume of work will decrease as more family members or kinship ties are involved in the ethnic restaurant business. However, unlike farms which are limited by the amount of land that can be worked, the restaurant business is not limited by space. The restaurant can expand in terms of space as well as in terms of customer service. More workers can mean that more customers can be served more efficiently through faster service. This means that as customers are served and ready to leave, more customer turnaround can occur and ultimately more profit can be made. The only limiting factor would be the number of customers available to be served. There needs to be more demand for the business than the business can supply. Therefore volume of work can increase as more customers can be served in the restaurant space. Chayanov’s theory on family farming operations is limited when compared to the Chinese restaurant business.
Moving away from Chayanov’s theory and looking at profit maximization and capitalism, these may not have been the initial purposes for Chinese immigrants moving towards self-employment, yet the successful nature of these businesses reflects another perspective that may be the driving force for continuing these operations. As time has passed, the institutional structures that affected Chinese immigrants no longer exist and the Chinese immigrant has changed; therefore, conditions for entrepreneurship need to be re-evaluated for present circumstances.

**Ethnic restaurant business**

Although the family oriented business model is evident in Chinese restaurants, this is not true of all ethnic businesses. In a study of African American entrepreneurial experiences, Sharon Parkinson discussed family with her study’s participants. She found that although some had involved family within their businesses, the majority did not want family involvement as it was viewed as creating additional complications and would add to the stress of the business (Parkinson 1999: 83).

In Esther Ofori’s (2004: 10) study on Afro-American and Afro-Caribbean small ethnic businesses in the Bronx, she cites the findings of Nelson (1958) and Gosh and McLafferty (1987), that choosing a location is based mostly around customer attraction and potential profit. Therefore seeking potential profit becomes the major factor leading individuals to seek specific locations for their businesses.

A study of Vietnamese restaurants in Reno, Nevada found these ethnic businesses strongly depended on family labour. However the family members often ultimately separated to open their own restaurants within the same or nearby areas. The Vietnamese family restaurant focused on maintaining close family ties through a strong family
support network. To sustain the support network of the family, physical location of family members was important. There was no discussion of moving away to a rural area without family and ethnic support. The study also concluded that due to a lower cost of living and minimal competition, the five Vietnamese restaurants addressed in the study were successful (Jimenez 2007: 111). The majority of the Vietnamese population in the study area worked in Vietnamese ethnic businesses, and this led to a lack of exposure to the non-Vietnamese speaking majority. This has affected the younger Vietnamese generation, where many youth develop strong skills in spoken English. One Vietnamese restaurant owner pointed out that in order to move ahead, the next generation will need fluency in the English language (Jimenez 2007: 112–113). This reflects the way that language ability can lead to limited opportunities.

A study on minority ethnic enterprises in Scotland found that many successful ethnic businesses resulted from diversifying factors of the business to exploit multiple opportunities for growth. Some of these businesses used varying markets or chose to develop a niche for their product in order to find success (Deakins et al. 2009: 315). Since those businesses in urban areas faced greater competition in the market, the customers often complained about cost but continued to buy the goods sold (Deakins et al. 2009: 316). The restaurants studied in this thesis chose to exploit the rural location and the niche market in order to find success. The rural Chinese restaurant differs from other ethnic businesses because of their rural location away from co-ethnics.
Part two: Chinese entrepreneurship and the restaurant business

2.1 Chinese entrepreneurship

Since institutional measures blocked the mobility of the Chinese in Canada, Chinese immigrants sought alternatives to finding success in a social position within a society that segregated them (Li 1993: 220). Seeking alternatives was the only means available to attempt to overcome the harsh conditions of the host society. Although the blocked mobility theory may address the historical reasons for Chinese self-employment measures, it does not account for current continuance of Chinese restaurant operations (Li 1993: 223).

2.2 Characteristics of Chinese entrepreneurship

Theories on Chinese ethnic entrepreneurship focus on three areas, all relating to identity. First, there is the Chinese diaspora, where overseas Chinese defined an identity and created social space. Second, there is Chinese transnationalism, a theoretical approach addressing the way overseas Chinese remained connected to the homeland. Finally, the literature has proposed a specific cultural work ethic associated with Chinese immigrants. The Chinese diaspora, Chinese transnationalism and the Chinese work ethic have emerged as theoretical guides to studying cultural characteristics of the Chinese identity and how these factors might affect Chinese entrepreneurship.

Chinese diaspora and social space

The diaspora refers to groups which have historically been dispersed from their homeland and hence consequently have experienced divided identities. Identity is split between the homeland and the new country of settlement. The Chinese diaspora focuses on Chinese immigrants who have left the homeland, while still maintaining strong social
ties and affiliations with it (Bennet, Grossberg and Morris 2005: 82–83). The term “Chinese diaspora” is defined here as the relations that overseas Chinese have developed economically and through networking to create identity in a new homeland (Cheung 2004: 664). The Chinese diaspora focuses on the way that Chinese immigrants have created an identity away from their home country. Thus, a dual identity exists.

The Chinese diaspora in a rural community can be seen in the Chinese restaurant. The restaurant operates in a public sphere and becomes a social space for community interaction. Lily Cho’s study compares women’s identity to the emergence of the Chinese identity, describing the way women in the United States used the public sphere to enter public space in order to be recognized in society (Cho 2010: 124). This concept of using a public sphere relates well to the Chinese restaurant. Though it emerged as a response to racist sentiments, the presence of the Chinese restaurant in the dominant society paved the way for shared space, where the Chinese minority mingled with the dominant society while serving meals. These restaurants integrated into the communities in which they operated and the families of these businesses also integrated more broadly into the communities.

Cho continues to address social integration when looking at the menu stating that “food is mutually acknowledged as Chinese…constantly changing, mutating and responding to ideas of Chineseness and Canadianness among both Chinese and non-Chinese people” (Cho 2010: 126). The menu of the Chinese restaurant does not resemble any traditional Chinese cuisine found in China, yet it distinctly holds an identity tied to “Chineseness.” The food along with the restaurant contributes to the Chinese diaspora
and acts as a symbol of cultural integration while maintaining ties to the country of origin.

**Chinese transnationalism**

Related to the Chinese diaspora concept, the theoretical perspective of Chinese transnationalism has emerged. Chinese transnationalism addresses the way immigrants have created social connections between the host country and the country of origin (Light 2007: 90). While the Chinese diaspora approach focuses on the identity created by overseas Chinese, Chinese transnationalism focuses on the relationships overseas Chinese have maintained with their home countries. Chinese transnationalism paved the way for the term “transmigrant,” referring to immigrants who are able to move between both societies, participating equally in both. These ideas of transmigration and transmigrants within the literature have become more popular in reference to new Chinese immigrants with access to new communication technology, and who possess education and financial security prior to emigrating (Light 2007: 90). The importance of this concept lies in the way it addresses new Chinese immigrants and the communication methods they employ in order to maintain identity in separate locations. Chinese immigrants were affected by historical racism and ethnic disadvantage as a result of their minimal skills and lack of English language ability (Chan 1992: 117). New immigrants are viewed as having their own strategies for continuing in the restaurant industry. The old narrative of the Chinese immigrant experience does not encompass the characteristics of new Chinese immigrants who may have language ability and higher levels of skill and access to capital to invest.

The research on Chinese transnationalism reveals that identities of these immigrants are based on duality. Immigrants are found to have created bridging between
cultures through social and professional networks (Szonyi 2007: 144). Transnational networks exist as informal links despite territorial borders. Through technology and changes in immigration policy, Chinese immigrants are able to connect more readily with their country of origin and to build and maintain social ties.

**Close family ties, work ethic and filial piety**

The three values of close family ties, strong work ethic and filial piety are common themes within Chinese immigrant literature, and are described as cultural values that contribute to the success of Chinese entrepreneurs. Redding describes Lau’s study of Hong Kong society as a key example of how family is symbolic of a unit, similar to that of a team that provides family security and builds family resources. Therefore family consists of a family unit whose members are dependent on one another (1993: 53). Although family refers primarily to immediate members, Chinese immigrants have historically recognized broad kinship ties as well. Those with the same clan names (surnames) are often also considered to be part of the broader family circle (Redding 1993: 54).

A strong work ethic is the description often used with reference to Chinese immigrants and entrepreneurs. This description is used to describe the apparent willingness to take on more laborious and difficult tasks. Since the family structure is codependent, the work ethic is characterized as an attempt by family members to contribute to the growth and security of the family as a whole (Redding 1993: 70).

Although these characteristics are often used to describe the Chinese immigrant family, it is important to recognize that cultural background may have less of an impact since not all families possess the same cultural qualities attributed to the Chinese family
structure. Rather, circumstances and experiences may play a larger role in shaping the decisions of immigrant families. Overarching structures of racism, and the lack of education and language ability, act as the limitations affecting many Chinese immigrants. Also family operations involve all members and this translates to lower operating costs. Survival is based on the collective individual the contribution of individual family members to a common goal.

2.3 International literature on Chinese restaurants

Restaurants are often considered a negative investment in the business world since they can be difficult to operate. A study of Chinese-owned businesses found that approximately 86% sought informal sources for advice on opening the business in Scotland (Deakins et al. 2009: 321). The 41 individuals who entered the restaurant business as a means of self-employment did not get advice from formal settings, but rather sought sources of advice among family members and close friends. In terms of financing the business, the research suggests that self-financing continues to be a theme, first appearing in the early rise of Chinese restaurants and continuing to the present. Although banks may contribute initially, the re-investment of profits helps the businesses grow (Deakins et al. 2009: 318). The research notes a heavy reliance on the family and ethnic group participation for the actual operation of a restaurant. Studying a chain of Norwegian Chinese restaurants, Anne Krogstad found there was a link between the home and the destination country; a transnational community had been created (Krogstad 2004: 200). The transnational network acted as a sociocultural resource that enabled Chinese restaurant owners to stay connected with the homeland and to build ties with potential workers in China.
A study conducted in the United Kingdom interviewed a series of Chinese ethnic restaurateurs on their business practices. They identified the main reason for self-employment as labour discrimination (Chaudry and Crick 2004: 41). Other key factors for choosing restaurant self-employment were the potential for higher earnings, and that many already possessed professional cooking skills (Chaudry and Crick 2004: 41).

In an in-depth qualitative study conducted on children’s involvement in the Chinese restaurant business in the United Kingdom, Miri Song interviewed 42 young people from a total of 25 families operating Chinese take-aways in southeast England (Song 1999: 19). Her study resulted from the observation that most ethnic family-operated businesses in England are often viewed through racial stereotypes of immigrant livelihoods in self-employment. She focused on the stereotyped livelihoods of immigrant entrepreneurs and their children (Song 1999: 2). Song notes self-exploitation was the key to maintaining low operation costs. The family operated as a unit where duties were based on the age and gender of the children. Family members progressed in their ability to take on different tasks in the business in order to maintain its successful operation (Greenhalgh 1994: passim, Song 1999: 17).

Song discovered that the children of restaurant owners characterized the restaurants as dominating their lives. Many lived in the restaurant, either upstairs or in adjacent living quarters, all found the take-away to “run their lives” (Song 1999: 48). The take-away required that the parents work long hours. The work was viewed as long and arduous, often ten or more hours a day, seven days a week (Song 1999: 49). Some children were brought in to help in the business with small tasks. As they got older they were involved in more aspects of the business. However, some children mentioned the
take-away became more of a commitment for them once they became teenagers. Prior to being teenagers, their parents did not include them as a major part of the business (Song 1999: 51–52).

Gomez and Cheung’s research on the Chinese food industry in Britain found that there is structure to Chinese business that involves family firms and intra-ethnic business networks (Gomez and Cheung 2009: 134). Family was not only important in the business operations but also in the financial start up. The costs to open a restaurant often derived from kinship ties. A common theme in studies on Chinese enterprises suggests “…in family firms, the focus is on perpetuating ownership within the family and to build the company for the future generation. This desire is greater than the emphasis on making money” (Gomez and Cheung 2009: 135). Although this characteristic may not be unique to Chinese immigrants, it is a characteristic often associated with the Chinese immigrant identity.

Maggi Leung interviewed 22 Chinese restaurateurs in Germany. She noted the ethnic food businesses fell into three categories: larger restaurants, bistro and fast food, and take-aways (2003: 109–110). Chinese entrepreneurship in Germany was greatly affected by government recruitment policies in the 1960s, which initially promoted Chinese catering and later began imposing qualifications on restaurant workers, requiring restaurant qualifications and education (Leung 2003: 110). The increasing demands of government policy have shifted the focus of Germany’s Chinese restaurant industry, such that Chinese restaurants have adjusted their food offerings to provide less authentic dishes that do not require an experienced chef (Leung 2003: 112).
The American experience with Chinese restaurants mirrored its Canadian counterpart. As in Canada, Chinese immigrants came to the United States for the gold rush and for railway construction. Self-employment through the restaurant was a result of anti-Chinese sentiment in the United States. An American study of Chinese food authenticity found that the majority of the customers who came to frequent the Chinese restaurants were non-Chinese, creating a shift in cuisine. The cuisine shifted to bridge Western food tastes, while still symbolically representing an oriental experience (Barbas 2003: 669). This experience kept the non-Chinese customers returning and as anti-Chinese sentiment shifted to a positive view of Chinese immigrants, the food began to change again. As more Chinese immigrants have arrived in the United States, the food has shifted back to a more authentic Chinese style of cuisine.

2.4 Canadian literature on Chinese restaurants

Motivations for immigration and rural destinations

Immigration to rural Saskatchewan has an historical roots. The rural West was based on immigration to populate the area (Silvius and Annis 2007: 126). There are diverse reasons for choosing to immigrate to rural areas, so predictability of motivation is not consistent. However, confirmed potential motivations are employment, business opportunities, and quality of life (Silvius and Annis 2007: 131). Immigrants are often driven by opportunities and Canada’s immigration model focuses on an economic strategy that emphasizes skill and education. Studies on immigration to rural areas find that rural immigrants tend to possess higher levels of education than the rest of the rural population (Reimer 2007: 4). Rural immigrants to Saskatchewan also faced higher levels of isolation, with limited employment opportunities and limited services (Sorensen 2007:}
123) due to a lack of diverse industry. A lack of services contributes to the potential need for self-employment. By self-employing and providing a service, immigrant entrepreneurs benefit by having minimal competition while simultaneously filling a need in the rural communities. Immigration to rural areas also builds and promotes local industry (Sorensen 2007: 122).

Chinese restaurants in rural Saskatchewan do not have the same ethnic community support that restaurants in urban centres enjoy. Since Chinese immigration and ethnic business were rooted in clan connections and ethnic bonds, the rural restaurant is removed from many of these bonds and achieves other means of community integration. The restaurant business acts as a medium of integration into the community. The Chinese restaurant in small-town Saskatchewan is often the only restaurant in town. In Cheuk Kwan’s documentary on Chinese restaurants, Kwan interviewed patrons of the New Outlook Cafe in Outlook, Saskatchewan to better understand their views on the restaurants within their community (Cho 2010:80, Kwan 2005). The patrons viewed the restaurant, and the family, as staples of the community, where a mutual trust and friendship had developed through decades of operation. The concept of institutional completeness and integration are fully evident in the interviews with the restaurant owners and the patrons of the New Outlook Café. This business is integral for both parties within the community. The business becomes a symbolic place as well as a physical gathering spot for the community (Kwan 2005: passim).

**Chinese restaurant experience in Canada**

Research on Canadian Chinese business uses restaurants as an example of the way Chinese immigrants reflect the third stage of the ethnic niche, “Middleman Minority,
(which) emerges when immigrant business owners begin to serve the majority population as well as the ethnic clientele” (Chan 1992: 118, Ward and Jenkins 1984: 3). Rural Chinese restaurants do not serve many co-ethnic customers, due to an absence of Chinese families in rural communities. In order to build ethnic community, the restaurateurs visit one another and this acts as a cultural connection and facilitates cultural social networking. The owners reach out to one another to create an ethnic community that share values, ideas of family and kinship, and collective ethnicity, in order to find institutional completeness (Chan 1992: 119, Light and Bonacich: 1988: 325).

Research on Chinese business in Canada demonstrates that restaurants emerged from an underserved niche market (Chan 1992: 119). Historically, Chinese immigrants with minimal education and labour skills were able to start up restaurants with little knowledge and low upfront costs. Immigrant entrepreneurs were able to maximize their efficiency from a self-exploitation strategy that involved longer hours, yearlong service, lower price points, and personalized service (Chan 1992: 119–120). By self-exploitation and the use of family labour, the business would be able to maintain lower costs. This is corroborated by the literature suggesting that Confucian values of loyalty and family servitude are crucial. Although Confucian ideas are discussed as culturally based reasons for Chinese families to operate in a specific way, this stereotypical association neglects to address the way that other mechanisms may be involved in choosing self-employment, other than traditional cultural values (Greenhalgh 1994: passim, Song 1999: 16). Without this initial sacrifice of self-exploiting labour, the business would not be financially viable. This idea of self-exploitation for success follows what Giddens states as “dialectic control,” where those who have the lower hand use it to gain success (Chan 1992: 131,
This means that by utilizing self-exploitation as a resource, Chinese restaurant owners have been able to gain socioeconomic success for themselves and their families.

A study in a small prairie community found Chinese immigrants operating Chinese restaurants were able to live in a space that hovered between the Canadian and Chinese identity, without focusing on either (Wason-Ellam 2001: 71). Although the study focused primarily on child literacy development while being raised in the family business, the two in-depth interviews that were conducted shed light on the way that business success may lead to other problems. The long working hours required for the business limited opportunities to participate in English-language skills training; their skills were limited to the necessary conversations associated with operating a business. Thus the families were limited in understanding the education and language practices that their children were involved in at school (Wason-Ellam 2001: 72).

Wason-Ellam observed in her qualitative study that she considered both families to operate within the transnational community. Both families, although far from their country of origin (China), were still trying to keep their cultural and business ties with their homeland (Wason-Ellam 2001: 74). The constant connection to homeland was further emphasized by the families’ surrounding themselves with a larger group community and kin who spoke the same Chinese dialect as they did. This contributed to their social support network but hindered their advancement in the dominant society, for they had not improved connections with their non-dialect speaking neighbours (Wason-Ellam 2001: 74).
A qualitative study on rural and urban Chinese restaurants in southern Alberta found that most rural communities had a Chinese restaurant, run primarily by the only Chinese family in the community. In terms of initial start-ups for these restaurants, the family was key to having low cost and flexibility of labour for the restaurant (Smart 2003: passim). Although the restaurants were recognized by owners as a means to give their children a better life financially, it was expected that the children would move up the socioeconomic ladder through education to pursue more professional types of employment. The study also found that the choice to move from an urban to rural space was strategic in order to pursue economic success away from the competition in urban centres. These families, although far from one another, were able to maintain a sense of cultural continuity by facilitating and maintaining ties to other Chinese restaurant-owning families (Smart 2003: passim).

Although the studies on Chinese in rural Manitoba do not focus on Chinese restaurants, they still note the importance of the Chinese restaurant as a defined place for relationship development and social interaction (Marshall 2008: 578). Historically, these restaurants were opened by Chinese immigrants who had minimal education but strong ties to Chinese cultural beliefs from their homeland. These belief systems stemmed from Confucian ideas of benevolence and loyalty (Marshall 2008: 579). Marshall’s study found that since restaurants were scattered amongst the small towns, the restaurants owners maintained ideas of creating cultural continuity through creating Chinese support groups such as Benevolence Associations and kin organizations, in order to maintain personal connections (Marshall 2008: 579). Ties to homeland culture and ideas remained important within the new homeland.
The story of the rural Chinese restaurant, and many ethnic businesses, reveals that the entire family is involved. Initially clan members would come together to own the business, but once immigration in Canada began to allow families to come, the family restaurant business emerged. There is a holistic concept at the core of the family business suggesting other mechanisms are also at play, such as filial piety and Confucian teachings which continue to sustain the family by viewing the business as part of the family.

**Limitations of the literature**

The research on rural Chinese restaurants is limited. Currently there are no studies specifically addressing the Chinese restaurant experience in rural Saskatchewan from the perspective of family structure and business operations. Literature on Chinese ethnic business and Chinese restaurants is discussed in terms of results from wider studies that focus on general ethnic businesses or ethnic restaurant businesses.

There have not been any studies addressing the vast numbers of Chinese restaurants that opened in Canada over the years, other than these restaurants being mentioned as part of wider studies. There is no context for the present experience or motivations surrounding the continued existence of these restaurants. No research has been conducted nationally using interviews to specifically address experiences and family dynamics. There have been no in depth studies of the Chinese restaurant in rural Saskatchewan. There have been a few studies conducted on a national level that specifically address rural Chinese restaurant culture, but they are limited; the rest of the studies available discuss Chinese restaurants in connection to general ethnic business. It is recognized that Chinese ethnic businesses in rural and urban Saskatchewan are not limited to restaurants, but also include laundromats and other service industries. This
study’s primary focus is on the rural Saskatchewan Chinese restaurant experience. The findings are compared to the available research on ethnic restaurant businesses and ethnic businesses in general.

**Part three: Research study and conceptual model**

**3.1 Research objectives**

The literature review discussed common themes used in Chinese entrepreneurship literature. By discussing these ideas, the study will look to see whether these ideas prevail in the context of the rural Chinese restaurant experience. The existing literature is limited for it has not examined the daily experiences of rural Chinese restaurant owners nor does it look at the adaptive and business strategies of these entrepreneurs. The resulting literature primarily addresses urban Chinese restaurant owners and overemphasizes historical perspectives of Chinese immigrants. It also oversimplifies the experience by over focusing on theories meant to address all Chinese restaurateurs.

The uniqueness of the rural restaurant derives from the way these businesses adapted to cater to Canadian tastes, through food offerings and cost efficiency. By choosing to locate and operate rurally, early Chinese restaurateurs were not only moving away from more concentrated forms of racism, they were also moving away from co-ethnic support networks. As communication technology has advanced the rural restaurant no longer exists in isolation away from co-ethnic support but has the ability to maintain ties to the home country and other co-ethnics despite rural residency.

This study uses themes common in ethnic entrepreneurship research, with a greater focus on theoretical contributions stemming from studies involving Chinese entrepreneurs in the food industry (Parkinson 1999: 20). This study focuses on: (1) the
motivations and strategy Chinese entrepreneurs employ when entering self-employment; (2) the family involvement and the integration into the family business within the community; and (3) the method Chinese restaurant entrepreneurs use to overcome structural obstacles and to capitalize on business strengths in their rural communities. These foci will then be used to understand the greater conditions that led to the continuation of the rural Chinese restaurant model.

Motivations

The strategy to enter self-employment in the restaurant industry was an adaptive one to combat the racism. By using kinship and family ties the business could minimize labour costs. In return, these restaurants became social spaces for the general community (Cho 2010: 12, 80).

The Chinese restaurant uses food to bridge the taste of the host society and the home country. Research on Chinese restaurants in North America report the cuisine served is described as taste-specific to suit the needs of the host country. The food is not seen as actually being traditional Chinese fare but rather a modified version; thus cultural cuisine authenticity becomes a factor (Cho 2010: 53). Not only do these businesses serve a cross cultural menu, the menu also encompasses a wide variety of dishes in order to maximize the product offerings of the business and appeal to as wide as possible a clientele base.

Unlike major urban centres, rural restaurants command the customer market. These small restaurants possess little to no competition. As a result advertising is typically non-existent since the market is already commanded. Rural Chinese restaurants in Canada often operate as the lone restaurant in a rural town, raising the likelihood of success.
Larger rural communities may have up to three Chinese restaurants but since the community is larger, the additional restaurants are still able to command the market similar to a smaller location.

**Family participation**

The family is the primary labour force for the business. These families follow a patriarchal structure with the father as the head of the household. However, both the father and mother act as the operational managers of the business, while the children contribute to daily labour and translation.

Research on the role of the mother in the ethnic restaurant describes the way the mother often acts as a mediator that buffers working family relationships within the business. The role of buffer/mediator is invisible, since the male/father of the household still rules as patriarch (Janjuha-Jivraj 2004: 782). In interviews with 130 Chinese Canadian women, life for these women primarily revolved around work (Sugiman 1992: 11, 15). Women often worked alongside their husbands for 12 hours a day, then returned home to household and children chores. Women are often associated with family duties and child rearing.

The solidarity of the family and the goal of success are values associated with the family structure of Chinese entrepreneurs. In order to maximize efficiency and lower housing costs, these restaurants tend to be attached to the family home or the home is within a short walking distance from the business (Smart 2003: passim).

**Business structure and obstacles**

Chinese restaurants were established by Chinese immigrants to adapt to a society that was preventing their upward mobility by limiting their employment options.
Therefore racism, both institutionally and through popular anti-Chinese sentiment, resulted in Chinese immigrants seeking new avenues of employment. Restaurants were a business venture requiring low costs and no education to start up, whilst able to employ the whole family. Although initial start-up costs were low, Chinese immigrants utilized informal kinship and familial ties to finance the business. Early immigrants of the same clan name would come together and jointly purchase a restaurant they utilized the Chinese family model of group labour. Close relationships between clan members reflected a familial relationship which provided support to counter the continuing obstacles of racism. Institutional racism attempted to control the self-employment of Chinese restaurant owners by prohibiting, for a period, the hiring of white women, and prohibiting the possession of a liquor licence (Li 1992: 33). To this day family members continue to act as the major labor force for the Chinese restaurant while reflecting the work ethic associated with the Chinese family model. This dependency on the family created a strain for individual members. Children are often cited as translators and mediators between their immigrant parents and the host society (Smart 2003). The extensive focus on the restaurant limits the parental ability for “quality family time,” and other recreational activities.

3.2 Conceptual model

By adjusting Redding’s framework of analysis (Figure 2.1), the conceptual model for this study (Figure 2.2) takes a top-down approach in terms of structures (Redding 1993: 80). Redding’s model is based on Chinese economic success and what forces may have created the success of Chinese business operators. It uses a bottom-up approach, from the individual outwards to the society. He looks at the qualities of the Chinese
business person to determine the factors that may have led to success. Using open-ended
questions, the respondents were allowed to answer the questions according to their own
understandings and preferences. Redding began the questions without a preconceived
notion of how the questions would be answered. Although this approach allowed the
responses to dictate much of the analysis, it was recognized that the respondents might
not be aware of structures affecting them. As well, the responses only reflect the ideas as
understood by the respondent. Their views bring to light specific aspects of the
experience and by looking at overarching structures, this study aims to add to the
understanding of this rural Chinese restaurant phenomenon (Redding 1993: 79–81).

Figure 2.2 S. Gordon Redding’s Framework of Analysis

The conceptual model (Figure 2.3) used in this study recognizes the overarching
structures in society, so the approach is a top-down perspective through time. It looks at
the greater structures in order to understand how experiences may have been influenced
by the larger structures. It is an historical timeline that reflects the structures and resulting
effects. Using background history and literature regarding Chinese restaurants, the model is organized as a timeline of structures, events and experiences.

This top-down model is used in order to address the structures and mechanisms that affect the experiences of Chinese restaurateurs. By using this perspective, the study will be able to gather information on experiences in order to understand the greater events and conditions that contribute to the experiences. The racism faced by early Chinese immigrants to Canada demonstrated itself through social conditions of self-segregation (enclaves), violence and minimal interaction with the dominant society. Institutional influences contributed to the racialization of Chinese immigrants by manifesting through events such as the Head Tax and *Chinese Immigration Act* and employment bans. These events were a liability for Chinese immigrants by disadvantaging their social mobility and forcing them to adapt to society despite marginalization.

Chinese immigrants adapted by utilizing their resource of family/kinship labour. This family mobilization as well as ethnic mobilization became the transformative resource that enabled Chinese immigrants to enter self-employment. The Chinese family acts as a structure as well, that perpetuates the cultural values of an ethnic group that has a strong focus on familial relations. The ability to mobilize for the purpose of self-employment changed their disadvantage to an advantage and facilitated social mobility. The restaurant model used by these entrepreneurs focused on providing lower costs to their patrons and greater food options. These factors made the restaurants appealing to the public.

As the restaurants popularized and found financial success changes were also occurring institutionally as Chinese immigrants were no longer viewed as inferior.
Racism as a structure no longer acted as the dominant motivating factor for entering this industry. Although racism specifically was not the motivating structure, the restaurants do continue to operate under an ethnic model that identifies as a “Chinese” restaurant. The success of these businesses became the motivating factor in ensuring ongoing Chinese immigrant entrepreneurship through restaurants. An ability to use family/kinship ties to build a successful business is an advantage. The liability of the ethnic restaurant model stems directly from the advantage, such that their self-exploitation involved maintaining a racialized business model. The model also forces dependence on family labour. Overall, this model is a reflection of the history of Chinese restaurants and the motivations that continue this trend of ethnic entrepreneurship.
### Societal (Racist attitudes and marginalization)

- **SOCIAL CONDITIONS**
  - Ethnic Enclave (Chinatown)
  - Violence against Chinese
  - Lack of English language ability

### Society /Institutional Influences (Racism)

- **EVENTS FACILITATING DISADVANTAGE**
  - Head Tax and Chinese Immigration Act
  - Minimal employment options
  - No more railroad

### Relationships
(Marginalization from dominant society, and reconnecting with kin and family ties)

- **POWERS AND CONDITIONS LEADING TO ADVANTAGE**
  - Availability of family/kinship labour
  - Low wages in dominant society workplace
  - Need for employment
  - Low start-up cost

### Self (Self-employment through restaurants)

- **ADVANTAGES**
  - Minimal Competition
  - Variety of food options
  - Exotic nature of the food

### Societal/Institutional Influences (Capitalism)

- **SOCIAL CONDITIONS**
  - Financial success
  - Stable employment
  - Minimal competition

### Society (Cost effective food alternative)

- **ADVANTAGES**
  - Acceptance in community
  - Image of hardworking
  - Language and education

### Relationships
(Becoming part of community and viewed as community members)

- **ADDITIONAL ADVANTAGES**
  - Inclusion in community
  - Positive image to community

### Self (Self exploitation and lower costs leading to financial success)

- **LIABILITIES**
  - Ethnic restaurateur image
  - Self-exploitation: overdependence on labour

---

**Figure 2.3 Conceptual Model**
3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCHER’S EXPERIENCE

This study focuses on rural Chinese restaurant owners operating in the southern quarter of Saskatchewan. Institutional racism stemming from racial sentiment and the lack of employment are the factual events that constitute the overarching racist structure. Although the literature focuses on racism as a dominant structure in the actions of early Chinese immigrants to Canada, this study addresses how structure and agency contribute to the ongoing success of Chinese restaurant owners in rural Saskatchewan. This study interviews eight rural Saskatchewan Chinese restaurant owners to explore the business structure and the idea of family involvement in order to understand the continued thriving nature of these businesses. A partial critical realist perspective is used in order to explore the structures and agency that keep this phenomenon going. This study will also address present day structures that might be shaping the way for restaurants to continue as well as find success (Porter 1993: 596).

Critical Realism

Using critical realism, this study seeks to understand why these restaurants continue to exist and how they continue to operate. Critical realism is a methodology that “explains the relationship between social structure and human action,” as well as recognizing that “social phenomena comes from multiple structures” (Porter 1993: 593). In order to outline critical realism, knowledge, the domains of reality, structure and agency, and how they connect with events and experiences will be discussed.
Domains of Reality

Table 3.1 Domains of Reality (Bhaskar 1975: 13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Domain of the Real</th>
<th>Domain of the Actual</th>
<th>Domain of the Empirical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mechanisms</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Events</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experiences</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The domains of reality as outlined by Roy Bhaskar are presented in Table 3.1. According to Bhaskar, reality is stratified and is broken down into mechanisms, events and experiences (Bergin et al. 2008: 171, Bhaskar 1975: 13). The Real domain as discussed earlier is what exists in the natural and social world (Bergin et al. 2008: 173). The Actual reflects a domain that houses the results of the activated mechanism in the real domain. The mechanism produces events and experiences that are evident in the Empirical domain. The Empirical domain only houses experiences, because not every structure will create an event and not every event will affect a structure (Bergin et al. 2008: 171).

The significance of the domains of reality derives from recognizing that the experiences of individuals and their independent actions stem from events and active mechanisms. An individual’s reality (empirical) does not address the full reality. It is only a slice of reality as defined by socially produced meanings. By focusing on the experiences of rural Chinese restaurant owners, this study hopes to abstract the related practices that exist for maintaining and reproducing the overarching structures that continue the Chinese rural restaurant phenomenon.

Structure and agency

A group of internally related objects makes up a structure and any given structure can be part of a larger structure (Sayer 1992: 178). A social structure includes two
features; first, it is relational such that it “endures relations between societal positions of actors” and, second, it has ontological depth, in that “existence lies behind and affects and manifests phenomena” (Porter 1993: 597). Structures recognize social forms and social relations and can impact upon and affect the social world. Social structures can only be recognized through the impacts and effects reflected in the social world (Porter 1993: 593). Structures are not dependent on being recognized and they can exist despite no apparent effects. Their existence can also be found in multiple social divisions, such as big social objects as well as interpersonal and personal levels. For this study, it was found that structures of racism and the economic market exist on the larger social scale, but on a lesser scale, the Chinese family model was a structure that was well integrated and constantly reproduced. Multiple social structures are always at play when addressing people and institutions (Sayer 1992: 94). The Chinese rural restaurant phenomenon is no different, as multiple social structures at different levels have contributed to its existence.

Structures are a vehicle whose power is reflected through what is known as a causal mechanism (Jones 2002: 14). Returning back to Bhaskar’s diagram (Table 3.1), the real domain houses mechanisms but mechanisms can and do occur in multiple strata (Bhaskar 1975: 50, Jones 2002: 16). Bhaskar states, “The point of science is to produce knowledge of the mechanisms of production of phenomena in nature that combine to generate the actual flux of world phenomena” (1975: 17). By recognizing that phenomena exist in nature, critical realism recognizes that there are underlying mechanisms exist and are operating. Mechanisms are the way that structures execute action, and action can occur in any strata.
Structure and agency exist in different strata, in order to understand agency, there needs to be an understanding of agents. Any given person is able to make a goal and aim to achieve the goal; this suggests that an agent has intent with their actions to achieve a goal. Human action can create effects on the society (Danermark et al. 2002: 179). The effects of human action are not necessarily through individual action but collective action can also exist as agency. The ability of agents to reproduce, change or alter a structure is dependent on the differences in the power and resources of the agents (Sewell 1992: 21).

Structure and agency can only exist with one another, and any action taken by agency can be traced back to reflect the social structures (Danermark et al. 2002: 180). Social structures exist and they shape people’s practices, in turn, and people can reproduce or transform structures through their actions (Sewell 1992: 4). Social structures allow for human agency to occur but they can also put constraints on agency. Structure and agency both have powers and they help to mould one another, they do not operate statically but rather are in constant process (Danermark et al. 2002: 180-181, Sewell 1994: 4). The idea of agency suggests that human behavior whether conscious or unconscious, allows for people to make choices for social action. The ability for choice considers the powers and resources available (Hays 1994: 62). Applying this to early Chinese immigrants, they needed to seek alternative forms of employment for survival; the restaurant industry became an alternative to lower wages from employers and from unemployment. Rural Chinese restaurants reflect how the family operation demonstrates the Chinese family structure model. Chinese restaurateurs are acting on the success of previous rural Chinese restaurant owners and reproducing the family structure model within the business to find success.
Events and experiences

Events are the result of the mechanism(s) exerting power (Jones 2002: 15). These events would not have occurred if not for the causal laws or mechanisms (Jones 2002: 10). An event is just an aspect of reality, much like an experience. This aspect or slice of reality is a single-levelled abstraction taken from a multi-levelled occurrence (Elder-Vass 2004: 6). The domain of reality has constant structures, mechanisms and events occurring. When an event creates an experience, there are multiple other levels reacting. Not all the reactions at each level are recognized. Experience is only a single level abstraction. If only the event of the experience is explained, this mistakenly suggests a sort of solid frame for an occurrence. This neglects the multi-level occurrence for it narrows the event and experience to the social interpretation placed on only that particular aspect (Elder-Vass 2004: 6). It is difficult to address all aspects of a particular event and experience; however a study can take multiple points of view to shape an experience to greater detail.

Events and experiences are linked, although an event can occur and it may not necessarily be experienced. This re-emphasizes Bhaskar’s domains and the concept that although different things are occurring in each stratum, not all is recognized and not all domains directly cause effects to other strata. By using qualitative interviews, the questions that are asked seek to understand the experiences of rural Chinese restaurateurs. Although different events and experiences may have occurred, this study will explore the perspective of the respondents to gain an understanding of the level of awareness they possess in regards the structures that might be affecting their experiences.
Researcher’s experience (general narrative)

Seeking out rural Chinese restaurant owners to interview was a difficult task. Restaurateurs were initially wary of the project and my intentions, and were difficult to engage. Introductions needed to be made by a third party, either a friend, family member or another restaurateur who had already been interviewed. Only two restaurateurs were fully fluent in English. The rest were fluent enough in English to operate the restaurant and used their children as translators within the business when necessary. The fact that the researcher was fluent in Cantonese (which all participants spoke) was an asset for understanding their meanings and for conducting the interviews. A translated Chinese version of the interview questions was used for reference. The restaurateurs appeared to find comfort in the knowledge that the researcher was the child of a Chinese restaurant owner. This knowledge made the respondents feel that their experiences struggles would be sympathetically understood by the researcher. They appeared more comfortable with the idea of sharing their experiences when believing the researcher could empathize with their experiences in the restaurant industry.

Although introductions by a third party were conducted, some restaurateurs still felt nervous about the Letter of Consent. Once the purpose of the signature was explained, they understood and were eager to complete the interview in order to go back to the business operations. It became fairly evident that the restaurant work was all-encompassing, and taking time away from the actual business was difficult. Of the eight interviews conducted, six were conducted during restaurant business hours. At times the respondent would leave for brief periods to help with restaurant duties.
Researcher’s bias and limitations

A potential for researcher’s bias needs to be acknowledged. Although the researcher’s position as a child of Chinese restaurateurs played a large part in facilitating access to rural restaurants, the researcher may have entered the interviews with pre-conceived notions. It is possible issues that appeared common to all restaurant settings, such as the stress and long hours, were overlooked. It is possible knowledge of these common aspects of the restaurant business may not have allowed recognition of individual concerns and particular impacts these issues may have had on the restaurateurs.

This research focused on successful rural Chinese restaurants as defined in the sampling method. Not all rural Chinese restaurants are successful. This research does not address the restaurants that failed, nor does it address restaurateurs that left the rural business setting due to a dislike for rural life. As a future continuation to this project, a study on ethnic businesses that did not last would be worth exploring in order to determine factors that may have hindered success and/or encouraged abandoning this type of venture.

Sampling method

The sample consisted of eight rural Chinese restaurant owners residing in the southern half of Saskatchewan. A snowball sample was used in order to gain contact with multiple rural restaurant owners. The interviews ranged from forty-five minutes to over an hour. Since the interviews were conducted in person, travel was limited to six hours. The restaurants were also limited to families that had been operating the business for a
minimum of four years. This was to ensure a sense of successfulness for the business.

Restaurants also needed to be located in rural towns, so cities and towns larger than 5,000
were not included.

All the restaurant owners consisted of a husband and wife team. Primarily the
female partners answered the questions for the interview while the men continued the
restaurant duties. Only two males chose to be interviewed. All but two of the restaurants
were open during the interview process; therefore during the interview process, restaurant
operations were easily observed.

**Recruitment method**

Restaurateurs in a major city were able to provide the researcher with contact
information for relatives and friends operating restaurants in rural Saskatchewan. These
contacts in the city were instrumental in opening doors, and helping bypass feelings of
distrust. They contacted the rural relatives/friends beforehand to let them know about the
study and provided contact information for willing participants. Each rural restaurant
owner was phoned after business hours to arrange a meeting. Each meeting occurred
within a week of the phone call. As well, during the meeting the restaurateurs provided
contact information for additional potential respondents. They also agreed to contact
these respondents to introduce the project and the researcher. If agreed, they contacted the
researcher to provide contact information for the potential respondents.

**Interview schedule and method of analysis**

The interview guide that was used consisted of a series of questions falling into
four categories: history and family; second generation; restaurant as an ethnic business;
and location. These categories were used to elicit information to answer the research
objectives previously outlined. The first two sections (history and family, second
generation) were used to address the background of the family members, as well as the
involvement of family members in the business. The last two sections (restaurant as an
ethnic business, location) were aimed at understanding the motivations for opening a
business and exploring the business operations and obstacles. By looking at the
experiences and choices made by these immigrant entrepreneurs, the study explored the
greater mechanisms and events that contributed to experiences.

The interview questions included both open- and closed-ended varieties in order
to respond to the personal experiences of the owners. A qualitative approach was used so
that respondents were able to answer questions and not be limited to a set of potential
answers. This line of questioning also allowed for probing respondents to say more if
they had additional comments regarding a specific question.

Both the interview guide and the letter of consent were translated into Chinese,
and participants were provided with copies of both the English and Chinese versions. The
guide and the letter were translated by a bilingual Chinese lawyer. To check for potential
translation problems, the interview guide and letter of consent were tested for clear
understanding and meaning in a pilot test with another Chinese-speaking individual. This
feedback was taken into account and the guide was adjusted accordingly.

Of the eight interviews that were conducted, six were conducted in Chinese, and
two were conducted primarily in English. Once the interviews had been completed, the
recordings were translated into English by the researcher. The interviews conducted in
English were translated verbatim. The researcher completed the translations due to her
knowledge of the Cantonese and Taishanese dialects and her knowledge of the topic of
ethnic business. After the data was sorted and coded into categories, the categories were broken down into common themes and sentiments that were experienced. Highlighted themes were based on respondents replying with similar responses to questions. By grouping common responses, it was easier to understand how some issues were viewed as common experiences. Themes common to the literature were close family ties, self-exploitation, and limited employment opportunities. The categorized data was used to make comparisons with the existing research and to address to what degree the structures that historically led Chinese immigrants into self-employment might continue to exist today. The results of the interviews were analyzed in terms of the individual narrative and a general narrative to compare and contrast experiences, as well as to look at how agency played a role for these entrepreneurs. The researcher also analyzed and discussed the experience in a general narrative. Please see Appendix A for the researcher’s general narrative regarding each interview.

Using in-depth interviews was a significant aspect of this study, since there has never been a sociological study of Chinese restaurants in rural Saskatchewan. It is recognized that the results from the interviews described the experience of the respondents, and not necessarily the reality. As Bhaskar notes, “meaning cannot be measured, it can only be understood” (Bhaskar 1983, Porter 1993: 593). This understanding of the truth will later be evaluated to determine the structures that are in place to create the current phenomenon these restaurateurs are experiencing regardless of whether they are aware of their present position within the structure. After all the data were collected, the interviews were compared to determine common overlying themes and concepts. By the end of the interviews, most respondents felt a connection to the
researcher due to the researcher’s roots in the restaurant business, and they treated the researcher more as a friend than a researcher, with some restaurateurs providing house/restaurant tours.

In this study, aspects of ethnographic research are used through a critical realist frame in order to determine through observation and analysis the structures that are presently in place to facilitate success for these businesses (Porter 1993: 594). By looking at the present structures that enable restaurant success, these structures are then compared with the historical literature on Chinese restaurants in Canada. Restaurant owners were interviewed personally in order to gain insight into their experiences and their views regarding the Chinese restaurant business.
4. INTERVIEW RESULTS, DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The eight interviews conducted with Chinese restaurateurs in Saskatchewan explore the family structure, business structure and overall restaurant experience. The family operations of the respondents involve a husband and wife owner/operator structure referred to hereafter as a “team” in order to simplify explanation. Chinese restaurants have predominantly been studied from an historical perspective that attributes the phenomenon to racism. Examining the current perspective of the rural Chinese restaurant, the continuing applicability of the historical perspective in the present is explored.

Recognizing that historical motivations for self-employment amongst Chinese restaurateurs may or may not still exist, the analysis begins with a discussion of the obstacles faced by the respondents in the case study. Family participation and business structure are analyzed in terms of their importance to the success of the business. Overall experience is addressed and comparisons are made to existing research and theories.

**Individual restaurant owner profiles**

Table 4.1 provides background information on the respondents and their children. A summary of the restaurant profiles and the researcher’s experience at each interview are in Appendix A. Figure 4.1 shows the eight locations.
## Table 4.1 Background information of respondents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Restaurant A</th>
<th>Restaurant B</th>
<th>Restaurant C</th>
<th>Restaurant D</th>
<th>Restaurant E</th>
<th>Restaurant F</th>
<th>Restaurant G</th>
<th>Restaurant H</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>ENTREPRENEUR</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age Range</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>41-50</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>31-40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
<td>Mr. A - CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. A - PHILIPPINES</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA/HONG KONG</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>Mr. A - High School</td>
<td>Mr. B - Trade School (Cooking)</td>
<td>Mr. C - High School</td>
<td>Mr. D - High School</td>
<td>Mr. E - College</td>
<td>Mr. F -</td>
<td>Mr. G - Unknown</td>
<td>Mr. H - Trade School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. A - University</td>
<td>(Cooking)</td>
<td>Mrs. B - Unknown</td>
<td>Mr. D - High School</td>
<td>(Cooking)</td>
<td>Mrs. F -</td>
<td>University</td>
<td>(Cooking)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHILDREN</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2 - Under 10</td>
<td>Child 2 - 20</td>
<td>Child 2 - 6</td>
<td>Child 2 - 22</td>
<td>Child 2 - 13</td>
<td>Child 2 - 16</td>
<td>Child 2 - 10</td>
<td>Child 2 - 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of Birth</td>
<td>CANADA</td>
<td>Child 1 – China</td>
<td>Child 1 – China</td>
<td>Child 1 – China</td>
<td>CHINA</td>
<td>Child 1 – CHINA</td>
<td>Child 1 – USA</td>
<td>CANADA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2 – China</td>
<td>Child 2 – China</td>
<td>Child 2 - Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2 – Canada</td>
<td>Child 2 – USA</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 3 - Canada</td>
<td>Child 3 - Canada</td>
<td>Child 3 - Canada</td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 3 - Canada</td>
<td>Child 3 - Canada</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of Education</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</td>
<td>Child 1 – High School</td>
<td>UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</td>
<td>UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>Child 1 – UNIVERSITY</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2 - High School</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Child 2 – HIGH SCHOOL</td>
<td>ELEMENTARY SCHOOL</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOCATION DETAILS</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population (2011)</td>
<td>1815</td>
<td>854</td>
<td>2034</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>3180</td>
<td>4265</td>
<td>1049</td>
<td>752</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of restaurants</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Motivations for opening a Chinese restaurant

Structural racism acted as a strong mechanism in facilitating the Chinese family restaurant business. Throughout the years, however the maintenance of the Chinese family restaurant within small-town Saskatchewan has changed. Through the interviews conducted here, racism was never cited as affecting the business. Despite not being cited as a structure affecting these respondents, their ethnicity may have played a role in community acceptance. Since these rural restaurants have traditionally been operated by Chinese families, an acceptance of this ethnic business has formed. The main reason for opening a restaurant business in a small town was to limit competition and to maximize profit by having less competition. At some point after immigrating to Canada, every respondent resided in an urban city. They all agreed that the city had more restaurants which would make competing restaurants a factor. These respondents actively searched
for a restaurant business to operate in a rural town in order to maximize a customer base
due to the minimal-to-no competition in the area. Therefore a rural location was a
conscious decision made to increase potential profits from a market with limited
competition. Initially these businesses emerged to satisfy a need to create self-
employment. By taking on long hours of work and using lower prices, these conditions
are producing success. According to Danermark et al., the actions of people reinforce the
social structure. Thus the mechanisms that initially produced the successful Chinese
restaurant will exist as long as the causal powers and conditions exist (2002: 56). As long
as the rural restaurant model provided financial success the business would in theory
continue to flourish.

Ultimately it was marginalized Chinese immigrants who initially decided that
self-employment was necessary to remove themselves from a racist labour market with
limited employment opportunities and lower wages (Li 1998: 47). This decision to self-
employ unexpectedly led to the successful high earning potential of the ethnic restaurant
business in rural Saskatchewan. In the 2000s a study confirmed that immigrants in self-
employment continued to report a lack of employment opportunities as the main driving
force for entering self-employment (Hou and Wang 2011: 7). Due to conditions that
include the economic market and a history of entrepreneurship, immigrants in self-
employment are seeking more independence, control and responsibility, and they
promote these entrepreneurial values when pursuing self-employment (Hou and Wang
2011: 12).

The continuing existence of the Chinese restaurant business in rural Saskatchewan
originally derives from a racist structure, but has evolved into a profit-seeking enterprise
enjoying high profitability through non-existent competition. This does not remove the historical structure of racism that fostered the emergence of these restaurants. Although race may continue to play a role in the acceptance of this ethnic business in rural communities, it is not stated by any of the respondents as a factor.

Of all the respondents, only Mr. and Mrs. E were not from a restaurant business background. Interestingly, unlike earlier Chinese immigrants, all those interviewed, other than Mr. and Mrs. E, had as a goal back in China to eventually open a restaurant in Canada. These entrepreneurs reflected the theory of chain migration where “prospective migrants learn of opportunities, are provided with transportation and have initial accommodation and employment arranged by means of primary special relationships with previous migrants” (Lai 1988: 16). Upon immigrating, they started in as skilled restaurant cooks working for either the restaurants of their relatives, or the restaurants of other Chinese immigrants. After working a few years in the restaurant business as paid labour, the respondents chose to begin their own family business in a rural town. When asked why a rural town was chosen, there was a consensus amongst all respondents that rural restaurants were successful. Despite the remote locations, the profitability and the sense of self-ownership were powerful motivators that overrode being far away from urban centres and a cultural network.

It was only 30 minutes from the city and it was a very popular restaurant and second it is the center of all the small towns. Both city and small town (people) will come here. People want to meet up here and use it as a central location” (Mrs A, sic).

The big city has a lot of competition. Big cities also have deliveries and I don’t like that. In small towns the people know you and are friendly. I chose this place because when I saw this place and the location I liked the styling of the building. I also like working in a town (Mr. B, translated).
Everyone said this community was nice and it is a nice town. We have a lot of tourist attractions here, so it attracts a lot of people to lakes and things in the summer (Mrs. C, translated).

This study explored the way that rural restaurateurs maintained ethnic community ties when physically removed from ethnic and social communities by relocating to another community to open a business. In each of the towns the respondents reported theirs was often the only Chinese restaurant, if not the only restaurant at all. Ethnic community was found by meeting other restaurateurs from other towns when grocery shopping in the urban cities. Among the participating restaurants, it was only Restaurant B that opened on Mondays. Historically, these restaurants opened long hours, seven days a week. However among these restaurants, it was common to close on Mondays and to travel to visit friends and other restaurateurs in other towns and cities. These Monday outings acted as social high points in the week to maintain cultural connectivity and to find institutional completeness.

**Family participation and division of labour**

This research gauged the family dynamics involved in the business. The power of these businesses was reflected in how the restaurant and the family appeared as a cohesive unit, operating to contribute to the success of the business. All but one entrepreneur team (Mr. and Mrs. E) had previous experience and/or education in the restaurant industry. The roles of the father and mother of the family were very distinct and clear, while the roles of the children and extended family members varied depending on circumstances and need.

In all cases the father, head of household, acted as the head chef in the establishment. Kitchen operations were primarily managed by the father. This role
involved more hours of preparation work, and suggested that the father handled more of the business while the female spouse maintained familial obligations. In order to operate the restaurant the father reported working approximately 12 hours a day in all cases, during days of operation.

The female head of the household reflected traditional caregiver characteristics. All the women, except Mrs. E of Restaurant E (Mrs. E’s children have all left home), reported fewer hours of work compared to their husbands. Although the women reported fewer working hours at the restaurant, this was due to their duties as caregivers for the children. Childrearing duties led to fewer hours working at the restaurant. All the women reported 10 to 12 hours of work, during days of operation. The women primarily operated and managed the front, while helping in the kitchen when needed. The customer service aspect of their role made their English-language ability observably much superior to their husbands. The interviews were primarily conducted by the women. It was suggested in a few cases that the men were too busy preparing for restaurant operations and/or that their English was an issue.

Children under the age of ten were not reported as involved in the restaurant. The parents viewed them as too young and they had the potential to “get in the way.” In interviews with restaurateurs who had older children, it became apparent that the children became more involved in the business as they aged. Two of the families described the younger children helping set tables and stocking take-out food containers. As the children became teenagers, they would help with some food preparation and serving in the front. The older children, who were still involved with their parents’ business, reported that language and communication were aspects of helping their parents.
If they didn’t help me it would be more difficult for my wife and me. The oldest two children helped me with the business, and I paid them. My son worked waitressing and in the kitchen. My daughter just waitressed (Mr. B, translated).

We share duties. If there is mail, orders, bank issues, taxes and working with accountants, my children helped. We both work in the dining room serving customers but the language is faster for the children (Mrs. C, translated).

They will help if they come back. The youngest came back to help out when he lived here before moving away for school. The rest are older (and have moved away) (Mr. E, sic).

Sometimes they see how busy it is and help us. They ask what they can do to help out and they gather dishes and clean up (Mrs. H, translated).

In Restaurant C, Mrs. C asked her 22-year-old daughter and 25-year-old son to sit in on the interview in case she did not understand the questions. Mrs. C’s daughter was back for the weekend from university and voiced her thoughts on the advantages of opening a restaurant, “I think it’s a good thing (the restaurant). It made my opportunities possible. It’s very good; it (the restaurant) makes it stable for our family. It is income and we all help out.” When discussing the following question, “If your children were not able to help with the business, how would that affect the business?”

It would be slower, when mom and dad need help, we are on hand. It would be a really long process if we were not there. I (daughter) am not here, but my mom knows some English so she can still manage. Brother still lives at home so helps out. Sometimes it’s delayed a bit. So it (the communication) goes to mom, then to us and then we call the person to deal with it (Daughter of Mrs. C, sic).

Language and the children’s contribution through language ability was echoed by Mrs. C and Mrs. F. For those with younger children (under the age of ten), language help from children was not described.

Extended family

Every restaurateur described immigration as a sponsored family member, or as a skilled worker. Seven respondents described the experience of immigrating and
immediately working the restaurant industry. Therefore, continuing the pattern of immigration of family into the restaurant business was evident in the businesses of those interviewed. Grandparents and siblings of the owners played particular roles when contributing to the family and work environments.

Four respondents acknowledged the presence of grandparents. Grandparents played an important supporting role in the family by helping to look after grandchildren when the parents were busy at the business. If child rearing was not needed grandparents were involved in the kitchen operations of the business.

Restaurant D had Mrs. D’s parents at home with her children while she and her husband operated the business. Mrs. D acknowledged that having her parents’ presence made it possible for her to focus on the business, unfortunately it also meant less time spent with the children. This trade-off was echoed by all of the restaurateurs with younger children (Restaurants A, B, D, G, and H). Although the business commitment helped the financial success of the family, quality family time was sacrificed.

Mrs. G and Mr. H are brother and sister. Their mother resides with Mrs. G while their father resides with Mr. H. Both grandparents help out at the restaurants of their children as well as help with childcare. The distance between the respective businesses is 2.5 hours by car; therefore they frequently visit one another. In this particular case the grandparents only participate in the business and childrearing six months out of the year, returning to China for the colder months. The grandparents maintain strong national ties to China and find Saskatchewan winters uncomfortable.

Restaurant F has Mr. F’s mother at the business. Due to her lack of English skills, she helps in the kitchen. No grandparents were found to help in duties at the front. No
care-giving duties by the grandmother were involved in this family since the children of Mr. and Mrs. F are 16 and 19.

Five participants used the immigration of siblings to help with their businesses. Bringing in extended family labour was a traditional method for building a labour force. It was observed in this research that the pattern of hiring family members continues to be present. Although the literature suggests that extended family members are heavily involved in the business; the sample interviewed found that siblings were the primary extended family in these businesses.

Three restaurants made use of extended family members. Restaurant C had Mrs. C’s sister, sister’s husband and their children all helping in the business. In Restaurant D, Mrs. D’s sister and sister’s husband helped in the business. The children were too young in that case and stayed home with Mrs. D’s parents (in the case of Restaurant D, the grandparents helped with child rearing and were not involved with the restaurant).

All the restaurateurs (Restaurants A, C, F, G and H) who apprenticed at the restaurants of family members saw this experience as a training ground for self-employment. Although not directly ascertained, the possibility is acknowledged that the extended families working in these restaurants may be doing the same.

**Business Structure**

Self-employment in the restaurant industry was seen by respondents as the only logical venture other than being employed in the restaurant industry based on personal skills. When asked what made restaurant entrepreneurship a “reasonable” choice, seven respondents reported specifically it was the only skill they possessed in terms of
understanding business. All of the respondents also saw this endeavor as requiring a low start-up cost.

We both have restaurant industry experience. My husband’s family all run restaurants and we both know how to work here (Mrs. A, sic).

This is what I did when I first came here. This is all I have ever done. I learned how to do cook in China and I also owned a restaurant in China (Mr. B, translated).

We did not know anything else and our English was not that good. Our relatives were in the restaurant business so we just did it well. We learned the business and then went into the restaurant business. All we know how to do is kitchen work (Mrs. C, translated).

He (husband) came earlier and first came to a restaurant and so that is all he knows. Then I came here and I went to the restaurant business but I did not know anything about this business at all. I came with no knowledge and a baby so I went along with it (Mrs. D, translated).

For a daily living (financial), something to do. I figured this would be easier to do and I already knew how to do it…I knew someone that wanted to sell and it seemed good (Mr. E, sic).

I figured it would be easier to take care of the kids if I was self-employed. A restaurant is very busy. Other forms of self-employment makes less money and they are more difficult (Mrs. F, translated).

I just know how to do this. I don’t want to do anything else. I have never had any experience in anything else so I would not know where to start (Mrs. G, translated).

Most Chinese people know restaurant work and my family knew this business so we joined the business too. It is better than working for someone else. In small towns any other business makes no sense. A restaurant has the most potential for success (Mrs. H, translated).

**Business and restaurant knowledge**

Business knowledge for all the entrepreneurs interviewed was described as an extension of their restaurant knowledge. Only in the case of Restaurant A, did Mrs. A possess a Bachelor in Business Administration in Management from her home country.
Even so, she felt prior employment in the restaurant industry in Canada was a major reason for entering the food industry.

All respondents described a three-tier level cooking certificate in China. Passing each level involved developing more skill. None of the women possessed this certification. No woman described formal training or experience in the food industry prior to coming to Canada. This was different for the male spouses, as three males had level two certificates and one had a level three certificate. All the other male spouses developed their cooking skills through apprenticeship in restaurants in Canada.

Shifting from employee to owner/operator was viewed by all to be a natural progression, such that these respondents reflected the apprenticeship theory. After learning Canadian business skills through their employee status in Canadian businesses; self-employment was deemed the next step. This shift was viewed as upward mobility through self-employment and the key to the family’s financial success. With more financial success there was more potential for educating their children and possessing material goods.

**Benefits and consequences of rural business**

Drawing on the “betterment of family” perspective raised by the respondents; the liabilities necessary encompass two main areas: self-exploitation and limited time for family.

8 am to midnight every day. 16 hours for both of us. The children are used to long hours and they do not think much about it. If you like the work, then it is fun for you and it is not work at all. If the business is bad, then you would not like it (Mr. B, translated).

Less time for my kids. Every day is a long day and not much time for me to spend with my kids. This restaurant does not have a residence so we had to buy a house a block away. The kids are looked after by grandparents (Mrs. D, translated).
They (children) do not like it, do not like being here and do not like working at the restaurant. They see how hard it is on us and they do not like it (Mrs. F, translated).

You have no time to do anything else. The children do not like it. We do not have them work because they are too young right now. Sometimes they are at the restaurant. The children do not like that we do not have time to drive them places and spend more time with them (Mrs. G, translated).

Self-exploitation is a common theme in the research describing ethnic entrepreneurs’ use of the family as a labour resource. The restaurant as a viable family business required family members to act as the labour force. The ability of the family to mobilize labour is a power that enables the business to operate with little to no outside help. The “salaries” of family members were not viewed as individual pay but rather as salaries based on family profit-sharing. Salary and wages were not specifically mentioned in the questionnaire; however respondents referred to the wages as being shared. The family labour force requires members to act as cleaners, kitchen staff and front of house staff for the business. In order to accomplish all the restaurant duties, the hours of work extend beyond a traditional eight-hour work day. In fact, restaurant teams reported working between 10 to 12 hours a day, with women reporting close to 10 hours and men working close to 12 hours. The women reported fewer restaurant hours as child rearing and household duties were also duties for which they were responsible.

Self-exploitation involved the sacrifice of choosing the restaurant over leisure and other activities. The time demands make the restaurant the central focus for the family. All the families reported the restaurant took away from enjoying “quality family time,” and this is a liability of the business. Through operating the business, the entrepreneurs recognized that they were less free to spend time with their children other than at the
business. All but Restaurant B had businesses that closed on Mondays. Monday was described as a family day. Mondays were also the day when the restaurateurs were able to socialize with neighbouring Chinese restaurant owners from nearby small towns.

The sacrifices were always justified as necessary for personal success in the form of financial success. The sentiment of “betterment of family” prevailed. Continuing financial success was the structure that kept demanding self-exploitation and loss of family time. Although the restaurateurs recognized the liabilities, their willingness to continue demonstrated that financial success was more important.

The pursuit of financial success through rural restaurant entrepreneurship was a calculated decision. The rural location was a conscious decision based on less competition. With less competition, they saw an opportunity to dominate the market in the area. But this benefit was gained at a cost. The rural location contributed to the excessive working hours involved in operating a restaurant. These were family businesses but some did require additional help. The problem of finding capable and reliable staff was a constant issue amongst respondents, with the exception of Restaurant C (they had enough family members to operate the business). Due to the rural locale, there was a lack of people to hire. Most individuals were farmers and those who did work outside the home tended to work in the nearby cities. High school students and seniors were commonly employed to fill the needed staff positions.

**Restaurant experience and future goals**

The children played a major role in the business both symbolically and in actual physical involvement. The business reflected the driving purpose of being a “general good” for the family. The restaurant was seen as a means for providing a better life for
the children. This “better life for the children” concept provided a symbolic aspect to the restaurant. The success of the restaurant acted as a mechanism driving the family to continue to move forward. Overall the restaurant experience was viewed as producing more of a benefit, making the negative consequences appear minor. None of the respondents described any specific goals, but all confidently expressed that the restaurant business would go on to continue until either their children grew up or they decided to retire.

**Critical realist analysis**

Danermark et al. argued critical realist studies can contribute by “the examination of social structures, their powers and liabilities, mechanisms and tendencies, so that people, groups and organizations may consider them in their interaction” (2002: 182). Structures exist in multiple strata and can exist on scales large and small, in this study multiple structures are at play that continues the rural Chinese restaurant existence.

In order to understand the rural restaurant, it is important to look at the relationships that exist in order for operation. There is the relationship between the Chinese immigrant with society in terms of the economic market, the relationship between family members in the business, and the relationship between the restaurant family and the community.

Historically racism acted as a structure that led to Chinese marginalization. As Chinese restaurants emerged and the view of Chinese immigrants changed, this transformed the structure of racism. Racism has evolved from an overt driving structure that leads Chinese immigrants towards rural Chinese entrepreneurship. At the same time, however, race continues to act as an element of the business in that the restaurant exists
as a racialized space as it mimics an ethnic family business model. The data from the in-depth interviews suggest the economic market, Chinese family and the pursuit of financial stability act as the current structures, resulting in the continued emergence and maintenance of rural Chinese restaurants.

Figures 4.2 and Figure 4.3 below reflect the way the Chinese restaurants emerged as a top-down result of a larger structure. It was agency that led to the plethora of restaurants opening, as Chinese immigrants went into self-employment as a means to find success when racism kept Chinese immigrants away from skilled labour (Redding 1993: 80).

Figure 4.2 Structural Analysis of Chinese Restaurant Emergence
Figure 4.3 Structural Analysis of Chinese Restaurant Continuance

The figures above illustrate the way structures affect the society and the views of the society. The power dynamic created between the society and a specific group (specifically the Chinese immigrant restaurant owners), led to a change in the way relationships were viewed and the way that the self (individual collective) chooses to move into the entrepreneurial sphere. Initially entrepreneurism emerged from a lack of employment opportunities due to racism, no language ability and low skill levels. Figure 4.3 shows a model that proposes that rural Chinese restaurant owners in Saskatchewan today do not reflect the same characteristics as past restaurateurs. Due to the proven success of previous restaurants in history using lower costs by maximizing familial/kin labour, the motivating factor became the success itself. Continued entrance into the rural Chinese restaurant business is just a reproduction of a structure that has found success in the past. Since motivating structures shifted from racism more towards economic success, this reflects the way that structures can be altered or modified. Figures 4.2 and 4.3 focus on the intangible structures that led to the Chinese restaurant phenomenon. It should be noted that as some enter the restaurant industry due to seeking self-employment, others may continue to enter this route due to a lack of employment opportunities elsewhere.
The success of these businesses also stems from the Chinese family model as a structure; it is a structure that is reproduced to operate the business. The power of this model from a rural perspective is the individual expressions of agency. The family can choose a rural location and maintain a self-exploitation model of labour. The liabilities that continue to exist are the sacrificing of quality family time, self-exploitation and the inability to hire outside help since these are rural businesses. The father figure remains the head of the household and the patriarchal structure reflects his own power to manage his family and dictate the operations of the business. Although a patriarchal structure continues the family still operates together in order to fulfill the Chinese family structure model.

Moving between the layers within society, Figures 4.2 and 4.3 could be combined to create the historical analysis of the way that restaurant entrepreneurship has changed through time (Figure 4.4). The change that occurred reflects the open system of human society and the way that change is constant (Danermark et al. 2002: 70). Porter states “human action is enabled and constrained by social structures, but this action, in turn, reproduces or transforms those structures” (Porter 1993: 593). In the case of rural Chinese restaurants, the structure was changed for the popularity of these restaurants altered the racial views of society evolving to community acceptance, and the financial success of these businesses. It is important to note that Chinese restaurateurs were able to demonstrate agency through their manipulation of ingredients in order to create food that would satisfy Canadian tastes. By also providing a sense of personalized service with lower costs, these restaurateurs were executing their power to cut costs for the purpose of getting more business overall. This strategy transformed the business by making it
appealing to the community and simply by its existence, it commanded the market as well.

Figure 4.4 Layering the historical experience and combining the strata

Placing the study into current research on Chinese restaurants

Canadian research has focused on three areas of Chinese restaurants: the roots in history, the involvement of family, and the cultural aspects of the Chinese diaspora and transnationalism.

Historically the Chinese identity rests on Chinese immigrants coming to Canada with minimal education and skills in hopes to find a better life in “Gold Mountain.” “Gold Mountain” was a term used to describe the wealth and prosperity possible in
Canada and the United States. Historically it actually meant the potential for finding gold during the gold rush in the 1850s (Chang 2003: 38–39). This term was used by some respondents when describing the search for a better life in Canada. Although the term is dated, the meaning has maintained some significance amongst older Chinese immigrants. The current literature describes the historical immigration policies that affected Chinese immigrants and their arrival in Canada. The research does not continue this discussion into current immigration policies and the effects of current policy on Chinese immigrants.

Stemming from historical data, the family business framework was utilized by early immigrants who used kinship ties to start restaurant business ventures. As government policies changed so families could be reunited, these restaurant businesses became family businesses. Theories of the Chinese family business suggest the family operates on the Confucian ideals of traditional cultural values and filial piety (Song 1999: 16). These family restaurants do appear to operate in traditional family structures; cultural values and good work ethic were not voiced by those interviewed. The respondents did not use the term self-exploitation; they viewed long hours of work as an aspect of an independent business and minimized the effect of this liability. Involving the family as a whole to make the workload shared was seen as a powerful resource. Among the cases where the female spouse immigrated later than the male spouse, it was noted that entering the restaurant business was the simplest choice considering their husbands had already been working in the business. When asked whether they would have preferred to branch out into something else, two women (Mrs. D and Mrs. H) responded that the restaurant industry was there and provided useable skills. Entering another line of work would have
been difficult in a country about which they knew very little prior to immigration, compounded by the fact that these women have little to no English-language skill.

The Chinese diaspora and Chinese transnationalism relate to the way Chinese immigrants maintained connections to their homelands. Historically in Canada, Chinese males were separated from their families for long periods of time, ensuring continued homeland ties. The Chinese diaspora is linked to an identity that is bridging two worlds, but this study found that the diaspora was not as prevalent with the respondents as the literature suggests (Cho 2010: 76). This may be a result of the respondents feeling well integrated into the communities that they reside in, such that they feel less inclined to maintain strong connections with their country of origin.

Unlike Chinese immigrants to urban areas where more immigrant Chinese reside, the immigrants interviewed chose to live and operate their businesses in rural areas. Therefore the cultural connection and the constant bridging exist to a lesser extent. All respondents stated they had returned on vacation to their homeland at least once. Their ability to return to their homeland also reflects changes to immigration policies which previously limited Chinese immigrant mobility outside the country. All the respondents described they still felt a sense of Chineseness when referring to personal identity. They all recognized living in Canada has allowed their identity to be shaped partially by their new homeland. When asked about their ties to the homeland, and potentially going back, only two respondents said they would consider moving back to China but they both agreed that would be impractical for the family (Mrs. G and Mrs. H). It should be noted that these two women were highly established prior to coming to Canada and felt that their work in China was less difficult.
Yes, I considered it. Remembering how much fun it was as a kid. I didn’t have to work in China and it was less stressful (Mrs. G, translated).

I liked my life in China because the working hours were shorter and there were 2 days off a week. Here in Canada, even when we closed for business we still need to prepare (Mrs. H, translated).

Mrs. A and Mr. B stated that they both felt Canada was their home. They had been here so long returning to their home country meant returning to a world they no longer knew. When speaking about their home countries, all the respondents spoke fondly about past memories but maintained that Canada was now their home and they were happy about this.

In my country (Philippines), usually we have 2–3 maids at home who wash the clothes and do the house chores, throw garbage out…(Now) I do most things by myself, clean the house and do the house chores. Even though I had a maid in the Philippines, I would prefer here. My kids like it here and they like their friends and my husband is here and the business in running good (Mrs. A, sic).

After all this time, I am a citizen and now I am a Canadian. My thoughts are Chinese but I have no longer have ties there. I do not know very many people in China anymore (Mr. B, translated).

**Structural obstacles**

The entrepreneurs interviewed were more educated and more skilled than their historical counterparts (Lindsay 2001: 14, Wang and Lo 2004: 14). Although this is not a study on immigration, one cannot neglect noting the way immigration, education and language may have affected the success of these entrepreneurs.

The data in this study found seeking a “better life” was a dominating structure for coming to Canada. Immigration to Canada today must meet certain criteria involving skills and education of benefit to Canada’s labour market. Canadian immigration has an economic model that drives the policy. Two structures are at play affecting Chinese immigrants; seeking a better life in general, and the established cultural/familial
connections to the food industry. Cultural and familial ties in the Canadian food industry make this a viable option for Chinese immigrants who hope to come to Canada and must find employment. Figure 4.5 reflects the way the Chinese immigrants in this study came as skilled workers seeking a better life and required strategically developed skills and education to fulfill the criteria of Canada’s immigration policies. Those who came as family members sought for better life, but skipped directly to the fourth step (ie., Knowledge and Skill Development). All the male participants interviewed developed their knowledge and skills of operating a restaurant while in Canada, working for someone else, whether a relative or another business. The importance is that the employee position acted as an apprenticeship to learn how to run a business in Canada and to learn more about the food industry in Canada. Once the knowledge and skills were developed, the respondents interviewed in this study saw that the only way to move upwards was to enter self-employment. This was seen as a natural progression for food industry advancement.
Figure 4.5 Structural Obstacles and the proceeding events

Immigration

According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada’s *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act*, immigration to this country focusses on

Developing and implementing policies, programs and services that: facilitate the arrival of people and their integration into Canada in a way that maximizes their contribution to the country while protecting the health, safety and security of Canadians (CIC: 2012).

The respondents in this study reported they immigrated to Canada in one of two immigration streams, skilled worker or family class. In order to immigrate in the skilled worker class, immigrants must get a series of points under six criteria: education, English/French language ability, work experience, age, arranged employment and adaptability. A passing mark requires 67 points out of 100 points. Education accounts for the most points at a maximum of 25, and experience in skilled labour accounts for up to 21 points (CIC: 2010). Immigration is not the focus of this study, but skills and education
affect immigration policy and in turn have affected the ability to immigrate. The position of “Cook” is considered skilled labour under Canada’s National Occupation Classification codes. The cooks in this study had the education and the skills allowing direct entry into the food industry in Canada. It cannot be ignored that changes in immigration have affected the education and skill levels of immigrants and this means unskilled and uneducated Chinese immigrants are no longer able to immigrate.

Considering that immigration to Canada today has a strong focus on education and skilled labourers, the success of experienced and educated cooks immigrating to Canada demonstrates this focus. The number of respondents in this study is limited, and therefore cannot easily justify generalizations regarding the education levels of Chinese restaurateurs. Recent immigration to Canada from China has involved immigrants with greater skills and education.

Only two respondents demonstrated full English-language ability—Mrs. A and Mr. E. Both were educated in a predominantly English system in their country of origin. All the other respondents described either a few hours of English-language training in high school in their country of birth, or coming to Canada and attending some English classes through the Open Door Society or private tutoring. The respondents never pursued long-term English training and cited the lack of time and the need to work as reasons for stopping lessons. None of these respondents developed much language skill through these classes or tutoring and stated it was working in the industry that developed their English skills. Through conversations with the respondents it became quite evident that the English developed reflected a work-based vocabulary. The respondents developed workplace language, specifically a language about the restaurant industry.
They were comfortable speaking in English for business-related activities, but preferred speaking in Cantonese for their interview due to what they deemed inadequate English language ability.

I studied English once a week in high school. I never used it so it was not very useful. I went to the Open Door Society (English Language program) for a couple months when I got here (Mr. B, translated).

We studied about 10–20 hours in English. We hired someone who was Canadian to teach us. We still had to work and the working hours took too much time, so we had no time to get English lessons. We did get our driving licenses. We also studied enough for our citizenship test. The children helped with the citizenship test and the driver’s license test (Mrs. C, translated).

I studied English in high school and my husband learned some English in high school as well. He studied some English in Canada but not very much. He was busy working so he likely only studied for half a year in Canada (Mrs. D, translated).

I finished high school and 1 year of English study in China. I have not studied English in Canada. I just work. There are no English classes in small towns. We work so much that there is no time (Mrs. G, translated).

Theoretical applications to the results—similarities and limitations

Regarding ethnic enclaves, Chinese immigrants in Canada have a history of exhibiting this theory through Chinatowns and areas where Chinese immigrants were segregated. For respondents in this study, ethnic enclaves were not applicable. The rural nature of their businesses did not enable enclaves to be created.

The Chinese immigrant entrepreneur situation is not static. The findings from this study present evidence that capitalism may now be the dominant social structure, exhibiting itself as the driving force for the entrepreneurs interviewed. The entrepreneurs interviewed did not view racism and the blocking of employment due to race as factors contributing to their self-employment. By coming to Canada and directly entering the food industry, they saw this as a choice. They did not feel blocked from employment...
elsewhere due to race. Nevertheless there was a sentiment amongst all respondents that they were somewhat limited since their only Canadian experience was in the food industry. This was not necessarily seen as negative. It was observed by some of the respondents that they had no choice but to stay in the industry. Their skills were in the restaurant industry and this was a limitation for jobs outside the industry. Racism may not have had overt displays though the biological or ideological dimensions, however it may have existed in the form of power relations as the respondents themselves cited a lack of experience elsewhere and felt that this was the only type of work they knew how to perform. As Chinese immigrants continue to dominate in the food industry, this may have created a racialized industry that promotes their employment and networking only in this area. This limits the employment opportunities elsewhere which may have limited their abilities to engage in other industries as new immigrants.

Institutional completeness in regards to those interviewed found that there were no community organizations and cultural groups bringing ethnic Chinese together. Due to the rural nature of their businesses these families were often the only, or one of two, Chinese families in the community. In order to create social ties these families integrated into the community through meeting people at their businesses. All the respondents described the community as welcoming to them and supporting them by being repeat customers. Restaurateurs not opening on Mondays reported they would visit one another or go to the nearest city to shop and socialize with other ethnic Chinese. Some owner-operators often closed their business late at night and proceeded to drive to a neighbouring town to meet other Chinese restaurant operators to converse and play mah-jong. These meetings could occur up to every other day. These informal gatherings acted
as the social network for the respondents. These gatherings created a cultural community for the restaurateurs and allowed them to connect, communicate and socialize with other Chinese restaurant owners.

The apprenticeship theory was evident among those interviewed. All but one of the restaurateurs had experience working for other restaurants prior to opening their own businesses. Some even described that working for someone else at their ethnic restaurant was useful as a training ground for future self-employment. Self-employment was viewed as a goal to be achieved.

Although racism may have existed as a structure, it is not understood through their experiences as entrepreneurs. Historically and presently, many Chinese immigrants are found employed in the food industry. New immigrants reach out and connect with past immigrant Chinese and other cultural Chinese (i.e., through cultural associations, relatives, etc.) for employment due to cultural ties. The existing or previously existing, structures (racism) have shifted. Racism may have taken the form of a structure that pushed Chinese immigrants to self-employment. Currently their financial success under this racialized labour finds that they repeat the self-employment model. The success Chinese immigrants found in the restaurant industry gave way to a capitalist structure as the context of operations. This success led to replication, as Chinese immigrants continue to enter the food industry as self-employed entrepreneurs (Bergin, Wells and Owen 2008: 173).

Discrimination was not viewed as a direct factor affecting respondents. Since this study did not directly focus on discrimination, that may have limited discussion of the topic during the interviews. Also, respondents may not have been aware of different
forms of discrimination, since they all stated racism must be direct verbal or physical violence. Similar to the Lai and Huffey (2005) study, participants may have minimized any negative experiences due to being satisfied with their living standards and employment success.

**Multicultural perspective**

On the level of their experiences, a theory that is more applicable to the immigrant entrepreneurs interviewed in this study is the “multicultural perspective.” The theory finds that,

> “ethnic diversity and ethnic groups/individuals can co-exist and maintain…respective sociocultural distinctions as they acquire the norms, values, and behaviors of a dominant or host culture” (Kim, Laroche and Tomiuk 2004: 8).

All the respondents stated a dual relationship with Canada and their home country. Mrs. F stated, “I think like a Canadian but many thoughts are still Chinese,” while Mrs. H felt, “Yes, very much still a Chinese person but I have some Canadian-ness in me. When it gets really busy I think back and think I should go back to live in China to a life where I was less stressed” (translated). It was observably and clearly described in other questions that skills and traits have been developed in order to function in the host society. By maintaining feelings of association to the home country and creating identities in Canada as well, they demonstrated their acculturation and ethnic identification through dual identities.
5: CONCLUSIONS, SUMMARY of CONTRIBUTIONS and FUTURE RESEARCH

Key research findings

The goal of this study was to shed light on the Chinese restaurant industry in rural Saskatchewan through an interrogation of family and business structure. Using interviews in the study allowed for a nuanced understanding of the driving forces for these entrepreneurs to operate rural businesses.

Business structure

The majority of the respondents had work experience and/or education in the restaurant industry prior to becoming self-employed. All the respondents felt that entering self-employment was a stepping stone that enabled the family to move upwards. With the knowledge gained from experience in the industry, self-employment became an attractive option. Self-employment allowed for greater independence and was seen as having the potential lead to greater wealth.

The business structure in terms of the Chinese family model has changed very little from the model developed by early Chinese immigrants entering the restaurant business. Since some of the respondents had bought restaurants that were 30–100 years old, some restaurants had multiple Chinese owners who had continually passed down the method of operating. Cultural ties for the family business fed the “better life” goal by having each member of the family participate in the business. The concept of this operation being a family operation continues to be prevalent.

Current rural restaurateurs have more access to ingredients and spices that enable them to continue to provide a wide variety of food offerings. Transportation and urban development has contributed to this accessibility. These restaurants continue to provide a
fusion style fare that involves common Canadian dishes blended with spice blends often associated with Chinese fare. These restaurants continue to serve dishes primarily to suit a Canadian palette but the ingredients available to restaurant owners enable them to create dishes that also reflect more traditional Chinese cooking.

**Family participation**

Family participation historically and presently appears to continue as a major aspect of the business. Current Chinese restaurant owners continue to reproduce the structure of the Chinese family model by having the father as the head of the household/business while the spouse and children contribute to the success of the business through their work. The idea of self-exploitation for the purposes of maintaining low costs did appear in the study. In the present study, it was found that extended family played a supportive role in some of the restaurants. Their participation demonstrates that these are not always a “one family” operation. The concept of children as translators for the parents was found as not a significant factor in the families we interviewed. Although it was discussed by a couple of entrepreneurs, it was viewed as not an issue by the respondents with young children.

The structure of the Chinese family model continues to exist. Respondents continue to buy these businesses in order to help the family as a whole economically. Most of the respondents closed at least one day a week, and all of the respondents acknowledged that they would take formal holidays and close the business. Although long hours and strong work ethic were still voiced by respondents, they acknowledged that they needed time for rest and socialising.
Structures

The main structure of the past that affected rural Chinese restaurant owners was racism. This study found that among the respondents interviewed, racism and discrimination by the host society were not major factors in the decision to enter self-employment. Although racism is not seen as a motivating factor, these restaurants continue to exist as Chinese restaurants. By maintaining the ethnic based model of the Chinese restaurant, these businesses are continuing as historically racialized spaces. There is the perpetuation of a business model that uses fusion fare that is not specifically Canadian or Chinese but rather a Chinese infused style that is catering specifically to a Canadian palette. Restaurateurs and the community mutually benefit from the success of these businesses, the restaurant finds financial success and the community continues to have a service to gather and socialize. This mutually beneficial relationship along with the higher levels of education and skill of the respondents may have contributed to their acceptance in the communities.

Entering self-employment stemmed from a goal of seeking a better life and self-employment was viewed as a gateway to economic prosperity. Capitalism and the success of past Chinese immigrants in the restaurant industry fuelled the drive of these respondents into entering the business of self-employment as well. These respondents were also affected by Canada’s immigration model that prioritizes skill and education. Respondents possessed higher levels of education and more skill than those who had immigrated to Canada previously. Canada’s economic immigration model was a structure affecting immigration policy and in turn, affected the types of immigrants allowed into
Canada. Ultimately immigration policy continues to be a factor affecting Chinese immigrants as a whole.

The challenges faced by rural restaurant owners were the lack of available employees, the heavy workload involved in the business and the lack of co-ethnic support networks. Respondents found hiring employees to be difficult, as more and more people were moving to urban centres. By bringing in family members through immigration, this helped with the business and enabled the restaurateurs to serve more customers with faster service. A lack of co-ethnic support in the actual towns meant that restaurateurs went to urban centres on neighboring towns to socialize with co-ethnics and other Chinese restaurant owners.

**Restaurant experience—current perspectives**

The respondents of this study overwhelmingly agreed that they have no regrets in going into the restaurant industry. By choosing a rural location, it was voiced that it can be monotonous and uneventful; however, those with restaurants closed on Monday, found enjoyment in travelling to larger communities and socializing with other Chinese immigrants. The absence of other ethnic Chinese in the community did not create much of a problem, and the respondents were able to make friends with those in the community who frequented their business. The respondents adapted to their communities and formed ties and support networks within the communities.

The rural location was also noted as a preferred and more viable option due to the lack of competition. By opening in rural communities, all the respondents felt that they were maximizing profits. The downside to these rural communities was that while all the respondents felt their businesses were successful, this success resulted in needing more
employees. The lack of available labour for hire added to the already long hours and created stress during periods of high customer volume.

Some respondents raised the issue that immigrating to Canada and working in a restaurant for long hours was an adjustment from their life in the home country. However, the success of the business and thus gaining financially compensated for this sacrifice.

Summary of contributions

Chinese immigrants are widely perceived to be heavily involved in the food industry. This image of Chinese immigrants in the restaurant industry neglects individual experiences while also feeding an image of the hard working model immigrant. This image although positive, also maintains a framework of racializing a specific industry. By using interviews with restaurateurs, this study examines the personal aspects as well as the common narratives shared by these entrepreneurs. The experiences were analysed through a critical realist lens by taking each entrepreneur’s experience and then looking at the social structures to understand the motivations and the drive that these entrepreneurs had for self-employment.

In addition, this study addressed the current nature of the rural Chinese restaurant phenomenon and the continuing Chinese immigrant participation in this industry. Recognizing the impacts of historical racism on Chinese immigrants, this study moved beyond that narrative in order to bring in a new perspective, proposing the possibility of a capitalist-driven structure. Immigration policies of the present have also impacted the Chinese immigrant. Although both past and present Chinese immigrants entered the restaurant industry in Canada, the characteristics of these immigrants have changed over
time. The Chinese restaurateurs interviewed possessed higher education levels and greater skills, a common feature of new immigrants to Canada. Since Canada’s policy favours education and skill levels, those with higher levels of education are more able to immigrate.

Many concepts used in analyzing ethnic business, specifically Chinese ethnic business, emerge from research in urban settings. This makes the rural perspective unique in the way these immigrants needed to integrate into their communities without cultural support networks. The multicultural perspective was more applicable among those interviewed. All of the respondents managed to maintain a sense of cultural heritage, while using their skills to integrate into the community,

**Directions for future research studies**

**The critical realist perspective**

A critical realist perspective enables this study to explore the experiences of current Chinese restaurant owners in Canada. This approach allows a chronological examination of the evolution of Chinese immigrants and their involvement in the restaurant industry. Taking a chronological perspective and using critical realism demonstrates that laws are “not a constant conjunction of events but the characteristic pattern of activity, or tendency, of a mechanism” (Steinmetz 1998: 177). Thus, this study was able to demonstrate the way that through time, patterns emerged from structures at play. This study was also able to explore the role of human agency for rural Chinese restaurant owners as they made the choice to enter self-employment but have been continuing this pattern despite racist policies, lack of education and language no longer being the prevalent structure affecting employment.
Racism was a prevalent structure in the past that, through the causal powers of immigration policy and anti-Chinese policy, drove many Chinese immigrants into self-employment. This study uses the experiences of the respondents to better understand the structures that exist in the self-employment trend for rural Chinese restaurateurs. Critical realism emphasizes structural mechanism and this was a key factor to understanding the motivations of the respondents (Porter 1993: 607). Although this study is not a direct comparison study but rather focuses on the current structures; it is important to address the link that Chinese immigrants were historically motivated to enter self-employment initially because a racist society was blocking their employment opportunities. As success was to be found in these businesses, this became the primary motivator for pursuing self-employment. These businesses operated using kinship/familial ties and the Chinese family structure model became a structure repeated through all the businesses as strategy for business operations.

A critical realist approach enables the researcher to study ethnic businesses from a perspective of experiences. The researcher can also look at the structures and events that may have contributed to these experiences. Not all immigrant/ethnic groups are linked to entrepreneurship, many immigrant groups are not identified specifically with seeking self-employment. It would be interesting to take a look at the structural factors that contribute to immigrant entrepreneurship in other business sectors. By using qualitative interviews, the experiences can be taken and analyzed in terms of structural influences and causal powers (Leca and Naccache 2006: 645). Studying ethnic entrepreneurship through critical realism can address multi-level structures and/or the experiences that
contribute to the reproduction of structures in order to further understand the relationship between structure and agency.

**Immigration to rural Canada**

Immigration policy was not a major focus of the study, although it was recognized as a key factor. Immigration policy affecting the ability of immigrants coming to Canada has changed the face of the Chinese immigrant from unskilled and uneducated to skilled and educated. These policies have affected all other immigrants. To build on ethnic business research, it would be useful to conduct a study on other immigrant groups that chose to immigrate to rural Canada, and the various motivations for settling in areas with little or no ethnic community for support.

Often the Chinese immigrant families are the only minority family in rural Saskatchewan towns, and there is a long history of small-town restaurant ownership by Chinese immigrants. As more immigrants move to rural areas, there are research possibilities for exploring the experiences of new immigrants. This could then be compared to the experiences of past immigrants.

**Concepts and the rural perspectives**

The “ethnic enclave” and “blocked mobility” theories were not applicable to the experiences of respondents in this study. Participants did, however, find institutional completeness by meeting up with other Chinese restaurateurs on days off or at the nearest supermarket. Participants also displayed apprenticeship theory through their early employment as restaurant workers before becoming employers themselves.

The multiculturalism perspective was reflected in the experiences of these respondents. They have continued aspects of Chinese values and Canadian values in their
identities. They have adapted to their communities and view them positively whilst continuing to identify with their home country.

**Chinese restaurants, successful and unsuccessful**

This study’s criteria for the selection of respondents required that each business had been open for at least a four-year period, and that the respondents be immigrant entrepreneurs. In order to study the rural Chinese restaurant phenomenon effectively, it was important the respondents be experienced in the business in order to discuss the experience meaningfully. Since it was also important that respondents exhibited some sense of integration into their communities and that they had been operating for at least four years, it was presumed they had some understanding of the community.

Only eight respondents were interviewed for this study. Although the interview sample is small, it became apparent that similar issues were constantly being raised. The answers were repeating themselves in quite a uniform manner among those interviewed. It would be interesting to conduct a larger study interviewing immigrant entrepreneurs in urban and rural areas of Saskatchewan in order to compare and contrast their experiences. This study was an attempt to add to the research on Chinese restaurants, and this area remains underexplored. The small sample cannot yield overarching theories on Chinese ethnic business, but it does suggest that the current research may be overemphasizing the racial aspect of these businesses. Current research may also be downplaying the effects of capitalism and the pursuit of wealth.

A study of unsuccessful Chinese restaurants in rural Saskatchewan would be useful. Not all restaurants are a success and from a business perspective, restaurants are often viewed as high-risk ventures. It would be worth looking at what structures and
events may contribute to a failing restaurant and rural area. Also, with Chinese immigrants becoming more and more associated with transnationalism, it would be beneficial to study how greater communication and greater ties to the home country have affected Chinese immigrants and their ability to enter self-employment.

**Second generation children**

Although the role of the children of newcomers was explored, the focus of this study was on rural Chinese restaurant owners. Further research could involve conducting interviews with the children of Chinese restaurant owners both past and the present. All the respondents noted they would not recommend the restaurant business for their children unless it was a last resort, and/or unless the child truly felt a strong desire to enter the industry.

General studies of second generation children of immigrants have suggested that the children tend to move up the socioeconomic ladder from their parents (Corak 2008: 14, Kucera 2008: 25). A study addressing the motivations of second generation children to enter and/or not enter the restaurant industry would provide greater understanding of the impact of the restaurant business on family members.

**Conclusion**

This study provides a new perspective and contributes to the dialogue on Chinese entrepreneurship in Canada. This study provides insight into rural Chinese restaurants as a current phenomenon as much as a phenomenon of the past. Using in-depth interviews, the actual experiences could be used to provide a greater understanding of the effects of family and how the business operated in terms of everyday experience.
Looking at the way these entrepreneurs experienced their self-employment, the researcher was able to analyze the data in terms of the motivations that led to self-employment. The rural perspective provided an interesting factor for the case study, allowing an examination of the way these families integrated into communities in the absence of ethnic ties. In the final analysis this study uses real experiences to understand the greater structures that surround the continued success of rural Chinese restaurants in Saskatchewan.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: Restaurant profiles and researcher’s experience

Restaurant A, Mr. and Mrs. A
Interviewed: Mrs. A

Mrs. A arrived in Canada in 1993 from the Philippines, while her husband came to Canada from China. Both are between the ages of 41 and 50. Mrs. A settled in small-town Saskatchewan, while Mr. A settled in Regina to work at a relative’s restaurant business. Mr. A had chef training in China prior to his immigration and many of his family members were involved in the restaurant business. Mrs. A had no restaurant experience prior to coming to Canada but had graduated with a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the Philippines.

Once they were married they opened a restaurant in a small town but when Mrs. A became pregnant with her first child, they closed the restaurant and moved back to the city. Once the children got older they moved to another small town and opened a new restaurant in 2006; this was and is the only restaurant in the town.

Mr. and Mrs. A live within the restaurant in a house that is connected to the restaurant through the kitchen. Mr. and Mrs. A have two children who are 9 and 12. The oldest helps within the restaurant packing orders some of the time, but the 9-year-old does not participate in the restaurant yet. Mr. A has been a trained and working chef for 11 years and primarily handles the kitchen aspect to the business, while Mrs. A primarily handles the outside customer service aspect. Mr. A works 16 hours a day to prepare food and cook while the restaurant is open. Mrs. A works 12 hours a day dealing with restaurant needs and spends much of her other time with the children.

The restaurant is open Tuesdays through Sunday. Mondays are the only day of the week that it is closed. There are 11 staff members in the restaurant besides Mr. and Mrs. A and none are relatives.

Researcher’s Experience

I completed the interview in the kitchen of the restaurant. It was a Saturday morning and Mr. and Mrs. A were preparing for the lunch crowd that would be coming at noon. The restaurant was already open upon my arrival and it was clear that the interview was going to be conducted during business hours. Since Saturday mornings and afternoons tend to be less busy, they decided that it would be best to conduct the interview then. Since the restaurant was still open, we stopped the interview for short breaks so orders could be completed and any restaurant business that needed to be handled could be dealt with.

Mrs. A was the respondent and when hearing about the purpose of my study, she was very interested. Her perspective was unique compared to other respondents, since she was born in the Philippines and she identified as ethnically Chinese. Her husband was a Chinese immigrant and together they had two children who were wandering around during my interview. The youngest was 9 years of age and did not participate much in the business but it was understood that once she was old enough, she would become more
involved. The eldest was inside the house (which was connected to the restaurant through the kitchen) and did not need to help, since this was a slow time at the business.

My initial contact information for Mr. and Mrs. A was through the sister of Mr. A. Aware that I already knew someone in the family made my access as a researcher appear more credible. This was a common theme during my research—as long as I knew someone the respondents’ knew and trusted, then I could be trusted as well. Therefore prior to the interview I was taken on a full house and restaurant tour.
Restaurant B, Mr. and Mrs. B
Interviewed: Mr. B

Mr. and Mrs. B arrived in Canada from China in 1994. Their ages range from 41 to 50. They first immigrated to a small town in Saskatchewan to work at another Chinese restaurant for someone else. Mr. B had been trained to be a chef prior to coming to Canada and therefore had restaurant work experience before arriving. The family chose to open a restaurant in 2002 in order to be self-employed.

Mr. and Mrs. B have three children who have all helped with the restaurant business. All the children are between 10 and 20 years of age. The oldest two have moved away to pursue post-secondary studies, while the youngest still lives at home and continues to help with the restaurant. Both Mr. and Mrs. B work between 10-12 hours daily to maintain operations of the restaurant. The family lives above the restaurant, which can be entered through a side door.

Restaurant B is one of three restaurants within the town. Restaurant B is open seven days a week, with only three days off for holidays at Christmas. Between three and five staff are required to operate the restaurant, including Mr. and Mrs. B.

Researcher’s Experience

The contact information for Restaurant B was provided by the owners of Restaurant A. Upon first contact with Restaurant B, a misunderstanding ensued, with the owners thinking I had come to be interviewed for a waitress job. The thought that I might want to interview them as Chinese restaurant owners was a novel one to them. After informing the respondents that I knew Mr. and Mrs. A, I was allowed to interview Mr. and Mrs. B, since this knowledge made me appear more credible.

Mr. B responded to my questions while Mrs. B continued the operations of the restaurant. The restaurant was quite busy upon my arrival and therefore I had to wait until the business slowed down. Unlike many of the other restaurants, Restaurant B was open for breakfast as well as being open seven days a week.

Mr. B was interested in my project and suggested that some archival material available in the town might include some information on past owners of the restaurant. He estimated that the restaurant has been in operation for over 100 years, which makes it the oldest restaurant business where I conducted interviews. Upon completion of the interview, I was viewed with more trust and thereafter I was treated more like a family friend. At this point Mr. B took over restaurant operations and Mrs. B gave me a tour of the restaurant, the house upstairs and an attached building that was used as a storage room. Since Restaurant B is located over an hour from a major urban center, Mr. B, in addition to ordering stock for delivery, drives and buys large amounts of stock on a weekly basis and uses the adjoining building as a storage unit for non-perishables. Having large amounts of stock enables the business to continue operations in case a delivery fails to arrive.
Restaurant C, Mr. and Mrs. C  
Interviewed: Mrs. C

Mr. and Mrs. C immigrated to Canada on April 12, 1995. Their ages are between 45 and 55. Mr. C was trained in China as a chef and he worked in a restaurant before immigrating; Mrs. C had no restaurant experience before arriving in Canada. They initially immigrated to a small town in Saskatchewan to work at a restaurant and spent three years learning the restaurant business. In 1998 they moved to Town C and bought a restaurant, where they both work between 10–12 hours a day.

Mr. and Mrs. C have two children between 20 and 30 years of age who are pursuing post-secondary studies. The oldest child still resides at home to work and go to school. The youngest comes home on holidays to help with the business. Both Mr. and Mrs. C still rely on their children to help with language issues and correspondence. They do not live within the restaurant building, since it does not have housing accommodations; therefore they live a block away.

Restaurant C initially opened seven days a week, and now is open six days a week, Tuesday to Sunday, with only three to four days off at Christmas. Operating the restaurant requires four to seven employees working; all of Mr. and Mrs. C’s employees are relatives.

Researcher’s Experience

I first referred to Restaurant C by my contacts at Restaurant F. Since the restaurant was still open for business while I was conducting my interview, Mr. C went to work while Mrs. C answered my questions. Mrs. C also called her adult children to come join in and listen to the questions, which appeared to make her feel more comfortable; as well she wanted me to meet her entire family.

From looking around and asking my interview questions, it became evident early on that the entire restaurant was run by family members. All the adult children were fluent in English, while the adults were only knowledgeable of basic English, primarily of food terms. The adult children and a teenage cousin worked in the customer service aspect of the business along with Mrs. F, while Mr. F and his brother and sister worked in the kitchen.

Through my interview questions, I learned that the restaurant business runs well when the children are away with their post-secondary studies; however, neither child moved out of the province and upon their return on weekends or weekdays they are able to help with business forms, dealing with stock orders, and anything that might require more English-language knowledge. This family business was the most family-oriented and run business of all those I interviewed. Everyone had a role and a position, and their participation was understood to be part of the greater good of the family.
Restaurant D, Mr. and Mrs. D

Interviewed: Mrs. D

Mr. D immigrated from China in 1986 and Mrs. D immigrated to Canada from China in 2001. Their ages range between 41 and 50. They both immigrated to Saskatoon from China. They decided to buy a restaurant in a small town in 2002. Mr. D had experience within the restaurant business but Mrs. D had no experience prior to opening their family restaurant. Mrs. D views the restaurant as a temporary business and believes that within five to ten years the family should move back to a larger city so that the children will have more opportunities.

Mr. and Mrs. D have two children under the age of 10. They do not help at the restaurant since they are still too young. The family also does not live within the restaurant but rather lives a few blocks away.

The restaurant is open six days a week, Tuesday to Sunday. As for holidays, the restaurant is open for some and closed for others. It is the only Chinese restaurant within the town. The family finds it difficult to find locals to work at the business. Within the business they have a total of seven employees including themselves. They have two relatives working full-time and two non-relatives who work part-time. Mr. and Mrs. D work 13.5 hours a day to operate the business.

Researcher’s Experience

My contact for Mr. and Mrs. D came from Mr. and Mrs. F. Since I knew Mr. and Mrs. F, I was regarded as trustworthy and they agreed to interview me. This restaurant was closed during my interview, which occurred on a holiday. The restaurant does not close on all holidays, but was closed on this Remembrance Day. Mr. and Mrs. F, along with Mrs. F’s sister and brother-in-law, were all at the restaurant when I arrived. They were cleaning the air filters above the cooking area, which they explained needed to be done once a week. On this day off, they would all still be working eight hours that day to prepare for the coming week.

Mrs. D was the respondent for the interview. She came to Canada through an arranged marriage to her husband. Through my interview with her, it was evident she was very educated and was a chartered accountant back in China. Running a restaurant was totally new to her and she saw it as hard work. Unlike other restaurant owners I interviewed, she did not see this as a long-term position. She viewed the restaurant business as a profitable, short-term endeavour and she wanted to eventually move to a larger urban centre when her children were older.

Although she had a professional position back in her home country, she still viewed Canada as a place for greater opportunity. She attested to wanting to perhaps go back to school as well as perfect her English. Her English was learned primarily through working with customers in a fully English speaking town, so she saw herself moving to learn more instead of just continuing in the restaurant business until retirement.
Restaurant E, Mr. and Mrs. E  
Interviewed: Mr. E  

Mr. and Mrs. E immigrated to Canada from Hong Kong in 2001. Their ages range from 50 to 60. They first immigrated to a small city in Saskatchewan but then moved to a small town to be self-employed. They bought their restaurant in 2002. They had no experience working in or owning a restaurant prior to coming to Canada.

Since Mr. E and Mrs. E had had English training prior to coming to Canada, a language barrier was not been an issue for them. They have five children who were all born in Hong Kong, ranging in age from 18 to 30. The youngest is pursuing post-secondary studies while the rest have completed their studies and are working in the major cities in Saskatchewan. The youngest child still lives at home when on holiday from school, and therefore still helps with the family business. There are no living quarters in Restaurant E and so the family lives in a home nearby.

Restaurant E is open six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday. It is the only restaurant within the small town. Mr. and Mrs. E work 13–14 hours a day to operate the restaurant. On their one day off they work approximately 4 hours. The restaurant requires between two and four individuals to operate the business, including Mr. and Mrs. E. At the moment they do not have any family members working at the business.

Researcher’s Experience  

My contact with Mr. and Mrs. E was through Mr. and Mrs. F. This connection allowed me to come and interview Mr. and Mrs. E. The restaurant was closed the day I came to conduct my interview but Mr. and Mrs. F were still working at preparing for the week. I conducted my interview with Mr. E, who spoke fluent English due to his English training through high school in Hong Kong.

Upon entering the restaurant, I noticed many plants traditionally found in the homes of people living in China. The plants covered the windows of the restaurant, which I interpreted as a tribute to the homeland. There were Chinese trinkets for sale at the cash register, such as Chinese New Year toys and decorations. This was the only restaurant that sold products other than food.

Mr. and Mrs. E were not dependant on their children to operate the business. Due to their English fluency and high level of education, Mr. and Mrs. E were less reliant on their children to help with the business. Interestingly enough, they were the only family with no restaurant training or experience prior to moving to Canada. They decided to open a restaurant solely to not have to work for someone else.
Restaurant F, Mr. and Mrs. F  
Interviewed: Mrs. F

Mr. F immigrated in 1994 and Mrs. F in 1997, both from China. Mr. F had formal chef training in China prior to coming to Canada and Mrs. F had worked in a small restaurant as well. Their ages are between 45 and 50. When they first immigrated, they settled in another small town and worked for family members who owned the Chinese restaurant there. Soon after, they realized that they wanted to live in a larger centre and moved to Regina. After living in Regina, they moved to another small town to be self-employed for two and half years, before closing due to the lack of business. They opened Restaurant F in 2004 and enjoy this location due to it being larger than other towns but smaller than the major cities in Saskatchewan.

Mr. and Mrs. F studied a couple years of English on and off. Mrs. F manages the front of the restaurant while Mr. F handles the kitchen primarily. They have two children between the ages of 15 and 20 who were both born in China and immigrated to Canada with Mrs. F. The oldest moved away for post-secondary studies while the youngest is still in secondary school. Both children have worked at the restaurant and the youngest continues to work at the family business. Neither child is interested in the family business will not continue the business once their parents retire. The family home is connected to the restaurant and is entered through the kitchen.

Restaurant F is open six days a week, Tuesday through Sunday and is only closed Christmas Day and Boxing Day every year. This is one of three Chinese restaurants within the town. Mr. and Mrs. F work approximately 13–14 hours a day. Mondays are closed but they still work about eight hours in order to buy supplies and prepare foods. Four family members work at the restaurant and they have three additional staff members who are not related.

Researcher’s Experience

Mr. and Mrs. F were contacted based on information from a family member of mine who had worked with Mrs. F. The restaurant was open during the time of interview, even though it was a holiday. Mrs. F was the respondent during the interview while Mr. F continued with business operations. Mrs. F was quite receptive to the project since she had worked in many Chinese restaurants and found owning one to be very profitable and enjoyable.

Mrs. F was the only one who stated that her children did not love the business as her and her husband did, and would not follow the family business. Mrs. F’s excitement during the interview showed her love of the business and she felt that it enabled the family to survive and be accountable to themselves instead of having to work for others. The children, one of whom was an adult and another a teenager, helped with the business, but were not integral to its operations. Mrs. F had a good grasp of the English language and only asked her children for help if necessary.
Mr. F’s mother also worked at the restaurant, providing some kitchen help and when the children had been younger, she provided childcare. The restaurant is attached to the house, and can be entered through the kitchen. Since I was viewed as more of a friend than a researcher, I was given a tour of the restaurant and of the family home.
Restaurant F, Mr. and Mrs. G  
Interviewed: Mrs. G

Mrs. G immigrated to Canada from China in her late teenage years in 1994. She settled in Manitoba and worked in a Chinese restaurant owned by distant relatives. She came to Canada along with both her parents. In the late 1990s, Mrs. G moved to New York City to marry her now husband, who had come to the US from China to work. He was also working in a Chinese restaurant in New York. They moved to Canada in 2000. Their ages range from 31 to 40. They both moved back to Manitoba where Mrs. G’s family was running a Chinese restaurant. It was at this time that Mrs. G’s relatives helped her and her husband to locate a rural Chinese restaurant in Saskatchewan to purchase, so that they could be self-employed.

Since both Mr. and Mrs. G had only ever worked in Chinese restaurants, the transition to owning a restaurant was a natural one. They opened their Chinese restaurant in small-town Saskatchewan in 2005; their operation had not been a Chinese restaurant previously. Although both Mr. and Mrs. G are committed to the business, they find the hours long and the work exhausting.

Mr. and Mrs. G have three children. The oldest two are twins and were born while the family resided in New York. The youngest child was born in Canada, and this had made opening a restaurant a bit difficult since all the children were small. All the children are under the age of 10. The children have a play room in the back of the restaurant and the back door of the business opens to a clearing that shows their home on the other side.

The restaurant is open six days a week, Tuesday to Sunday, 9am to 8pm. The family may or may not open on holidays depending on the children and whether the children have some event in which they would like to participate. As with the other restaurants, the family has searched for but have continued to find it difficult to locate employees. Currently they only have one non-family member working other than Mr. and Mrs. G. Mr. G gets to the restaurant early and works from 7 am to 10 pm, while Mrs. G gets the children ready for school and works from 9 am to 9 pm. In the meantime the children’s maternal grandmother helps with their care.

Researcher’s Experience

Mr. and Mrs. G were contacted based on information provided by Mr. and and Mrs. C. The restaurant was open and customers were still eating at the time of the interview. Since there was an additional waitress working that day, Mrs. G was able to sit down and discuss my interview questions with me.

During our discussions it became clear that the restaurant business was less of a choice than the only option that Mr. and Mrs. G felt that they could handle, since their only work experience was in the restaurant business. Unlike many other restaurants, they did not offer a buffet-style operation, since they regarded this style as very wasteful when product was not sold.
Mrs. G conducted the interview and in turn took me on a tour of the restaurant. They had
a limited menu that worked quite well with the local crowd. Through discussing
restaurant life, it became quite evident that the children were the main priority. The
business was hard but it enabled Mr. and Mrs. G to provide their children with whatever
they needed or wanted. The family had previously rented out the upstairs of the
neighbouring building to reside in, until they found the house across the clearing. They
often take their children on outings to the city on Mondays when the restaurant is closed.
Restaurant F, Mr. and Mrs. H
Interviewed: Mrs. H

Mr. H immigrated to Canada from China in 1994, settling in Manitoba where he worked in a distant relative’s Chinese restaurant. He came with his sister and parents. His sister is actually Mrs G, who introduced me to Mr. H. Mr. H eventually went back to China to marry his spouse, Mrs. H, who immigrated to Canada in 2000. Their ages range from 35 to 45. Prior to moving, to Canada Mrs. H had never worked in the restaurant business; her past work experience had been as a nurse’s aide in a hospital, with regular hours of work and time for leisure. Mr. H’s relatives helped him locate a restaurant in rural Saskatchewan and the family proceeded to open a Chinese restaurant in 2002. Prior to opening the restaurant as a Chinese restaurant, it had been a popular Canadian family restaurant. Even after the change, the previous owner came in to help Mr. and Mrs. H and later became a regular patron on the business.

Mr. and Mrs. H have two children, an older son and a younger daughter, both of whom are under the age of 12. The family home is close to the restaurant and the children come over whenever they please. The son sometimes helps at the restaurant stocking take-away containers, but most of the time the children remain away from the restaurant since they are too young. The children are cared for by their paternal grandfather who lives with them. Their paternal grandmother is taking care of their cousins at Mr. and Mrs. G’s home.

This restaurant is also open six days a week, Tuesday through to Sunday from 10:30 am to 8:00 pm. Other than Mr. and Mrs. H, they have one employee outside of the family. The grandfather also contributes to working at the business if it is busy. This restaurant ideally needs six people to operate at full capacity, but due to a lack of employees, they must make due. Since the restaurant is very popular, the lack of employees requires that Mr. and Mrs. H, work at least 12 hours a day to prepare and operate the restaurant.

Researcher’s Experience

Mr. and Mrs. H were contacted via information provided by Mr. and Mrs. G. Since Mrs. G and Mr. H, are sister and brother. It was interesting to see the restaurant of Mr. H, after seeing his sister’s restaurant. Both businesses, although similar, also had differences. Mr. H’s restaurant was a bit larger with a more diverse menu but both restaurants showed signs of popularity and financial success, as expressed by their owners.

Mrs. H conducted the interview, since her husband was busy prepping the restaurant food for the supper rush. Her enthusiasm and positive outlook really brought the restaurant atmosphere to a different level. The restaurant was open at the time of the interview and it became quite evident that its popularity went beyond the small town, and orders were being taken from nearby towns as well.

Mrs. H found the restaurant life to be very demanding of both time and energy, although she recognized the benefits that having a successful business provided. She gave me a
tour of the restaurant and showed me around the kitchen and the private party room. The restaurant was quite large and could hold a total capacity of 160 people. Considering the capacity, the fact that the restaurant was short staffed, it became quite evident why more help was needed.
APPENDIX B: Thesis interview questions

General opener: Tell me about your experience operating a restaurant in the rural prairies.

Theme: History and Family
1. When did you arrive in Canada?
3. Did you originally settle in this community? If not, where did you first settle in Canada and why did you leave the previous community?
4. Why did you immigrate to Canada?
5. Why did you choose the restaurant business?
6. How long have you lived in this community?
7. How long has this business been in operation?
8. Does your family have a history in the restaurant business and/or any formal training?
9. Can you describe your life in your home country, such as where you were living and how you spent your daily life?
10. How do you feel daily life in Canada compares to your home country? Which do you prefer? Why?
11. Have you ever considered moving back to your home country? If so, why?
12. Could you describe your educational background, such as how much school did you complete in your home country? How much schooling did you complete in Canada? Have you ever studied English? If so, where? When?
13. How do you feel that your cultural values and beliefs changed, when moving to Canada?
14. How do you feel the restaurant has affected family life?
15. After immigrating to Canada, do you feel stronger nationalistic ties to Canada or to your home country? Why?
16. Do you feel your children have stronger ties to Canada or to the home country? Why?
17. Since immigrating to Canada, have you returned to your home country for a visit? Why or why not? If so, how often?
18. Do you feel your, social, familial, and/or economic life has improved since opening the business? If so, how? If not, why?
19. Do you feel your standard of living has improved since opening the business? Why or why not?
20. Do you have any plans of moving to another community either rural or urban?

Theme: Second Generation
1. Do you have any children? / Were your children born in Canada? Home country?
3. What is the highest level of education achieved by your children?
4. How do you feel your children view the restaurant? Is it seen in a positive or negative way? Why?
5. If your children were not able to help with the business, how would that affect the 
business?
6. What is/are the current occupation(s) of your children? If/ if not the restaurant 
industry, why did they choose that occupation?
7. How was the education of your children financed?
8. How are your children involved in the business? What specific duties do they 
perform?
9. Would you recommend the restaurant business to your children? Why or why 
not?
10. (For those whose children moved away) Do they still return to help at the 
business? Why or why not?

Theme: Restaurant as an Ethnic Business
1. Why did you choose to open a restaurant business and not another type of 
business?
2. How long have you owned this business? / Are you the original owners?
3. In your experience, what is the most difficult aspect of running the business?
4. What is the most difficult aspect about running this business?
5. What are your hours of operation?
6. Are you open during holidays? If so, how does this affect your family life?
7. How many people work at the restaurant? How many are non-family members?
   How many are family members?
8. How many people can be seated in your restaurant?
9. Would you consider your business a success? Why or why not?
10. How many people does it take to run the business on any given day?
11. How many hours are spent preparing for the restaurant? How does this affect 
    family relationships?
12. What long term and short term goals do you have for this business? Where would 
    you like to see the business in 10 years?
13. In terms of popularity, would you consider traditional Chinese cuisine to be more 
    popular or Canadian Chinese food? Why do you think this is more popular?
14. How have you managed business tasks such as payroll and accounting?
15. Do you enjoy operating a restaurant? Why or why not? What aspects?
16. How long do you intend to operate this business?

Theme: Location
1. Why did you choose to open a business in small town Saskatchewan? And why 
   this specific community? What was the drawing point?
2. How do you feel the community has received your business?
3. How do you feel the community has received your family entering? Was it 
   welcoming?
4. What do you feel was your biggest adjustment once you moved to this community 
   and opened a business?
5. Does this community have any cultural support groups that you are aware of?
6. Do you have aspirations to move elsewhere? If so where and why? If not, why?
7. Would you say that you have faced discrimination in your community? If so, what types of discrimination and how have you handled these situations?
8. Would you like to open another location for your business?

**Hypothetical Questions**

1. If you could go back in time,  
   Would you still immigrate to Canada? Why or why not?  
   Would you still open a restaurant? Why or why not?  
   Would you still live in this community? Why or why not?
APPENDIX C: University of Regina Ethics Approval

DATE: August 5, 2010

TO: Julie Yu
7618 Thorncroft Bay
Regina, SK S4P 1Y7

FROM: Dr. David Senkow
Acting Chair, Research Ethics Board

Re: Rural Chinese Ethnic Business: A Case Study of Rural Chinese Restaurant Entrepreneurs (File # 0251011)

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

☑ 1. APPROVED AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. For research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). ETHICAL APPROVAL MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. Approval will be revoked unless a satisfactory status report is received. Any substantive changes in methodology or instrumentation must also be approved prior to their implementation.

☐ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO MINOR CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 3. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). Changes must be submitted to the REB and approved prior to beginning research. Please submit a supplementary memo addressing the concerns to the Chair of the REB. **Do not submit a new application.** Once changes are deemed acceptable, ethical approval will be granted.

☐ 4. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. The proposal requires substantial additions or revisions. Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.

Dr. David Senkow

Dr. Henry Chow - Sociology and Social Studies

**supplementary memo should be forwarded to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board at the Office of Research Services (Research and Innovation Centre, Room 109) or by e-mail to research.ethics@uregina.ca**
APPENDIX D: Letter of consent (English)

**Title:** Rural Chinese Ethnic Business: A Case Study of Rural Chinese Restaurant Entrepreneurs

**Introduction:** The primary objectives of this study are twofold:
(1) To examine how family structure contributes to the business operations.
(2) To understand ties to the homeland and the relationship to Canada and Canadian culture, as well as perceptions of being restaurateur in a small rural community.

The study focuses on the way that family contributes to the restaurant business and what sacrifices are being made in order to operate the business. Secondly the study will look at the way Chinese restaurant owners perceive their own sense of belonging within the community as well as their ties toward their home country.

**Procedure:** A tape recorded interview will be arranged with you that will take approximately 1.5 hours. You will be asked a series of questions surrounding family relations and the operations of the restaurant business. You may decline the use of the tape recorder at any time.

**Benefits:** This research will provide a better understanding of the way that Chinese immigrants and their families have managed to successfully operate in the restaurant business in rural Saskatchewan. This will help to understand Chinese entrepreneurship in the prairies.

**Research Personnel:** This study is conducted by Julie Yu of the Sociology and Social Studies Department, who is under the supervision of Prof. Henry Chow, University of Regina, Sociology and Social Studies Department (306-585-4815). If you have any questions about the study, please feel free to contact Prof. Henry Chow.

**Confidentiality:** Pseudonyms will be used to conceal the identity of participants and the communities. The information disclosed in the interviews will be confidential.

**Voluntary Participation:** Participation in this project is completely voluntary. You are entirely free to discuss issues and will not be in any way be coerced into providing information that is confidential or of a sensitive nature. You are not required to answer any interview questions and you may decline participation or withdrawal at any time. If you choose to provide me with your complete mailing information, I will also provide a copy of the final report once completed.

**Report**
The study will lead to a final report that will be widely distributed. The report will be posted online for others to read, as well, findings may be discussed with government and non-government departments that may find interest in the study. A copy of the research report will be made available upon request.

**Ethics Approval:** This project was approved by the Research Ethics Board, University of Regina. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights or treatment as a research participant, you may contact the Chair of the University Research Ethics Board at 306-585-4775 or by email at research.ethics@uregina.ca.

**Consent Statement:**
Having read the above, I agree to participate in this study and consent to the above. I also acknowledge that I have received a copy of this form.

_________________________________________  ________________________________  ____________
Signature of Participant                      Signature of Investigator          Date

Your participation in this study is greatly appreciated.
APPENDIX E: Letter of consent (Chinese)

標題：小城鎮中國移民的民族企業：壹個關於小城鎮中國移民企業家的案例。

引子：這項研究的主要目標是由兩部分組成的：
(1) 研究家庭結構是如何促進經濟業務的。
(2) 理解母國同加拿大及加拿大文化的緊密聯繫，並且理解壹個小城鎮餐館老板的觀念 和看法。

這項研究著重于如何通過家庭的形式促進餐飲業，並且在這個過程中做出了多少犧牲。
其次研究將著眼于餐館主人如何看待自己在社會中的地位，歸屬感並且與自己的母國緊密的聯繫在壹起。

過程：安排播放壹盤採訪錄音帶，大約需要1.5小時。妳將會被問到壹系列關於家庭關係和餐飲業運作的問題。妳能自由放慢錄音帶的速度。

優勢：這份研究將提供壹個更好的方式去理解中國移民，和他們的家人如何設法成功地在薩斯喀徹溫省經營餐飲業。這將有助于了解草原上的中國移民企業家精神。

研究人員：這項研究是在裏賈納大學，社會學和社會研究系的周博恒教授的監督下，由社會學和社會科學系的于朱莉完成。(306-585-4815) 如果您對這項研究有任何疑問，請隨時聯系周教授。

機密性：參與者名稱和社會名稱將使用假名，他們在訪談中透露的信息將被保密。

自願參與：參與這個項目完全屬於自願行行為，參與者可以完全自由地討論問題，並且不會以任何方式被迫提供機密或敏感信息。參與者不需要回答任何問題，可以拒絕訪問並隨時撤回。如果參與者選擇向我們提供完整的郵寄資料，我也會提供了壹份最後的報告副本。

報告：這項研究的最終報告，將廣泛傳播。該報告將被張貼在互聯網上供他人閱讀，以及有可能引發政府和非政府部門的興趣。我將應要求提供壹份研究報告的副本。

道徳審批：該項目已通過裏賈納大學研究倫理委員會。如果您有任何疑問或對您作爲參與者的權利和待遇有擔憂的話，可聯絡大學研究倫理委員會306-585-4775，或通過郵件“research.ethics@uregina.ca” 聯系。

同意聲明：
我同意參加這項研究，閱讀過及同意以上信息，並且擁有這份表格的副本。

參與者簽名 ____________________ 調查者簽名 ____________________

日期 __________

非常感謝您參與此次研究。

123
APPENDIX E: Interview schedule

Interviews with Chinese Business Owners will be conducted on Saturdays and Sundays, in the months of October 2010 to April 2011. A total of 8 business owners will be interviewed from rural Saskatchewan. Major cities in Saskatchewan will be excluded such as Prince Albert, Saskatoon and Regina; these locations are viewed to have potentially different experiences for business owners due to the population size.

The locations chosen were based on the ability to make contact with businesses in those areas that would be available for interview.

**Dates:**
October 30, 2010  
November 6, 2010  
November 11, 2010  
April 9, 2011  
April 11, 2011

**Locations:**

1. Restaurant A  
2. Restaurant B  
3. Restaurant C  
4. Restaurant D  
5. Restaurant E  
6. Restaurant F  
7. Restaurant G  
8. Restaurant H