

UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Making Our Own Way:

Influences on Choice among Fort Collins Chinese Restaurateurs

By

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**Abstract:**

Interpersonal transactions made within a node on a global commodity chain provide a variety of ethnic and non-ethnic goods to Chinese restaurateurs. Tracing dynamic influences on restaurateur choice that precede commodity transactions permits us a better understanding of one way the flow of goods can change. I show that networks of co-workers, employees, friends and family influence the choices made by restaurateurs. Concurrently, the combination of quality, price and service, the costs of menu writing, the perception of good and bad customer, and the number of wholesalers competing for a limited market, add to the influences that shape restaurateur choice. By focusing on commodity chains that bring goods to Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins Colorado, this research draws into question previous ethnographic and theoretical discussions of Chinese entrepreneurs, urban ethnicity and the utility of global commodity chain theory in framing these issues.

**Acknowledgements:**

My interest in the process of commodity transactions among Chinese immigrants in small cities rose from personal experience. While spending four months studying in Yunnan, China as an undergraduate, I began to understand the complexity of relocating across the Pacific Ocean. Staying healthy and going where I wanted were feasible challenges, but accessing goods and labor to start a business and relocating a family seemed insurmountable tasks. Outside of Special Economic Zones, where a network of North American's existed, I observed few social or entrepreneurial channels open to Americans. I began to ask myself: How are Chinese immigrants starting businesses and raising families in small North American cities? I do not intend to compare the challenges immigrants face whether moving to China from America or to America from China, but rather would like to make a contribution to immigrant research that has been largely metropolis centered.

I thank the Chinese restaurant owners in Fort Collins. They were very helpful in answering my questions and allowing me small vignettes of their lives, families, and choices that brought them to run restaurants in Fort Collins. Seventeen restaurants existed when I began research, with one closing shortly after I began interviewing. In all, I received the help of fourteen out of seventeen (82%) restaurant owners. Twelve individuals became key sources of information. One restaurant chose not to participate and I did not have the language skills to speak with the second non-participant. All names used in this thesis are fictitious at the request of informants who gave their time for this research.

The wholesalers who service Fort Collins Chinese restaurateurs also deserve my thanks. Like the restaurant owners they work with, food sales representatives and managers made time during their busy days to explain their business. From their insights and stories, I have come to understand an array of the daily trials and tribulations that accompany the temporal movement of commodities through the hands of individuals.

While I am not fluent in Chinese, I found little trouble conducting this research. In fact, I was told on two separate occasions that had I been Chinese or knew too much of the language, I would have not been allowed to ask questions in the restaurants. These sentiments were supported by a Chinese MBA student who had not been allowed to speak with more than one restaurant owner in Fort Collins regarding the bilingual cash register system she hoped to design for her thesis. In short, I found as many as five languages being spoken in any one restaurant (Taiwanese, Mandarin, Cantonese, Toishanese, English and Spanish). English served this research well.

The research for “Making Our Own Way” took place between May 15 and September 15, 1999 during which time I conducted fifty interviews with restaurateurs and their wholesalers. Following the four-month period of interviewing, I worked part time for three months in an informant’s restaurant. Valuable observations made during this period taught me the complexity of day to day life in the restaurant industry.

*This Book is Dedicated to  
Grandpa Frank and Grandma Verna  
For their Dedication to Enriching All Aspects of my Life*

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## **Chapter 1: Conceptualizing a Commodity Chain**

Choices made between restaurant owners, wholesalers and consumers significantly impact the fabric of life in small cities by shaping local cuisine. However, relatively little is known about influences on individual choice that direct the flow of goods between these three groups. I examine the dynamic and varied influences on Chinese restaurateur, wholesaler and consumer choices in the small city of Fort Collins, Colorado. These influences may have an impact on broader flows of commodities, termed global commodity chains. This thesis does not definitively connect local influences on choice to the restructuring of global commodity chains. Nevertheless, it makes a significant contribution to current ethnographic and theoretical accounts that attempt to explain the flow of goods.

Anthropologists have recognized the exchange of commodities as a complex phenomenon throughout the discipline's history (Firth 1983, Geertz 1979, Malinowski 1922, and Mauss 1950). The exchange of commodities sustains much academic attention due to its recognition as a basic aspect of human relationships. In the past, the sociologist George Simmel addressed the exchange of commodities in an attempt to understand what he viewed as a universal human psyche. Simmel (1907:43) states, "Exchange is the purest and most concentrated form of all human interactions in which serious interests are at stake". Interest in commodity exchanges persists today, particularly in studies of globalization. Currently, Gary Gereffi, et al. (1994) conceptualize a local/global link within a framework that places a string of interpersonal transactions along a commodity chain.

This research addresses two areas of the discipline's interest beyond current theoretical and ethnographic accounts of commodity exchanges. First, observing Chinese restaurateurs in a small urban setting adds ethnographically to the substantial volume of enclave-centered literature on immigrant entrepreneurs (Lin 1998, Waldinger et al. 1990, Wong 1982, Zhou 1992). Second, research in urban anthropology suggests that the flow of goods marks one way to understand how ethnicity is created and transformed (Harvey 1989, Kopytoff 1986, and Rotenberg 1996). Adding to a second current discussion in the discipline, this research reveals potential links between commodity flows and the creation of urban identity.

This chapter contains three sections aimed at expanding on the current conception of terms and ideas central to understanding the flow of commodities. First, I explain what a global commodity chain is and why it is appropriate to my line of inquiry. I proceed by investigating two variables, networks and interpersonal transactions, suggested by Gereffi et al. (1994) as causal mechanisms that influence the transactions between nodes on a commodity chain.

### *Global Commodity Chains*

Borrowing from world systems theory, this research draws on the global commodity chain (GCC) concept outlined by Gereffi et al. (1994). Hopkins and Wallerstein (1986: 159) define a global commodity chain as "a network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity". The processes that inform the flow of goods are the focus of my inquiry. Observing transactions in a GCC

allows us to understand many of the influences shaping the choices of Chinese restaurateurs, wholesalers and consumers.

A global commodity chain consists of networks of individuals, families and organizations. From Gereffi and Korzeniewicz we learn that “these networks are situationally specific, socially constructed, and locally integrated, underscoring the social embeddedness of economic organization” (Gereffi and Korzeniewicz 1994: 2). The interpersonal transactions of Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins are central to the processes that move goods through a network. Skillful choices made by these individuals influence local flows of goods representing a portion of global commodity chains. While Gereffi and Korzeniewicz suggest that this is the case, they do not provide evidence of how a global commodity chain might be recreated or transformed ‘from below’ (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). I bring together ethnography and current theory, showing where and how interpersonal transactions play an important role in the workings of one segment in a GCC.

GCCs are generally of two types, buyer-driven and producer-driven. Literature on buyer-driven commodities is significant to this argument because it most nearly represents the flow of goods through Chinese restaurants. Gary Gereffi describes buyer-driven commodity chains as “industries in which large retailers, brand name merchandisers, and trading companies play a pivotal role in setting up decentralized production networks in a variety of exporting countries, typically located in the third world” (Gereffi, 1994: 97). Gereffi focuses on networks of “industries” as the actors in GCCs.

Walter Goldfrank addresses the variable of demand in GCCs by referencing the buyer-driven commodity chain of Chilean produce. “Cultural changes in the core are the driving force of this commodity chain, namely, the changing diet of affluent and middle-income consumers...” (Goldfrank, 1994: 267). Goldfrank identifies culture change as one factor affecting the creation of demand in produce commodity-chains. For Goldfrank, the core is the North American consumer of winter produce, and his or her preferences that spur demand. Goldfrank moves his analysis away from organizations such as industries, suggested by Gereffi, instead opting to look at large population trends. In doing so Goldfrank, like Gereffi, attributes the influences on global commodity flows to large groups.

Raynolds (1994) explores Oriental vegetable commodity chains. She suggests that Oriental vegetable commodity chains beginning in the Dominican Republic are too small to be recognized by influential mass-marketing and trade companies. Raynolds suggests that the oriental vegetable market is organized “around small firms that are linked through dense networks and produce for niche markets” (Raynolds 1994:145). The small scale of production needed to accommodate North American demand for oriental produce allows for a more flexible organization of importers and exports. She states that,

The exporting relations of oriental vegetable firms are strikingly different - their produce is predominantly sold on consignment to independent wholesalers/brokers in the US. Under this arrangement, importers take 13-15 percent commission on the selling price, with the balance going to the exporter. Exporting firms thus absorb the costs of transportation as

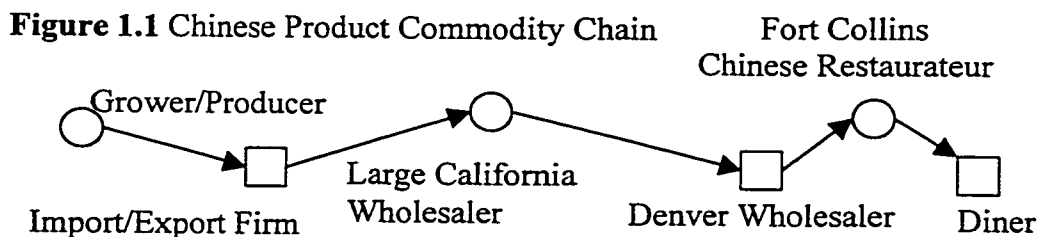
well as losses from damage in transit. Since exporters have no way of verifying the condition of the produce on arrival or the price at which it was sold, this relation is typically fraught with tension. Oriental vegetable exporters attempt to overcome these uncertainties by building up long term relations with importers, from their own ethnic group if possible (Raynolds 1994:153).

The oriental vegetable GCC described here suggests that variations in GCC structure occur based on scale of organization. Furthermore, we are led to believe that ethnicity shapes the networks through which commodities flow. Like Gereffi before her, Raynolds presents little evidence showing how interpersonal transactions are developed to the point of influencing the flows of goods in a GCC node.

The global commodity chain approach provides a theoretical and methodological basis for more systematic analysis of micro and macro social processes by identifying variables influencing action (Gereffi, et al. 1994:13). Beginning with the individual restaurateur as my unit of analysis, I attempt to understand forces affecting transactions in each node of a GCC participated in by Chinese restaurateurs. According to Hopkins and Wallerstein, “the greatest virtue of a commodity chain approach is its emphasis on process. The capitalist world-economy reveals itself via this kind of radiography as a fast-moving network of relations that nonetheless constantly reproduces a basic order that permits the endless accumulation of capital, or at least has thus far reproduced this basic order” (Hopkins and Wallerstein, 1994:50). For Hopkins and Wallerstein, it is the accumulation of capital in western societies that reproduces networks in a commodity chain.

I do not attempt to place Chinese restaurateurs, wholesalers, or consumers in a comparison of global capital distributions. Rather, my research follows actions of individuals in two nodes of a long GCC. The place of interpersonal transactions within a network, or GCC in this case, is termed a “node”. For Gereffi, the term node implies a geographic region in which exchanges take place. When comparing the accumulation of capital at these nodes along a GCC, we learn how different economies are benefiting or losing in the name of western consumption. This research attempts to address a significant shortcoming of the GCC approach by recognizing the dynamic interface that occurs prior to and at the point of consumption in Chinese restaurants.

A macro conception of GCCs shows the position of the wholesaler/retailer/consumer relationship with respect to the complete commodity chain (Figure 1.1). Goldfrank (1994) suggests that the nodes of interactions start with suppliers



giving direct input to growers, who deal with packers, who contract shippers, who contact suppliers and finally deal with wholesalers who work with retailers. To further complicate matters, according to Goldfrank, the short shelf life of produce requires a compression of space and time if a quality product is to arrive in North America. The

shelf life of produce, weekly changes in commodity pricing, changing shipping costs and so on, are pressures that can affect wholesaler/retailer transactions in a node on a GCC.

Applying Goldfrank's framework for a GCC to my topical focus, we find import/export firms located in supply countries such as China, Taiwan, Korea, Singapore, Vietnam and Cambodia. These firms have offices or business partners in the US. California is most conveniently located for the trade of many Chinese commodities and has become home to import/export firms that bring specialized Chinese restaurant goods to the US. Large and small Colorado based food wholesalers have purchasers in contact with these firms that arrange for the movement of commodities into Denver, Fort Collins and the surrounding Rocky Mountain region. These products travel by truck and occasionally by rail car container. From Denver, wholesalers contact their customers on a weekly basis with prices and then ship the appropriate quantity by truck to Fort Collins.

The interpersonal transactions between Chinese restaurateurs and wholesalers dominate this discussion of GCCs. I spent most of my time investigating this node because the aim of my research has been to holistically understand one of the nodes in a commodity chain. The series of interpersonal transactions revealed from one node in a GCC complicates the simple diagram above and, as I will demonstrate, transforms it into a colorful and lifelike portrait complete with predictable and unpredictable outcomes.

Gereffi and Goldfrank tend to look at organizationally large influences on consumption such as marketing and trade companies. Raynolds goes beyond these broad influences on consumption by recognizing the actions of small firms within GCCs. Still, her argument fails to observe relationships beyond the enterprise or State. Gereffi

recognizes that a key issue is missing in his and others' conception of GCCs. The literature on GCC does not attempt to address the individual or household in the creation of consumption patterns. It has been shown that households and individuals are principal sites in the construction of identities that shape habits of consumption (Jenkins 1997, Miller 1997). "The GCC approach must further elaborate this category to avoid missing a crucial analytical link" (Gereffi, et al. 1994:12).

### *Network Analysis*

The importance of networks in the study of commodity exchange has been established in anthropological literature (Mitchell 1969, Boissevain 1974, Hannerz 1980, etc.). In a GCC, the importance of networks can be observed when individuals attempt to gain information that reveals how to access goods, at what price and from whom. The type of network I look at in the study of GCCs is termed a partial network. According to Hannerz (1980:178), partial networks are "constructed around some particular kind of content in the relationship, and thus, for example, abstract the political network from the total network - this principle of abstraction leads to what is usually called a partial network". This study of GCCs abstracts the relationships that involve commodity exchanges from each individual's world of relations. Each transaction that occurs in a node on a commodity chain takes place between two ego-centered networks. Understanding partial networks such as these helps to inform the influences shaping the choices of commodity chain participants.

Network studies typically view individual action as a process embedded in the structure of an overarching network. Portes notes, "to be sure, corporate profit seeking



and individual income maximizing remain important aims, but plainly they must be pursued within the constraints of an elaborate social code that extracts severe penalties for deviance” (Portes 1995: 8). Like other sociologists, Portes places individual action in submission to “a larger social world of which all transactors are part”. I hesitate to agree with Portes on this point. Indeed, there are many situations in which one’s social relations govern action; however, there are many instances where individuals act against peer pressure.

Influences on restaurateur choice are derived primarily from past experience in combination with pressure from a various social networks. According to Boissevain (1974: 27), “A person’s network forms a social environment from and through which pressure is exerted to influence his behavior; but it is also an environment through which he can exert pressure to affect the behavior of others”. Similarly, actors in nodes on a GCC make decisions that are affected by networks of friends, relatives and employees. In turn, these decisions affect the form of the micro-macro link between individual action (whom one chooses to exchange with) and structural pressures (weekly market value of rice).

I would like to clarify two morphological characteristics of social networks before moving on with the discussion of acquiring information in a GCC. First, the size of a network refers to the number of participants or relations with ego. Studying partial networks of a GCC makes it difficult to uncover more than a small portion of the total relations maintained by an individual. I found that Fort Collins restaurateurs were part of small local networks where they had often heard of other restaurant owners but did not know them personally. Second, density refers to the number of ties between members of

a network (Boissevain: 1974). Boissevain's suggests that "the larger the size of the network, the more difficult it is for all its members to be interrelated, hence, the lower density" (Boissevain in Portes 1995:9). I expected to find dense networks among the small population of Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins. The density of the Chinese restaurateur networks, or one to one contacts between restaurateurs, was found to be very low, yet interviews revealed that information was being passed from one restaurateur to another. Ex-employees were found to facilitate the flow of information by maintaining relations with many restaurateurs, hence increasing the density of these networks.

While talk of networks interests academics and job seekers, I found little support for this type of inquiry among Chinese restaurateurs. Briefly, the networks I operate within are seldom thought about as I choose my way through quotidian everyday life. Likewise, many of the Chinese restaurant owners I interviewed did not find the networks they operate within of interest, although they acknowledged their existence and influence. As one restaurateur stated, "I would rather talk about my business than the people I know, because personal networks are small around here". This statement implies that personal networks of Fort Collins restaurateurs, however small, are tight knit. I respected this position and found that Chinese restaurateurs were most comfortable talking about family, less likely to talk about ex-employees, and least comfortable talking about friends.<sup>i</sup>

#### *Interpersonal Transactions:*

Many factors come into play as two individuals meet for the first time to conduct business. How one is dressed, the language they speak and so on... comes into play as

business transactions proceed. Goffman (1983: 2) defined social interaction as “that which uniquely transpires in social situations, that is, environments in which two or more individuals are physically in one another’s response presence”. Goffman raises a point that individuals (of the same ‘kind’) entering an exchange assume each other's experiences. “It is plain that each participant enters a social situation carrying an already established biography of prior dealings with the other participants- or at least with participants of their kind; and enters also with a vast array of cultural assumptions presumed to be shared” (Goffman, 1983: 2). Goffman's argument (1983: 8) that “every culture, and certainly ours, seems to have a vast lore of fact and fantasy regarding embodied indicators of status and character, thus appearing to render a person readable” is important here. The commonly held belief that like kinds assume greater trust and commitment was employed by American wholesalers attempting to enter the Asian food market, but not by Asian wholesalers who were of very different backgrounds than their Asian customers.

A potentially significant aspect of GCC research, suggested above by Reynolds, is the role of ethnicity in shaping the outcome of interpersonal transactions. Many studies show that ethnicity channels the flow of goods, while conversely the flow of goods supports ethnic boundary maintenance.<sup>ii</sup> A seminal contribution to our conception of interpersonal transactions comes from Fredrik Barth. Barth’s “Ethnic Groups and Boundaries” demonstrates how internal and external group definitions are important when studying exchange. Jenkins (1994: 212) draws on Barth’s work, offering an explanation of how internal and external definition can affect market exchange:

...Business and trading are nevertheless structured by ethnic categorization.

This is with respect to (1) who can trade with whom, (2) who can trade in what, and (3) the price that different categories of people must pay for similar commodities or services.

Jenkins' argument builds on Barth's idea that a claim to ethnic identity must be realized from inside and outside the group. Interpersonal exchanges that take place parallel to the flow of goods are affected by the actors' internal and external definitions of 'self' and 'other'. In the wholesale industry, the ability of a Denver based purchaser to speak the same local dialect as a Pacific Coast wholesaler will lower bulk prices based on an assumed cold reading of the other, triggering trust and commitment between two individuals who have never met.

*Linking Identity and Commodity:*

Conceptualizing the link between commodity and identity adds to the holistic understanding of factors that prohibit or ease the movement of goods over time and space. The conceptual link between identity and commodity has been established (Harvey 1989, Kopytoff 1986, and Rotenberg 1996). Kopytoff (1986) argues that processes of commoditization and identity creation are similar. He states that, "a person's social identities are not only numerous but also conflicting... similar[ly] a thing becomes the story of classifications and reclassifications in an uncertain world of categories whose importance shifts with every minor change" (Kopytoff 1986: pp. 89-90). Here, Kopytoff connects the movement of goods over time with the social creation of categories where "things" can be experienced meaningfully. The ability of Fort

Collins consumers to experience and embrace Chinese cuisine is the product of a history of classification and re-classification where consumers, wholesalers and import/export firms introduce products and ideas searching out items that make sense to the dining public.

Rotenberg (1996) takes a more objective approach to understanding influences on the flow of goods. He does this by connecting identity to material goods using the concept of “contingent structures”. Contingent structures are the material environment and temporal restrictions that are somewhat uniformly experienced by a group of individuals when associating with a place or space. The food, built environment, and schedule associated with Chinese restaurants in Fort Collins are contingent structures through which diners experience the result of choices made by individual restaurateurs.

Changing perceptions of schedule in one Chinese restaurant help demonstrate Rotenberg’s conception of space and identity. From 1972 through 1982, Chinese restaurants in Fort Collins were primarily dine-in establishments with lesser carryout businesses. During this time, the Fort Collins public learned to expect that Chinese restaurants were dine-in. Over the past seventeen years Mainland Chinese entrepreneurs have opened delivery, buffet and to-go businesses that have changed Fort Collins’ residents’ idea of schedule and place for the average Chinese restaurant.

Today, a commonly held belief in Fort Collins is that Chinese food should be a quick dining experience lasting 15 to 30 minutes. An owner new to Fort Collins explained to me that in order to create a “fine dining” experience, he must train the public to expect a one-hour meal and the accompanying price. This socialization process appeared to be tedious for consumer and restaurateur alike. The cash register acted as a

boundary for confrontation between the 'private' kitchen area where the owner cooked and the 'public' dining room where customers made demands for faster service. With time, I observed customers learning to show up and dine with time enough to make their next appointment. The schedule that consumers traditionally associated with dining at Chinese restaurants became a contingent structure that was contested daily. Customers could choose between eating at fast service buffet and carry out restaurants or enjoying individually prepared dishes in a dining room setting. The owners' refusal to lower the quality of his food preparation in the name of faster service forced the decision onto the customers. Through continued patron support, high quality food and the time required to prepare it eventually overcame requests for fast service. A new categorization of schedule for this restaurant resulted.

The GCC concept is recognized as a framework for interpreting flows of goods and distributions of capital between companies, countries, and world regions. However, by focusing exclusively on such macro level organizations the significance of individual action within these structures has been overlooked. What choices are made between wholesalers and restaurateurs and between restaurateurs and consumers, and what are the influences on these choices? This research begins to unravel the dynamic social situations that bring the nodes in a GCC to life.

## Chapter 2: Methodology

A general methodology for researching the choices of restaurateurs in a GCC can be extracted from chapter one. First, participant observation and unstructured interviews are suggested. Spend time with individuals who are in contact with the commodities one wishes to study (Appadurai 1986, Gereffi 1994). Find out how long people have been dealing in a certain type of commodity, where has it come from over time, and what influences brought this individual to deal with this good at this time? These questions help to reveal a context in which the individual is operating, concurrently sketching a historical outline of processes that brought these individuals and goods to meet at this particular time. Second, with a heightened knowledge of the individuals participating in a GCC, identify specific variables that may be affecting the choices of restaurateurs using structured interviews. Here, it has been suggested that co-ethnic networks of friends, family, and co-workers influence why immigrant entrepreneurs choose as they do (Portes 1995, Zhou 1992).

Figure 2.1

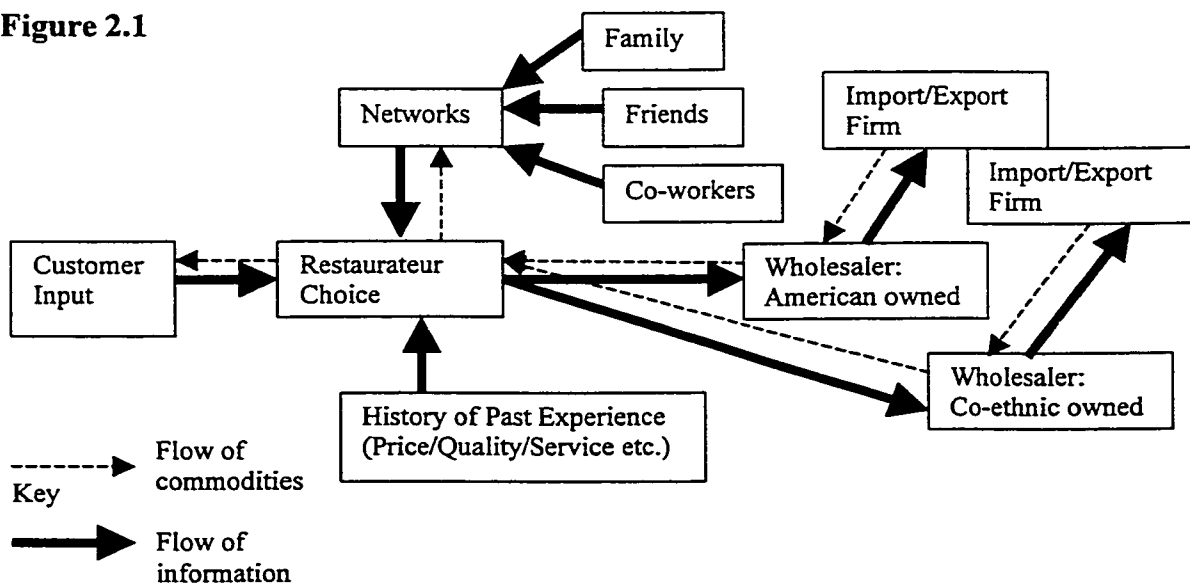


Figure 2.1 represents a rough sketch of the influences on choice revealed during three months of interviews. Networks of friends, family and co-workers influence restaurateur choice. Likewise, customer interactions feed the decisions made by restaurateurs. These variables must be operationalized in order to test for causality in the relationship between restaurateur's choices and the structure of a GCC. Finally, I consider each restaurateur's past history of experiences with his or her wholesalers. From unstructured interviews, I found that there is one choice faced by all Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins: Do I buy goods from American wholesalers or co-ethnic wholesalers? How one chooses to answer this question leads to a re-directing of commodities through alternative wholesale and import/export firms in a GCC. From literature described earlier, we can hypothesize that restaurateurs will choose to contract co-ethnic wholesalers. As figure 2.1 demonstrates, the flow of information moves opposite the flow of commodities. When a commodity chain is buyer-driven, the buyers have varying degrees of ability to choose, suggesting that wholesalers are left to invent new ways of attracting accounts. Following the suggestions of Gereffi et al. (1994), the directional flows of information, money and goods in a GCC account for uneven power relations and uneven distributions of capital, favoring North American consumers over third world producers.

Information is not unidirectional, and neither are transactions, making figure 2.1 oversimplified. These are the dangers of taking a structural model for more than it is worth. I plan to complicate this model much further upon revealing the gathered data. After briefly introducing my entrance to the field, I will outline four tools utilized to unearth the variables suggested above. Social network inventory (SNI), participant



observation, genealogy, unstructured interviews and researcher-administered-surveys were used. I will explain what I hoped to learn by their employment, and what type of data they provided. This discussion will include where questions did not appeal to informants, where they succeeded and why.

*Entering the field:*

Upon beginning fieldwork May 15, 1999 I spent a few days wandering around Fort Collins, looking at Chinese restaurants and building up the courage to approach their owners. My initial attempt to access Fort Collins restaurateurs was less than successful. This approach included eating lunch at restaurants, then asking to speak with the owner or manager and introducing my project by stating "I am a graduate student interested in writing about Chinese entrepreneurs in Fort Collins". I received a variety of responses to this approach, generally followed by a "not interested" or "I don't have time". Restaurateurs who had their MA or Ph.D. surprised me with a barrage of technical questions about the origin of funding for the research and where the information would end up. They would ask me whom I knew, and then try to figure out who else was participating in the research. Cold visiting eventually worked, because I wouldn't go away and also because I knew more and more names each time I returned.

The oldest and most established businesses opened their doors first. Slowly, after making contact with anyone who would listen, I began to find interested participants. I made an effort to meet Chinese Colorado State University faculty hoping that they would put me in touch with friends who owned restaurants. This worked, moderately well, yielding two contacts. Knowing the names of Taiwanese professors had a positive

impact when asking for interviews. Small talk was scarce during the entirety of my research regardless of the informant. Among those I interviewed it was not uncommon to witness 12-14 hour work days, six days a week. According to restaurateurs, the amount of work that goes into running a restaurant makes a 24 hour day impractical, and speaking to an anthropologist even less so.

*Participant Observation:*

Between May 15 and September 15, 1999 participant observation emerged as a useful tool, backing up structured and unstructured interviews, genealogy and social network inventory. Within a month's time, restaurateurs began to permit observations during open hours. I employed participant observation as a means of observing concrete behaviors, possessions and events among actors. While observing in various Chinese restaurants I focused on the day to day actions of employees and the purchasing habits of customers. These observations provided descriptive data on operating and working in restaurants. I was unable to spend an equal amount of time observing in all restaurants, a problem that will reveal itself below.

Observations during acceptable interview times (8-10am and 1-4pm Tuesday through Thursday) would lead one to think every Chinese restaurant in Fort Collins was on the brink of going out of business. Spending time in Asian restaurants when they were busy, between 12pm and 1pm and again between 6:30pm and 8pm, gave me an idea of who was creating the demand for the commodities moving along a GCC, and who was not. While building friendships, I was able to learn who was dining and working at Chinese restaurants.

My place of employment was an important site for participant observation. I began working at a local Chinese restaurant shortly after I stopped interviewing in September. The owner had participated in my interviews and therefore was aware that I was gathering data for this thesis. Participant observation was used to learn three important aspects of restaurant life, each informing the flow of commodities. First, I noted which menu items customers ordered most often and listened as they explained why a certain dish was their favorite. This information expanded on what ingredients might be in higher demand due to consumer trends. Second, I listened as customers told the owner what they did and did not expect to find in a Chinese restaurant. Often, it was the complainers who opted to speak up. Third, spending entire days observing at a restaurant made it possible to witness transactions between delivery people and restaurateurs.

Through rigorous transcriptions following each taped and un-taped interview and observations, I was able to describe interpersonal transactions, as well as each restaurant's contents and architecture. A collage of restaurant facades adorns the cover of this thesis. I jotted down observations between interviews and during times when restaurateurs were busy. These observations allowed me to recognize who was working in restaurants, and what types of interactions were taking place between owner and co-worker, owner and customers and owner and family members. These observations suggested that I pursue these groups of individuals as potential influences on restaurateur choice.

Participant observation among wholesalers proved much more difficult. In all but one case, I was prohibited from looking around warehouses. Occasionally, I would gain

a glimpse into the lives of food wholesalers when informants were taking phone calls or while leaving and entering the compounds. After spending time observing wholesalers doing their jobs in between my questions, it became clear that the most important communication tool these people used was the telephone. These individuals were constantly interacting throughout the office, region and world over the phone. Eye to eye contact was not a major part of the frequent deals being made. With larger wholesalers, I observed a trend of fewer human interactions and more frequent interpersonal telecommunications. The absence of cold reading as a means of enhancing co-ethnic trust left language as the major precursor to ethnicity in wholesaler/import-firm interactions. These observations influenced how I understood the interactions in this industry; in turn, this information was incorporated into future questioning.

*Unstructured Interviews:*

After identifying two groups of individuals (Chinese restaurateurs and wholesalers) participating in a global commodity chain (Chinese restaurant commodities), I began setting up appointments for unstructured interviews. These interviews were intended to last one half-hour and uncover general background knowledge about each group in this study. Furthermore, these questions were meant to build rapport by investigating non-threatening topics. Questions were asked among Chinese restaurateurs regarding each individual's history as an immigrant/migrant and entrepreneur in Fort Collins (See Appendix A).

I used unstructured interviews to learn how people felt about discussing certain topics. I was sensitive to the fact that many restaurateurs might not want to discuss

business with me at all. This notion was generally correct. Most restaurateurs were more than happy telling stories about their immigration and migration experiences. Talking about family also turned out to be easy and productive. People were interested in talking about what brought them to the restaurant industry. They were not interested in talking about where they get their soy sauce. It is not that their purchasing habits were a touchy subject (after one or two interviews most informants had no problem providing this information) rather, restaurateurs appeared disinterested in the topic. Realizing this early on, I was able to conduct long interviews dealing with hot topics such as family and immigration, and short interviews dealing with commodity transactions.

The information I gained from wholesalers came primarily from unstructured interviews. I could never be sure if or when wholesalers would grant me time. This led to many impromptu and phone interviews. Other interviews lasted up to four hours, sometimes long after the office closed. In all but one case, I was given a single shot at learning what I wanted to know about the wholesale industry. Luckily, I was able to contact a local wholesaler who explained some of the industry terminology and basics to me before I had to create questions under pressure. The information provided by wholesalers was intended to expand on three topics. First, I probed each individual's history both current and preceding participation in the wholesale industry. Second, I asked for a description of each wholesaler's (company) history of providing commodities to the Chinese restaurant industry. Finally these interviews aimed to understand each wholesaler's perception of servicing the Chinese restaurant industry. History, both personal and corporate, combined with the experiences and perceptions of working with

Chinese restaurateurs expanded my understanding of the growth of one portion of the wholesale industry, and the accompanying growing pains.

*Genealogy:*

Genealogies were taken on twelve informants to identify the role of family in the choices of restaurateurs. I used this highly productive but time consuming method in an effort to build trust among those Chinese restaurateurs participating in my research. I spent time tracing the work history genealogies of each informant. First, I wanted to know each family's history in the restaurant industry. Second, I wanted to know who was in Fort Collins, where were they working and whom were they working for. Third, I hoped to learn about networks of relatives that crossed restaurant boundaries. The genealogy provided all of this information and much more. When introducing this method to informants they were very curious to know what this had to do with their history as entrepreneurs. I explained that little is known about Chinese immigrants starting businesses in small cities, and that this exercise could teach me if family played a role in their current livelihood. People were generally eager to speak of their family whether or not they viewed them as having an impact on their current situation. From genealogies, I learned that most informants had lived in an ethnic enclave prior to living in Fort Collins. Two genealogies are included in appendix B.

The information gained from conducting this research was priceless throughout the fieldwork process. Not only did I gain basic knowledge of each informant's household, which made for easy small talk when questions flopped, but I was also encouraged to share my experiences with them.

*Structured Interview 1: Social Network Inventory*

Two structured interviews helped identify the choices of restaurateurs. First, Social Network Inventory (SNI) was used to identify networks of friends and relatives and to find out if these networks affected restaurateur's choices regarding the flow of goods. The second structured interview was aimed at understanding the decision making process used by restaurateurs in choosing between wholesalers.

With rapport in place and one structured interview completed, I felt it was time to delve closer to my emerging research topic by gathering SNIs. To do this I contacted Dr. Barry Wellman at the University of Toronto. With his guidance, I built a researcher-administered-survey aimed at understanding three aspects of each Chinese restaurateur's social network (See Appendix C: Structured Interview 2). First, the SNI was aimed at revealing friends of restaurant owners within and outside of the family. Second, I hoped to identify the strength of the ties that existed between network members. With the SNI, I hoped to learn who knew one another among the Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins.

The SNI I created was far too long and the questions much too personal to be successful. After testing the SNI on one informant, I modified the questionnaire to make better use of the time people would give me. In the end, the SNI provided useful data in the form of nominal variables. I was able to learn the size and ethnicity of most restaurateurs' social networks. Furthermore, I discovered the strength of these ties relative to one another. Finally, these interviews produced quantifiable information such as age, gender, and country of origin.

Two restaurateurs frowned upon this interview for reasons I came to understand better with time. Their contributions and lack thereof, point to a problem of validity in

my data. There are relatively few Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins. For this reason, two restaurateurs opted not to participate in this portion of my study noting that rumors spread easily among so few people. Some restaurateurs may be friends but few are mentioned in the SNIs I collected.

The SNI provided descriptive information, but too many problems were discovered in the research tool to make this more than a mildly useful exercise. In retrospect I should have pre-tested the instrument more extensively. The SNI located four friendships between business owners and found one example where a friend was also a wholesaler. Many acquaintances were identified among restaurateurs but the nature of the relations remains unsubstantiated.

#### *Structured Interview 2: Choosing Between Wholesalers*

The second researcher-administered-survey conducted addressed the question of how restaurant owners chose between all possible wholesalers. This survey set out to unravel the relationship between wholesalers and restaurateurs. The concepts of “good wholesaler” and “bad wholesaler” were investigated to find what factors influenced restaurateur choice. Concurrently, based on descriptions of Chinese restaurateurs presented by wholesalers, the concepts of “good customer” and “bad customer” were operationalized.

Data gathered from unstructured interviews suggested that quality, price and service play a major role in the purchasing habits of Chinese restaurateurs. Therefore, I devoted a portion of this interview to investigating the impact of these ordinal variables on the purchasing habits of restaurateurs. The second structured interview was also used



to develop ideas about why restaurateurs close accounts with wholesalers. Again, using the variables of quality, price and service, I was able to learn the relative importance of each variable in determining a flow of goods in a GCC.

*Issues of Sampling:*

A total of thirty-one “Asian” restaurants were identified in Fort Collins (listed in the Yellow Pages). Specifically, there were 17 Chinese restaurants. I attempted to avoid generalizing “Asian food”, instead studying only restaurants that advertised Chinese cuisine. Advertisements were found both from looking in the Yellow pages and from driving by Asian restaurants to see if they advertised Chinese cuisine anywhere on the building. I believe that I identified all but one Chinese restaurant during the course of my fieldwork. It turns out that an ethnic Chinese owns one of the Vietnamese restaurants in Fort Collins. The restaurant only advertises Vietnamese cuisine, so I left it out of the study. As interviews proceeded I found that most Chinese restaurateurs considered this restaurant Chinese. I had originally hoped to get a complete sample to improve the reliability and validity of my study. Instead, fourteen out of seventeen (approximately 82%) of the Chinese restaurateurs participated in the unstructured interviewing. Twelve out of seventeen informants participated in the genealogy portion of this research. Nine out of seventeen took part in the SNI, and seven out of seventeen participated in the second researcher-administered-survey. The overall small sample size in this research prohibits me from making any conclusive or comparative statements regarding influences on choice in a GCC. However, as a case study, this research suggests a number of attributes to GCCs that have not yet been identified in the literature. Because of the

amount of participation in this study (See Appendix D) and because of the variety of methods employed, I believe the validity and reliability of my results to be good.

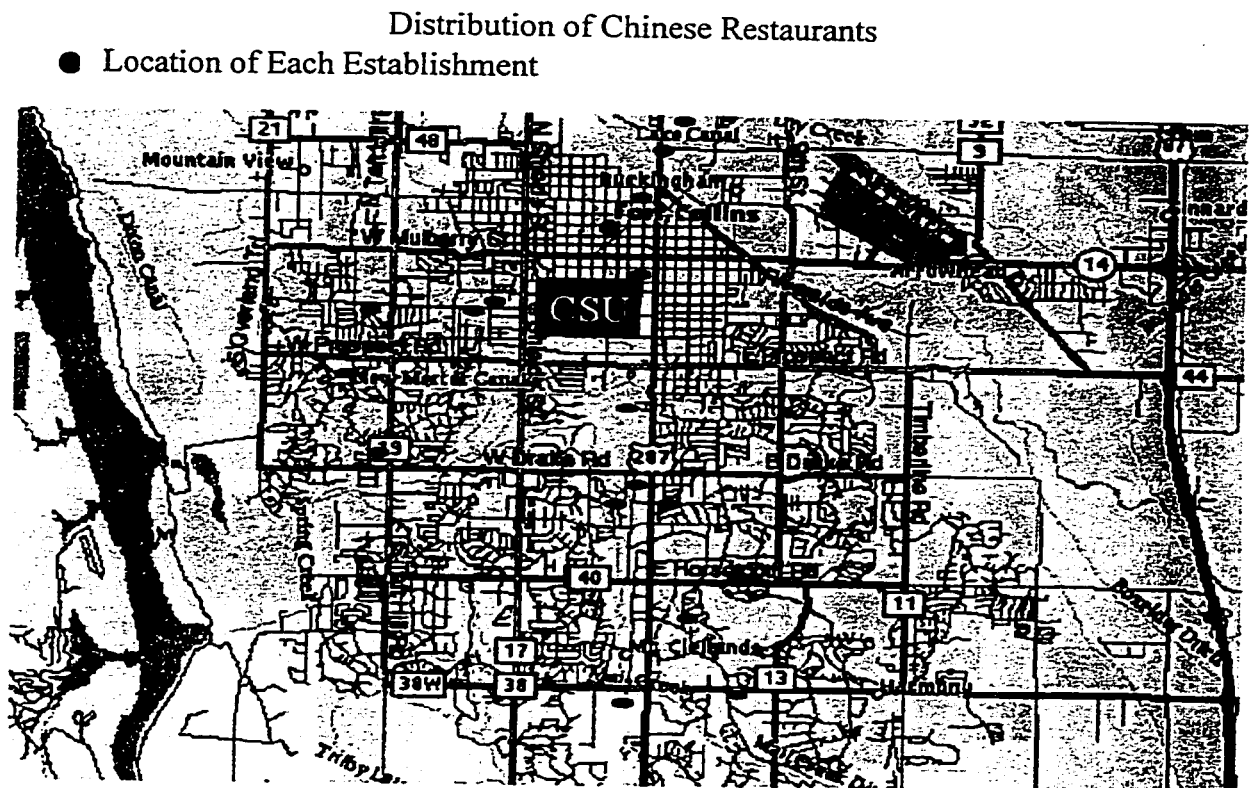
A final note on ethics. All of the informants who were interviewed for this study found the idea of a consent form (See Appendix E) both unnecessary and unnerving. While I agree that consent forms are needed for certain lines of inquiry, questioning Chinese restaurateurs, wholesalers, and consumers about their interactions did not lend itself to this type of documentation.

### **Chapter 3: Place and People, Fort Collins Chinese Restaurateurs**

This chapter begins by introducing the small city of Fort Collins, Colorado with the intention of developing an important context in which more specific data will be presented. I begin by describing the resources currently available to Chinese restaurateurs upon their arrival in Fort Collins and compliment this discussion by recognizing past resources. I proceed by introducing four brief biographies. These are cases of past and present restaurant ownership that highlight the experiences each restaurateur brought to operating a business in this small city. I conclude this chapter with an introduction to the world of choices available to restaurateurs. With the influences and choices available to restaurateurs identified, the following chapter concentrates on one kind of choice and how restaurateurs respond to it: obtaining supplies.

#### *Fort Collins:*

Chinese restaurants are found with growing frequency in most small urban areas throughout North America (Fong 1994, Saito and Horton 1994, Zhou 1992). While we may expect to find these establishments in large cities where enclaves are common, it is less clear why or how Chinese immigrants come to realize their livelihoods in settings that do not offer co-ethnic support. Studies of Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs suggest a number of major influences on immigrant choice. Kinship networks, trade associations and surname associations have been shown to play a significant role as Chinese immigrants vie to establish themselves and their families in California, New York,



Illinois and other US metropolis (Kwong 1987, Zhou 1992, Lin 1998 Wong 1982, Ong et al. 1994). Two views of Chinese immigrant adaptation retain currency. First, participation in co-ethnic organizations is viewed positively because these groups offer a variety of services that help Chinese immigrants establish themselves when they may not otherwise have the resources (Zhou 1992). Second, participating in co-ethnic organizations leads immigrants to suffer at the hands of established co-ethnics (Kwong 1987 and 1997).

Many organizations such as banks, and surname associations found in large cities are absent in small urban and rural settings. Thus, we must look for a different way to understand the choice making strategies of Chinese in Fort Collins. How one chooses to

take advantage of (or avoid) local resources is important because it demonstrates “one way immigrants and ethnic minorities can respond to the current restructuring of Western industrial economies” (Waldinger, et al. 1990:15)

Fort Collins offers a good environment for investigating the factors influencing Chinese restaurateur choice. Seventeen restaurants advertising Chinese food are spread throughout the city. Many are located near Colorado State University or in sprawl south of the city that, if predictions hold true, will eventually connect Fort Collins to Denver sixty miles away (Long, 1996). Asian/Pacific Islanders make up 2% of Fort Collins total population (US Census, 1990). The dominant Caucasian population, eighty seven percent, makes Fort Collins similar to many other small cities throughout North America. Although this study focuses on one small city, its aim is to expand our understanding of the processes underlying immigrant choice occurring in similar places throughout North America.

To understand the context in which restaurateurs make choices, I first explore where differences and similarities exist between choices available to metropolis and small city Chinese immigrants. Boissevain et al. (1990:133) suggests that there are “seven common business problems that confront ethnic entrepreneurs, (1) Acquiring information needed for the establishment of their firms; (2) Obtaining the capital needed to establish or to expand a small business; (3) Acquiring the training and skills needed to run a small business; (4) Recruiting and managing efficient, honest and cheap workers; (5) Managing relations with customers and suppliers; (6) Strenuous business competition; (7) Protection from political attacks”. The first six of these problems arose frequently in discussions with informants. However, the past business experiences of restaurateurs,

either as owners or managers in the US may have prevented vulnerability to political attacks, which according to Boissevain, “occur due to imperfect awareness of, and compliance with, the formal regulations and laws regulating their activities” (Boissevain, et al. 1990:151).

Fort Collins Chinese have few co-ethnic resources available upon arrival. I would suggest that in Fort Collins, the problems listed by Boissevain occur because of a lack of “institutional completeness”<sup>iii</sup>. The two largest ‘Chinese’ organizations in Fort Collins are the Taiwanese students association and the Chinese students association, both at Colorado State University. Each group considers themselves Chinese, however, they find that history and ideology divide them. These groups boast memberships ranging around one hundred members and are supported by at least two local restaurants through donations of food at large events.

Other social resources available to restaurateurs and their families include a Chinese Church, Language school, and a small convenience store. If we include Vietnamese and Japanese resources in this summation, then we may add two more convenience stores. The quantity and diversity of services offered by each of these businesses are not great. These resources may, however, be to scale with the size of the overall Fort Collins Chinese population. By informant’s estimates this population has grown to about 1000. Restaurateurs and their families make up about 1/10 of the total Chinese population. Other Fort Collins Chinese are employed by Colorado State University and large technology firms including Celestica, Hewlett Packard, Kodak, and others.

I will expand on three Fort Collins based resources to show where individuals are building social networks outside of their restaurant and/or nuclear family. My participation in a Chinese New Years Celebration put on by the Taiwanese student association brought one networking possibility to light. The Taiwanese couple with whom I attended this gathering pointed out that two restaurant owners were present. The reason for their presence is linked to one of two small Chinese organizations that exist outside of the Colorado State University campus. First, there is a Chinese Language School. A woman who is part owner of a local Chinese restaurant organizes this school. She has an MA from Colorado State University in food sciences, and upon starting as a manager at a local restaurant, decided to start this small language school. Her first attempt at starting this school failed within a year due to lack of support from local Chinese residents. Two years later (in 1983), with the encouragement of friends she struck out again and started a language school that exists to this day and is part of a series of similar Chinese Language Schools along the front range of the Rocky Mountains.

After attending language classes at this school, with students ranging in age from four to thirteen, I found that the social networks provided by the Chinese language school cater to local Chinese women. These women rotate responsibility as the principal organizer of the school on a semester basis. All the teachers and organizers are mothers of students who are separated into two classrooms according to language ability. The students are American born with parents who hope to teach them about their families' history and traditions. These lessons include performing songs and dances at festivals put on by the University's Chinese groups. They appear at events such as Chinese New Year

and International Students Week. The Chinese language classes teach Mandarin language, hence they cater primarily to Taiwanese families.

The Chinese Catholic Church is a second organization available to local restaurateurs interested in building networks for accessing information. This Church has weekly services, and serves the local Chinese population. The significance of this church in informing the flows of information among restaurateurs is unclear because only one restaurateur claims to attend.

Through participation in these local organizations, I was able to begin understanding the flow of information between restaurants. Women who completely or partially own these establishments are able to interact at the Chinese Church and at the Chinese Language School. Through these communications, individuals who don't otherwise leave the restaurant learn what is happening around town.

Beyond these small interest groups, which usually involve no more than one or two restaurant owners, no other co-ethnic resources were found in Fort Collins. Nevertheless, in Fort Collins we find similarities to the resources available in urban centers. Co-ethnic churches and language schools are available to many minority groups in urban centers (Sanjek 1998). Denver, Colorado, sixty miles to the south provides many of the resources one would expect of a larger enclave community. Denver is home to a large number of Chinese-Vietnamese immigrants. I was not able to confirm a number for this population. The 1990 Census enumerated 11,000 Asian Pacific Islanders in Denver County. The Chinese-Vietnamese business district in Denver is located inside of a larger Mexican Barrio, radiating outward from the corner of Federal Rd. and Alameda Rd.



On the suggestion of restaurant owners, I traveled to Denver's "Chinatown" or "Little Saigon" (it is called both). In the center of Denver's Chinese-Vietnamese business district one finds the "East Asian Center", a two story fortress shaped shopping area, walled on all sides, with a large dragon tiled arch entrance leading to a central parking area. Here one finds many of the resources needed by someone lacking English, marketable skills, or capital (See Table 3.1). Restaurant owners visit this area on a weekly basis to pick up emergency supplies or to eat Dim Sum, a Cantonese snack food unavailable in Fort Collins. When at the Far East Center, I noticed that some of the car license plates were from Wyoming (two hours north of Denver and one hour north of Fort Collins) suggesting that these facilities draw clients from Fort Collins, Colorado and beyond.

**Table 3.1**

"Far East Center" Co-Ethnic Services 60 Miles South of Fort Collins

Insurance	Travel	Medical
Banking	Interpreters	Realty
Construction	Lawyers	School
Grocery	Telecommunications	Hairdresser
Restaurant Wholesale	Seafood Sales	Jeweler
Restaurants	Clothing and Apparel	

Tri-lingual signage adorns many stores both outside and in. Chinese, Vietnamese and English are the trade languages of this shopping center. When asking directions, and information about the surrounding shopping district, I had no problem communicating in English. The level of institutional completeness found in Denver, and its proximity to Fort Collins, led me to believe that this area could be a valuable source of information for

Fort Collins Chinese restaurateurs. Contrary to my expectations, these services were found to play only a minor role in shaping the social networks and choices of the individuals I interviewed in Fort Collins. In fact many restaurateurs travel to Denver either to eat out on their day off (usually Sunday), or they go to pick up emergency supplies from one of the wholesalers in the area. One out of nine Chinese restaurateurs knew their Denver based wholesalers beyond the client/customer relationship. This business partnership developed in the late 1970s when there were fewer Chinese restaurants in all of Colorado. I will expand on the role of Denver wholesalers in the choice making processes of Fort Collins restaurateurs later.

When beginning fieldwork in Fort Collins, I expected to find a “community” of Chinese immigrants who needed one another’s support. The imagined community was suggested in literature concerning Chinese immigrants in urban environments. From Waldinger, et al. (1990), Wong (1982), Lin (1998), Kwong (1987) and others, we come to expect a bound enclave environment, where Chinese immigrants live cut off from their receiving community by language barriers and a lack of marketable skills. Chinatowns are often portrayed as a place of sacrifice where first generation immigrants struggle so that second generation Chinese can be assimilated into the American melting pot.

Similarly, studies of suburban Chinatowns repeat these generalizations (Lin 1998, Fong 1994). Historically, Fort Collins Chinese have endured some of the hardships described in urban centers such as discrimination and difficulty obtaining start up capital. At the same time great differences exist. For example, there is little co-ethnic support from within Fort Collins and no apparent geographical segregation of the Chinese in business or residence from the predominant white community (Lee 1978, Ahlbrandt

1987). These variables change the factors that influence choice among Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins.

Beyond co-ethnic resources, I found three small-business resources available to all restaurant owners in Fort Collins, provided they speak English or Spanish. First, the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) offers 'free one on one business counseling and low cost business training workshops'. This organization is sponsored by the US small business administration and offers a series of workshops on legal entities and employment law, small business marketing, financing, and taxes and record keeping. An interview with a counselor from the SBDC revealed a lack of participation in this organization by Chinese restaurant owners. Reasons for this are unclear, but I should point out that the SBDC is difficult to locate. I learned about the SBDC through asking the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce.

Second, the Colorado Restaurant Owners Association offers a forum for exchanging information. The Larimer County Chapter of this group includes restaurateurs from Fort Collins. I was told of this group by a Chinese restaurateur/member who gave me an invitation to the first annual meeting. Two benefits of participation were outlined at the meeting. Lobbying power, both locally and with the State of Colorado, and group health insurance were suggested as major reasons for participation. These reasons were re-affirmed by a Chinese restaurateur participating in the organization. Membership in this organization also provides a vast database of reports on the wholesale industry that could influence restaurateur's buying decisions, but my informant did not employ these resources.

Third, the Fort Collins Chamber of Commerce (FCC) offers a number of benefits that one Chinese restaurant is participating in. The most lauded benefit of joining the FCC is advertising. By joining the Chamber at the business level (USD\$450), members receive one listing in “The Guide”. The Guide is a color magazine focused on highlighting the many positive qualities of relocating a business or family to Fort Collins. The second benefit of joining the FCC is one hour per month use of the Business Service Center. This is a database of resources arranged to answer many questions related to relocating business and family. The Chinese restaurateur and employees of the FCC both agreed the advertising is the primary reasoning that one belongs to the FCC.

Co-ethnic and State managed organizations aimed at informing local businesses are located in Fort Collins but are rarely used by Chinese restaurateurs. The level of education and experience each restaurant owner brings to his or her business may predispose these individuals to standard business practices, decreasing the utility of the organizations.

### *Fort Collins Chinese Restaurant Owners*

The idea of an educated, integrated and capable Chinese restaurateur goes against most popularly perceived narratives of enclave bound immigrants. I will demonstrate that these are the characteristics of Chinese restaurateurs who have settled in Fort Collins. The large majority of Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins are not arriving poor, and without English language or employable skills. What follows is a rough sketch of Asian immigration into the Fort Collins area followed by four representative cases of how each individual is ‘making his or her own way’. With a clear picture of who Fort Collins

Chinese restaurateurs are, I continue by introducing the wholesalers servicing Fort Collins and explaining their background.

It is well known that the Hart-Cellar Immigration act of 1965 had a profound influence on the shape of America's Chinese communities. With this act, family reunification allowed US Chinese to invite members of their immediate family including parents, spouses and children into the US as non-quota immigrants (Lin, 1998:28). This, combined with the 1979 Carter-Deng normalization agreements recognizing China's claim to Taiwan created a massive influx of Taiwanese to the US (Spence 1990:670).

Before the 1970s, there are turn of the century reports claiming that Chinese workers were hired to dig the Michigan Ditch, a Rocky Mountain water conservation project that provides North Western Colorado watershed to Nevada and California (Ahlbrandt 1987). More often, early Colorado Chinese immigrants were employed in mining and railroad work. That they were engaged in these types of work is indicated by a contemporary newspaper article, which reported that,

The Cameron Brothers, miners in Clear Creek Valley, near Black Hawk, engaged a large number of Chinamen as miners. They are said to work steadily and faithfully, are very obedient to one of their overseers, Mr. Cyrus Cameron, a brother of the proprietor. They came from Texas on the Texas Pacific Railroad, where they had been employed as graders. Their contract with the Cameron Brothers was for a stipulated time, at \$35 a month, with board.

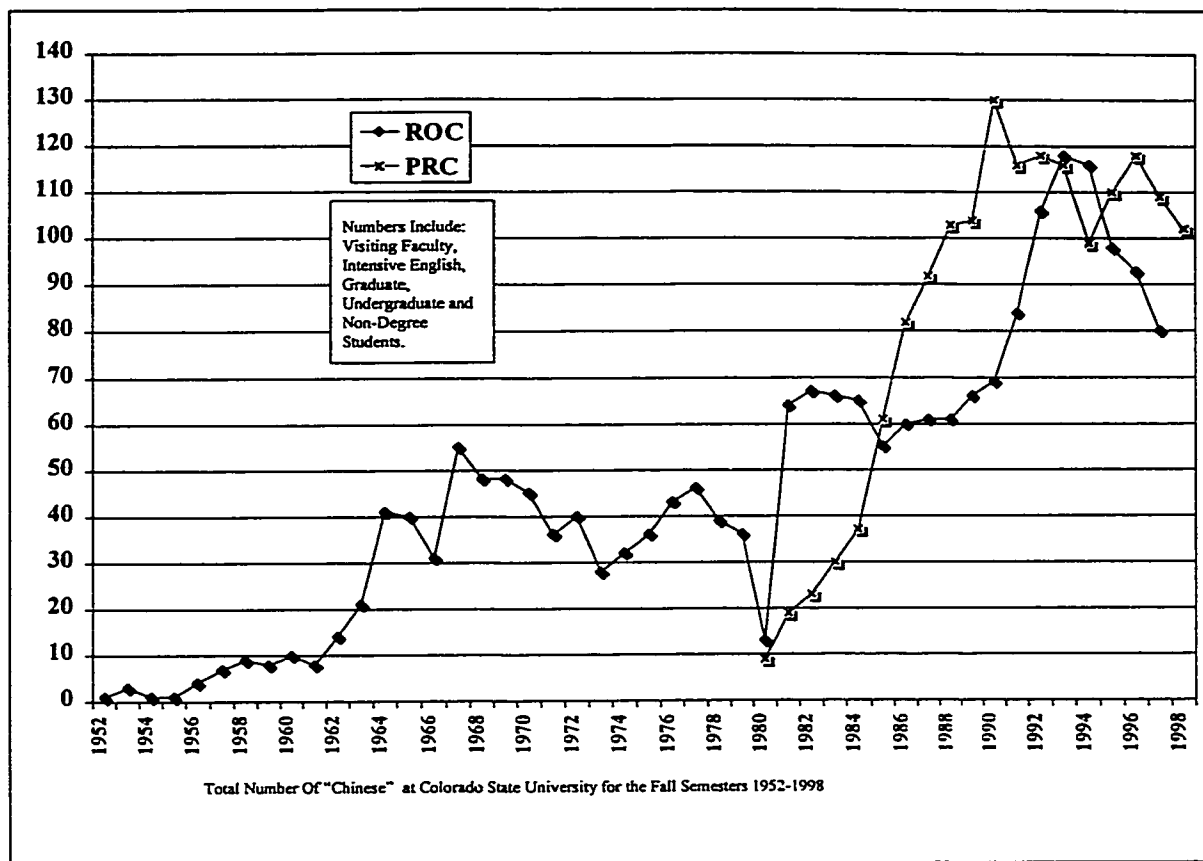
A second installment of forty Chinamen from Evanston, Wyoming under the temporary charge of Ah Say, an employee of the Union Pacific,

arrived at the camp Thursday evening. These had purchased a complete outfit in Denver. They have begun shoveling dirt for the Union Pacific, but few, if any, of them ever work at mining (Rocky Mountain News, July 23, 1873).

By 1890 the Chinese population in Denver peaked at 1000 individuals before declining to less than ten by 1920 (Lee 1978: 72). Chinese immigration into Fort Collins was limited to the sojourning of professors and students attending Colorado State University until 1971. I conducted a brief archival investigation that suggests the first Taiwanese students began to arrive at CSU in 1952 (Figure 3.2). It is from these students that Fort Collins' first Chinese entrepreneurs emerged.

The establishment of Chinese businesses in Fort Collins began fairly recently with the opening of the first Chinese restaurant in 1971. At that time, forty Taiwanese students attended Colorado State University. These students were part of a larger movement of close to 150,000 Taiwanese students who came to the US for graduate studies between the 1960's and 1980's. Of these students 97 percent converted their F-1 visa status into immigrant status (Kwong 1987:60). One of the Taiwanese students, who I will refer to as Alan, had just arrived at Colorado State University to begin a Ph.D. program. He arrived from the University of Illinois, Champaign where he received his MA in wood technology and wood sciences. After becoming discontented with the forestry program at CSU Alan and his family decided to try their hand at the Chinese restaurant business.

**Figure 3.2 ROC/PRC Residents at CSU**



Alan relied on a network of friends and professors at the University of Illinois to help raise capital for this venture. He chose to rely on these people because, as he viewed his options,

It [lenders] has to be Chinese because you are kind of a stranger coming into this city, at that time in Fort Collins, the 1970s, they did not have much understanding of other countries people or culture. So they have a more reluctant or discriminating way of acting. They don't feel like they want to help you. I remember that I went to the Chamber of Commerce in

Fort Collins. You are basically looking for any kind of help that you can find.

We don't know how to borrow money from the bank, so that is why we are looking for our own kind of people, oriental people to get the money to help us.

Access to startup capital is just one of the many hurdles that needed to be cleared before Alan could succeed. Labor was another factor. The restaurant owners I spoke with would much rather have family members at important positions in the restaurant, such as the cash register and cook, than have to rely on locally hired employees. Many restaurateurs, including Alan, had bad experiences with non-family and especially non-Chinese employees. Theft from the cash registers was an issue that arose constantly with regard to American employees.

The story of the first Chinese restaurant owner in Fort Collins reads much like that of many early Chinese immigrants. A lack of marketable skills left Fort Collins' first Chinese restaurateur predisposed to the restaurant industry. Each owner suggested that their first generation immigrant relatives began in the restaurant business because of an inability to enter other aspects of the job market. Today's restaurateur narratives tell a different story, focusing on the restaurant business as a positive choice rather than default livelihood. Thirty one percent of restaurateurs in Fort Collins own between one and five additional restaurants elsewhere in the country. In each case where more than one restaurant is owned, Fort Collins is the newest of their locations. They unanimously chose Fort Collins as a home base because "the city is safe", "public education is good", "the environment is clean" and "Fort Collins People love to eat out". They bring a history of experience and education to this locality and to the restaurant industry.



The case of a retired restaurant owner we'll call "Cathy" provides a second perspective on Fort Collins Chinese restaurateurs. After receiving her Ph.D. in food technology from Colorado State University, Cathy set out to pioneer a McDonalds style fast food Chinese restaurant chain in 1977. Within a year she was running three restaurants located in Fort Collins and Cheyenne, Wyoming, one hour north by car. The work was demanding. Cathy states, "often, I traveled to all stores. I had to supervise mechanical cooking in all stores. I wanted a standard flavor. This was done with recipes that had standard times and temperatures". Cathy quit the business after three years citing personal reasons. However, the fast food approach to Chinese food is alive and well today in the form of the omnipresent "Panda Express" with 283 restaurants in 35 U.S. states ([www.pandaexpress.com](http://www.pandaexpress.com) 4/30/00). Today, Cathy manages a consulting firm focused on providing US energy companies contacts in Shanghai. The purpose of these contacts is to assist China in its upgrade of Shanghai's State run power company.

Another restaurateur I interviewed moved to Fort Collins two years ago from Hong Kong. While in Hong Kong, Paul managed an aluminum extrusion factory owned by a Japanese company. He claims to have had a very comfortable life in Hong Kong but his daughter had reached college age and he was concerned for her education. He also expressed concern about Hong Kong's much publicized political reunification to China in 1997. Paul sent his wife and daughter to the US one year before he himself emigrated. He remained working for his firm through the completion of his contract. Shortly after arriving in Fort Collins Paul took a job at Hewlett Packard. While he enjoyed the benefits of working for a large and respected company, he felt he needed freedom from corporations like the one he had just left. Paul's brother helped his wife and daughter

gain employment at a Fort Collins Chinese restaurant where he cooked. The following year, the restaurant where Paul's brother, wife and daughter worked went up for sale and the family decided that they could buy it and continue running the business. The initial success of this entrepreneur, first as a computer programmer at Hewlett Packard and later as a restaurant operator, combined with language ability and family restaurant expertise, contradicts expectations about Chinese restaurateurs.

The final restaurateur I will describe here arrived recently. Mitchell and his family moved to Fort Collins in 1989. He has an MA in computer science from Texas A&M. Mitchell was prepared to enter the job market as a professional engineer but felt that it was his duty to take over the family business so that his parents could retire. He had a great deal of restaurant experience from helping in the family's Chinese restaurant under his uncle and his father.

Ten out of fourteen restaurateurs in Fort Collins have a BA from an American University and four have graduate degrees (Table 3.2). These immigrants are experienced and educated, and all seem to be very comfortable with the living that they gain from their work.

This brief introduction to the Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins provides us with a number of descriptions that both contradict and confirm past Chinese immigrant research. Clearly, the level of education these individuals bring to their businesses, whether academically or experientially, exceeds that of the popularly perceived Chinese immigrant. From this evidence I would suggest that the life histories of Chinese in other small cities would also challenge existing literature. These findings warrant future

research on this topic. I find it likely that new Chinese restaurateurs are similarly well prepared when they start businesses in suburban and rural settings throughout the US.

**Table 3.2**

## Restaurateur Demographics

#	Generation	Year Business Opened or Bought	Previous Restaurant Management or Ownership	Number Of Restaurants Owned	US Education
01	1	1971	No	1	None
02	1	1980	Yes	2	MA
03	2	1989	Yes	6	MA
04	1	1993	Yes	1	Tech.
05	1	1993	No	2	BA
06	1	1993	Yes	1	None
07	2	1995	Yes	1	BA
08	2	1995	Yes	5	BA
09	1	1996	Yes	1	None
10	1	1996	No	1	MA
11	1	1997	Yes	3	BA
12	1	1997	No	1	Ph.D.
13	1	1998	Yes	1	BA
14	2	1998	Yes	5	BA
15	1	1993	Yes	1	Tech.
16	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
17	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

*Restaurant Wholesalers:*

The wholesale industry that services Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins is divided according to size and content. First, there are “broad liners” who attempt to carry a comprehensive list of items that any type of restaurant could need. The broad liners I was able to identify are American owned and located in Denver and Fort Collins. The warehousing ability and variety of goods offered by a wholesaler suggest the size of a

company. One wholesaler enjoyed comparing the number of refrigerator trucks as a judge of size. Five trucks make a tiny outfit, 50 trucks make a small to medium size establishment, 150- 500 trucks makes a big wholesaler. Large broad liners, located in Denver, will carry produce, meat, fish, paper goods, kitchen equipment, and most anything else that one finds in restaurants. With the growth of the Asian food industry, larger broad liners are now experimenting with new forms of organization that make room for an “Asian sector” within the larger corporation.

In contrast, there are “niche marketers”. Niche marketers carry goods aimed at fulfilling one specific need among wholesalers. The Asian owned wholesalers located exclusively in Denver fall into this category. Also, American owned wholesalers who provide only meat or only produce and so on, fall into this category. When visiting an Asian wholesaler, one finds a tremendous variety of commodities aimed at fulfilling the demands of Chinese restaurateurs. Kitchen equipment, spices, sauces, rice, fish, meat, music and altars for your local god are all available in these one stop shopping locations.

There are two important differences and one similarity in the operations of American and Asian owned wholesalers. The first and greatest difference is that Asian wholesalers always have retail frontage through which they move goods. Restaurateurs, who do not sell large quantities of food or lack storage space for bulk purchases, can visit these wholesalers and purchase discounted goods. American food wholesalers do not have storefronts. They are also disinterested in small quantity purchases. In the past, this has kept American wholesalers from entering the Chinese restaurant market. One wholesaler imposed higher minimum orders on Chinese restaurateurs to discourage their business.

The second difference between these two types of wholesalers rests in how they approach customers. Broad line wholesalers send out sales representatives to meet with restaurant owners on a weekly basis. Niche wholesalers tend to make sales calls by phone. The explanation for this difference stems from the amount of money a company must make in order to afford sales representatives. Asian wholesale owners and managers claim that they are not large enough and do not wish to spend money sending sales representatives to all of the Asian restaurants in the region. These wholesalers recognize that Chinese customers do not expect this of them. American owned broad liners feel that their American restaurant owners expect sales representatives and so they provide them. However, this is slowly changing as technology advances the industry with online wholesale ordering, an attempt to cut costs by making sales representatives visits obsolete.

Despite these differences, there is also a significant similarity between American owned and Asian owned wholesalers. All Asian commodities offered by broad liners are also available from niche wholesalers. No American wholesalers claimed to offer a greater selection of Chinese commodities than that offered by Asian wholesalers. Upon review of wholesaler product lists I found that the name brands and types of sauces and spices were often identical. Furthermore, American broad liners often had a far smaller selection of these goods. Yet Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins are using them, in one case exclusively. When comparing non-ethnic items such as paper goods or chicken, I found that this trend reverses. Broad liners carry a greater variety of napkins and chicken than Asian wholesalers. It appears that Chinese wholesaler and American wholesalers

attempt to enter each other's markets by offering a variety of similar goods regardless of their ability to compete on price.

We are now familiar with the restaurateurs and wholesalers participating in a GCC that bring goods to Fort Collins Chinese restaurants. I have shown that Fort Collins Chinese are not the same immigrants described in previous accounts of Chinese entrepreneurs. Chinese entrepreneurs in Fort Collins are not enclave bound, an idea that has been closely associated with Chinese entrepreneurs in the past. The brief introduction to the wholesale food industry indicates that American owned wholesalers and Asian owned wholesalers are now competing for the same clients. This is a recent phenomenon, since American wholesalers entered the Asian food market in the mid-1990s. Restaurateurs may now choose one type of wholesaler over the other. I proceed to the next chapter asking how restaurateurs choose between goods offered by American and Asian wholesalers and what factors influence that choice.

## **Chapter 4: Choosing American and/or Asian Wholesalers**

This chapter identifies influences that shape choice when restaurateurs order supplies from both American and Asian owned wholesalers. Each influence is central to directing and re-directing the flow of commodities through various channels. First, I introduce some descriptive statistics that reveal which wholesalers are being used by Chinese restaurateurs to acquire a variety of products. In this discussion I outline the categories of goods being exchanged in the wholesaler/restaurateur relationship. Next, I look at what is meant by 'good customer' and 'bad customer' to gain a better understanding of pressures that shape restaurateur and wholesaler relations. Finally, I investigate what affect price, quality and service have on the choices made by restaurateurs. In concluding the discussion on price quality and service, I look at what factors caused restaurateurs to discontinue accounts with past wholesalers. With a basic understanding of the parameters for exchange, I introduce each of the variables I have been able to identify which influence choice. Restaurateur networks of family, friends and co-workers, and customer input will be expanded on, each variable adding to our understanding of how restaurateurs choose supplies. Past experiences underpin decisions made regarding the flow of goods in each identified category of influence.

### *Wholesaler/Restaurateur Relations*

For this portion of my research I had the help of seven restaurateurs. Five of these restaurateurs are from the PRC, one is from Hong Kong and one is from the ROC. From researcher-administered-surveys, I found that a total of sixteen wholesalers (6 Asian and 10 US owned) are being used to access four broad categories of goods. Paper products,

meats and seafood, produce, and Asian sauces and spices make up these categories.

After conducting these interviews, it was revealed that the meats and seafood category should have been delineated into three separate categories; seafood, chicken, and beef and pork. Restaurateurs explained to me that there are many niche wholesalers in the US who offer chicken, red meat and pork, and fish through independent companies.

With the categories of food established, I ran cross tabs<sup>iv</sup> on the data from my second structured interview to learn which restaurateurs were favoring certain wholesalers for the four categories of goods (Table 4.1). Overall, American owned wholesalers supplying Fort Collins Chinese restaurants outnumber Asian owned wholesalers (18 and 16 respectively). In this case the greatest number of wholesalers retained for any one category of products was found to be five and the least, one. On average each restaurateur had active accounts with two wholesalers per category of goods provided.

**Table 4.1 Wholesaler/Restaurateur Relations**

	#US/Asian Wholesalers Supplying FC	#US/Asian Wholesalers Contracted by Restaurants	Average # Wholesalers Contracted per restaurant
Paper Products	5 US/ 3 Asian	7 US/ 3 Asian	1.4
Meat and Seafood	6 US/ 5 Asian	13 US/ 6 Asian	2.7
Produce	6 US/ 2 Asian	11 US/ 3 Asian	2.1
Asian Sauces/Spices	1 US/ 6 Asian	1 US/ 12 Asian	2.1
Totals	18US/16Asian	32 US/ 24 Asian	Average 2.0



Overall, we see that US owned companies have a total of 32 accounts with the seven surveyed restaurateurs while Asian wholesalers maintain 24 accounts. These numbers are high relative to the number of restaurateurs interviewed because each restaurateur maintains a number of relations with different wholesalers for any one item. 'Asian Sauces and Spices' make up the only category where Asian wholesalers are contracted more often than US owned wholesalers. This data suggests that US owned wholesalers have more accounts open with Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins than their Chinese competition.

### *A Good Customer*

The number of open accounts does not tell us enough about the relative importance of the wholesaler/restaurateur relationship. Instead, we must look at the amount of goods changing hands between restaurateur and wholesaler. According to one wholesaler "after menu analysis, we learn what percentage of the total menu is being purchased through us". This wholesaler implied that the best customers buy 100% of their menu through a single wholesaler. I identified only one case where a Chinese restaurateur purchased all of his ingredients from an American broad liner. It is important to note that searching out the total percentage of a menu bought is an American method for judging a "good customer". Chinese wholesalers did not use such a specific method instead opting for measurements such as 'prompt bill payment', and 'few returned items' as their indicators of a good customer. Becoming a good customer with any wholesaler has benefits such as a thirty-day grace period on payments and an increased credit line. Conversely, bad customers are those who bounce checks, miss

payments for more than three months in a row, or attempt to return items that are not faulty. In all of these cases, accounts are closed. The only way to build up credit again is on a cash only basis.

I used the American rules for becoming a good customer in an attempt to learn the percentage of each restaurateur's total menu being purchased from the world of wholesalers (Table 4.2). In every case we see that US owned wholesalers receive orders for a larger portion of the total menu than Asian owned wholesalers. I asked each restaurateur what percentage of their total menu they bought from each wholesaler they used. The question was not understood clearly in two cases, therefore their data could not be used. A pre-test of these questions would have resulted in this question's restructuring.

**Table 4.2 Percent Menu Purchased**

	Wholesaler Ownership	% of Menu Purchased
Restaurant 1	Asian	30%
	US	70%
Restaurant 2	Asian	30%
	US	69%
Restaurant 3	Asian	0%
	US	100%
Restaurant 4	Asian	20%
	US	80%
Restaurant 5	Asian	35%
	US	75%
Restaurant 6	Asian	NA
	US	NA
Restaurant 7	Asian	NA
	US	NA
Average Asian		23%
Average US		78%

Despite the seemingly high usage of US wholesalers to access goods in Fort Collins, Chinese restaurateurs are perceived as problematic business partners in three ways. First, according to one wholesaler,

American restaurants will have over 300 line items in a menu while a Chinese restaurant uses chicken, beef, rice and shrimp. The basic nature of their menu items insulates them from many of the trends that American restaurants deal with. This in turn leads to small orders with limited diversity. Also, the Chinese restaurants buy a great deal of disposable products because of their carry out and delivery business.

A second reason for American owned wholesaler's discontent with Chinese restaurateurs is that "the trust factor is nothing like Americans when doing business... Once rapport is built, you have a customer for life with most Americans... With the Chinese this is the exception and not the norm... Most Chinese will price shop you without loyalty". In order to test this, I asked customers the length of time they had been working with the wholesalers they contracted (Table 4.3). I found that twenty six percent of restaurateurs have maintained accounts with the same wholesaler for over nine years, suggesting that they are somewhat loyal to wholesalers they contract. Regardless, this perceived lack of loyalty has led to American owned wholesaler regulatory policies requiring high minimum orders (\$750/month) for Chinese restaurateurs compared to other restaurateurs (\$350/month). Finally, American owned wholesalers complain about the lack of storage available to Chinese restaurateurs, which necessitates small weekly orders.

Although Chinese wholesalers receive orders for a small portion of the total items used in a Chinese restaurant, they do not perceive Chinese restaurateurs in the same

negative light as American wholesalers. Chinese wholesalers find loyalty an inappropriate category for describing restaurateurs. Instead they believe that Chinese restaurateurs are “shrewd”.

**Table 4.3 Months in Business with Wholesaler**

Months in Business with wholesaler	#Restaurants	%
0-12	12/34	35.3
13-60	13/34	38.2
61-108	0/34	0
109-180	9/34	26.5

One Chinese wholesaler explained,

The word loyal is a problem in your question... Chinese people are loyal but they are also good with numbers... Chinese people really compare, but when a customer buys a product he or she may pay a few cents extra because of quality, service, fair quantity/price ratio, or even something like a good [delivery] driver who knows when to stop in, or helps unload. This can make a big difference.

From these descriptions and statistics we see that there is a difference between what is considered a good customer for Asian and American owned wholesalers. It appears that American wholesalers lodge complaints about Chinese restaurateurs based on something more than restaurateur’s actions. Chinese restaurateurs purchase the majority of their menu from US wholesalers. Furthermore, Chinese restaurateurs are in very long relationships with many wholesalers. These measurements, suggested by US owned wholesalers, contradict the reasoning behind company policies such as higher minimum

orders for Chinese restaurateurs. One wholesaler made an important point that sheds some light on the problems of perception listed above. She stated with frustration that “Chinese restaurants drive a hard bargain yet they account for less than one percent of our total business!”

### *Price, Quality, Service*

Three heavily discussed parameters for choosing to deal with one wholesaler over another are price, quality and service. For restaurateurs, price is the dollar amount paid for a commodity based on the quantity purchased weekly or committed to in a yearly contract. Furthermore, price includes delivery, therefore tying in the variable of service. Service includes having receptive sales representatives or secretaries, having delivery people that you can set your watch by, and handling returned items efficiently. Quality is related to the degree of freshness agreed upon when ordering perishable goods such as produce and meat. For instance, when a restaurateur and wholesalers sit down to fill out an order, the restaurateur must specify ‘first’ or ‘second’ quality. US owned wholesalers began carrying ‘second’ quality produce and meat as a way to attract Chinese restaurateurs based on a lower price. The sales call I observed resulted in transactions for ‘first’ quality produce. When judging the quality of meat, it is the size of the cut that matters most. Chicken breast meat traditionally comes in two size cuts. Many American restaurants use a standard 8oz fillet leaving a large gap in the market for other size cuts of chicken breast. Chinese restaurants will order the odd cuts and sizes of chicken and make them into a variety of dishes that don’t require specific sizes.

An attempt to understand the influence of price, quality and service on the choices made by restaurateurs revealed that price is the most influential attribute of choosing to work with a specific wholesaler (Table 4.4). According to respondents, price is the most important influence on whom to purchase goods from on a weekly basis (55%). Quality is ranked as the second most important choice-affecting variable (68%). Finally, service is consistently ranked the third most important attribute of choosing a wholesalers (56%).

**Table 4.4 Price, Quality, and Service**

	Ranked #1	Ranked #2	Ranked #3
Price	16/29 = 55%	4/29 = 14%	7/29 = 24%
Service	5/16 = 31%	2/16 = 13%	9/16 = 56%
Quality	3/19 = 16%	13/19 = 68%	3/19 = 16%

It is important to note that respondents do not universally agree on the prioritization of price, service and quality listed above. For instance, service is ranked as the most important influence when choosing wholesalers 31% of the time and price is ranked as third most important 24% of the time.

Reasons for leaving past wholesalers provide further evidence of the role quality, price and service play in the decision making process of restaurateurs. I received information on fourteen instances of switching wholesalers. Five informants switched wholesalers in the first year of their relations, three switched wholesalers in the second year and four switched wholesalers beyond the second year. In the last four cases, contracts ranged from three to ten years with a company before switching. There was one non-response to this question. Five out of fourteen restaurateurs left their previous

wholesaler because of price. One out of fourteen left the company because of quality. Five out of fourteen left their previous wholesalers because of service. Finally, three restaurateurs left their previous wholesalers for 'other' reasons that ranged from an argument with a sales representative to two cases where the American wholesaler stopped serving the Chinese restaurant business. At this node, where restaurateurs are engaged with wholesalers, I did not find evidence to support the importance of consumers in the decisions of restaurateurs. This puts into question the buyer-driven framework proposed by Gereffi et al. (1994) which suggests that consumer trends in western countries are the primary driving force that organizes the structure of GCCs. That consumers may not play an important role in certain nodes on a GCC highlights a potential shortcoming in previous GCC research. However, the small sample size in my study prevents me from making any conclusions.

Perception of the other in term of what makes a 'good customer' demonstrates how company policy can be shaped, in turn, affecting what choices are available to restaurateurs. Concurrently, price, quality and service play a role in how restaurateurs choose between wholesalers who offer similar commodities. In the next section I expand on these choice-shaping mechanisms and explore networks, and consumer/restaurateur interaction.

### *Networks of Family*

As mentioned earlier, networks of family friends and co-workers play a role in which wholesaler a restaurateur chooses. Family networks influence restaurateur choice in three ways. First, family members create demands for commodities that are not sold to

customers. The demand for non-menu foods can be observed after the lunch rush and before dinner rush when busy family members and restaurant employees make time to sit down for a meal. The dishes served at these lunches are not always found on the menu. Seafood and rice porridge is the lunch of choice among one restaurateur's family. At another restaurant, it is steamed vegetables in a light oil sauce that one finds at the dinner table. At yet another restaurant, the food for employees and family is derived straight from the menu. When a family member wants a favorite meal from home, it becomes the restaurateur's job to source the needed ingredients, some of which are not needed on the standard menu. This leads to increased demands placed on wholesalers. I cannot be sure of the degree to which preferences of family members affect the ordering habits of restaurateurs, but I witnessed numerous occasions where family members requested food that was not on the menu implying that alternative commodities had to be brought in to create the cuisine.

The second influence from family that affects the decision to use one wholesaler over another can be thought of as a type of social capital. Restaurateurs that inherit the family's restaurant or branch off to open a chain, often use the same wholesalers relied upon by their relatives who have existing networks of information and capital. Seven out of fifteen restaurateurs interviewed explained that family members influenced which wholesalers to choose. In one case, the son of the owner had grown up helping with wholesaler ordering because he knew English well. When the time came to open his own restaurant he had built rapport with several wholesalers. In another case, after opening his own restaurant and following his father's selection of wholesalers, one informant realized that one of his father's suppliers was not offering a good price on certain items.



The son then changed wholesalers, discontinued business with the supplier and convinced his father to do the same. Another restaurateur followed his sister's choice of wholesalers.

The third way that networks of family members influence one's choice of wholesalers is found in the information provided to future restaurant owners by extended family living in coastal enclaves. Two Chinese restaurateurs migrated to Fort Collins after growing up in family restaurant environments in New York City. These individuals did not know exactly whom they would use as a wholesaler when they arrived in Fort Collins, but their experiences predisposed them to the challenge of choosing from the world of available wholesalers (Table 4.5). From Figure 4.5 we see that finding wholesalers is not difficult.

**Table 4.5 Learning of Wholesalers**

They Contacted You	19/30
Friends and Family	7/30
Previous Owner	3/30
Newspaper	1/30

Two thirds of respondents state that the wholesalers contacted them either by phone (19) or through the newspaper (1). Family and friends make up the next largest flow of information with seven respondents. Last, and surprisingly, previous owners constitute an import means of suggesting which wholesalers to use. Because both American and Asian owned wholesalers aggressively seek out new business, the impetus is placed on the restaurateur to draw on past experiences when making important buying decisions.

### *Networks of Friends*

Eight social network inventories (SNI)<sup>v</sup> revealed potential influences on restaurateur choice. Four restaurateurs had friends either in other Fort Collins Chinese restaurants or with Denver wholesalers. As mentioned earlier, there are likely to be far more relationships between restaurateurs in Fort Collins and Denver, but people may have been hesitant to present these relations since the total number of restaurant owners is small. In conjunction with the SNI, I had informants check off the restaurant owners they knew from a complete list of Chinese restaurateurs in Fort Collins. This exercise, completed by nine informants, revealed many potential acquaintances but offered nothing about the substance of the relations.

**Table 4.6 Potential Relations**

Rest.#	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	08	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
#Acquaint.	2	4	2	2	1	0	2	5	1	3	2	1	2	5	3	4	2

The SNI revealed that one friendship exists between a Fort Collins restaurateur and a Denver wholesaler. This friendship has been built over ten years, beginning as a working relationship and growing to include social visits as well as advice on business. A second important relation suggested by the SNI demonstrates that the Fort Collins Chinese language school is promoting the flow of social as well as business information. On three separate occasions information regarding business was shown to flow through friendships maintained because of this organization. Beyond the non-descriptive category of 'business', I was unable to learn the extent of the information changing hands through the Chinese Language School. It is unclear whether these friendships affect the

flow of goods. The fact that these relations exist presents only the possibility of their use in acquiring goods.

The final friendship network revealed by the SNI would seem to affect the flow of goods. One older and established restaurateur maintains friendship with another new restaurant owners in Fort Collins. It is common for these men to spend time between lunch and dinner rushes or on days off sitting and discussing business. The topics are broad in scope and have included tips and advice on the wholesale industry. Furthermore, this restaurateur has taken his friends advice and ordered from different wholesalers to see how service, quality or price varied. These friends were brought together by a cook who had spent time working at the established restaurant in Fort Collins. The cook eventually joined in a partnership to open a restaurant with his sister and her husband shortly after they immigrated to Fort Collins. In this case, the cook became a link between his sister's husband and his previous boss.

### *Networks of Co-workers*

Networks of co-workers or ex-employees informed the decisions of Chinese restaurateurs on three separate occasions. Restaurateurs spoke often of ex-employees as a major source of information about other restaurateur's business practices. One of these cases was reaffirmed with the SNI and two were not. Two of these cases involved cooks who had worked at various Chinese restaurants in Fort Collins. As employees for their new bosses, they would offer advice on who was buying what from whom and how much they were paying. Two additional sources of information were waitresses who, on occasion, held jobs at more than one restaurant at a time. These waitresses would pass

information similar to that of the cooks mentioned above, talking about things such as how many egg rolls another restaurant sold (a commonly debated subject) or how many pounds of chicken a restaurant used in a week (another hot comparison topic)<sup>vi</sup>.

Conversations about other restaurateurs purchasing habits and which wholesalers had the best products were held rather infrequently, and at least on one occasion I brought the conversation about through my own questioning. I was unable to learn of specific examples where these conversations influenced the choices of restaurateur. However, these are certainly channels through which information is flowing, and certainly have the potential to affect the flow of goods.

### *Customer Input*

Customers play a pivotal role in how restaurateurs order from the variety of available wholesalers. The following section recognizes three examples of customer impact on restaurateur ordering. First, American holidays influence restaurateurs to consider alternative patterns of ordering, and in some cases menu expansion. Second, local preferences altered one restaurateur's menu to the point where he needed to shrink his list of wholesalers. Finally, the tastes of Fort Collins diners suggested a menu expansion for one restaurateur. The interface between customer and restaurateur occurs daily in Chinese restaurants. A common interaction at Chinese restaurants involves American customers calling out the restaurant owner's name to announce a friendly hello and to give advice on the quality of food that day.

The Valentine's Day holiday affected the choices of one restaurateur. I noted that Bill began planning three weeks ahead of the Valentine's Day holiday to put together a

special dinner menu that would meet the approval of his American customers. From experience, Bill knew that the restaurant would be busy with couples who had forgotten to make reservations at other places in town. Bill attempted to spur business by advertising in a number of regional newspapers that his restaurant would have a Valentine's Day special. This was quite a change in business practice for an owner who does not advertise beyond two yearly fundraisers. From Bill's own dining experiences in Fort Collins, he thought that a salmon dish would make a nice addition to his menu. Many Fort Collins restaurants serve fresh salmon fillets as an expensive or gourmet menu item.

Bill had never served salmon in his restaurant except for buying it at the local grocery store and cooking it for family and co-workers. In order to buy a large quantity of salmon, Bill had to find a seafood wholesaler that could deliver to his restaurant. Bill maintains accounts with two potential seafood wholesalers, the first, a seafood niche market wholesaler, and the second, a bulk grocery store. Bill chose the grocery store to supply the salmon because over the past five years he had become a friend with the meat and fish department employees. These individuals informed him of the correct days and times to purchase freshly delivered seafood. In this case, the volume of goods bought and sold by the grocery store allows them to act in the capacity of a wholesaler, providing that the consumer has the resources (such as money or storage) to buy in bulk.

If the special went over well, Bill would begin having salmon as a periodic special, and order regularly from a seafood wholesaler. He decided that he would prepare the fish steamed with soy sauce, sugar, ginger and whole black beans. Everyone employed at the restaurant, four American employees (including myself) and six Chinese

employees, favored the dish. This preparation of salmon represents a hybrid Chinese American cuisine. Salmon is found regularly on Fort Collins' restaurant menus, usually as a grilled dish. For instance, the local "Outback Steakhouse", itself an international chain, offers grilled salmon. Bill's preparation of salmon uses sauces and spices associated with Asian cuisine. According to Bill, by adding whole black bean to the recipe, the flavor of the food becomes close to something one might find in his hometown of Toishan. Here, Bill is negotiating between the flavors Fort Collins residents have learned to expect in restaurants and what he thinks his sending community can offer to Chinese cuisine. In this process, Bill located and utilized an alternative commodity chain. The process behind Bill's creation of cuisine demonstrates the variety of influences that can shape how one chooses in a commodity chain. Past experience, the opinions of co-workers and family, and the expectations of customers all come into play as Bill attempts to supply a special cuisine for Valentine's Day.

My second example of customers re-shaping a restaurateur's wholesaler usage comes from an interview. John had a Chinese restaurant in Fort Collins for ten years before deciding to move locations and open a new fine-dining Chinese restaurant. He felt that Fort Collins lacked a truly exquisite Chinese dining experience. Furthermore, John planned to make his restaurant stand out from the others by offering a wide variety of fresh seafood. Fresh seafood in landlocked Colorado stirs images of an expensive meal among local residents. Upon entering John's restaurant, one is stunned by the number and size of the fresh and saltwater fish tanks. For example, John had a large lobster tank with live lobsters from Seattle near the entrance, similar to arrangements I have seen at American seafood restaurants.

John gave me an example of how he has had to restructure ordering based on the demands of consumers.

When we first opened, we would serve a shrimp meal that would go from \$19.99 to \$24.99. The shrimp I was using at the time was about 5-6" in length. Ten pieces per pound. The shrimp I am using now is about half that size. The shrimp are about \$15.00 per pound. These big shrimp, I serve five or six pieces a meal. This is over a half-pound. When customers receive this shrimp they have two reactions. First, they want more and smaller shrimp: Twelve pieces of smaller shrimp rather than six pieces of jumbo shrimp. The second thing is that they think the price is too high. Since the town has so much competition and not very many excellent quality [restaurants] I thought my concept would work. We revised the menu. For example, giant prawns in curry sauce were \$19.95 and now it is \$12.95. Back to the time of my old restaurant. For me to drop price I have to use smaller ingredients.

From John, we learn that the Fort Collins public was not ready to afford a fine dining Chinese seafood restaurant. John claims that a lack of marketing and research led to the failed concept. A niche seafood wholesaler turned out to be the only place John could source the gourmet seafood that he originally served. John employed this wholesaler until he was forced to restructure his menu. Upon returning to old prices and quality of seafood, John could use any of the less expensive local distributors instead of relying on a specialty wholesaler. Here, the commodity chain for seafood into a Chinese restaurant is changing based on consumer trends.

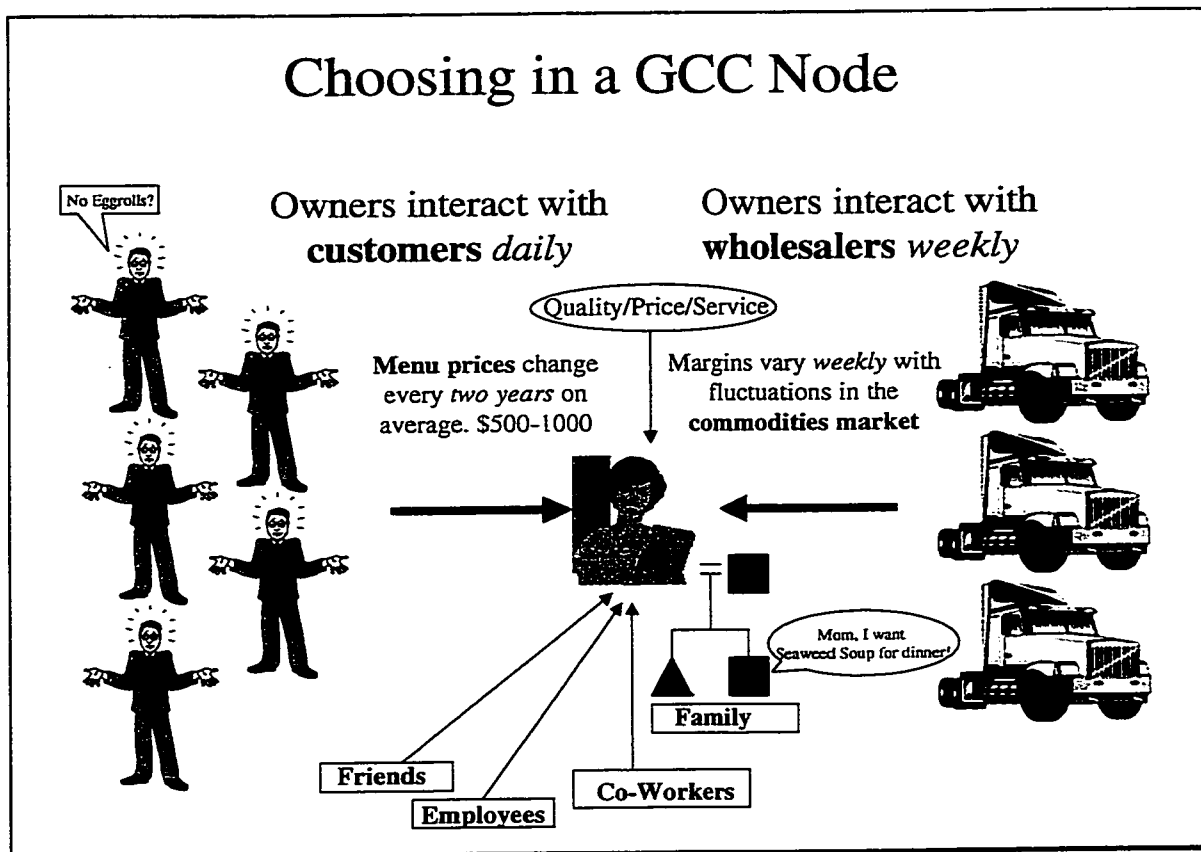
The final example concerns the influence of customers on the choices of restaurateurs involves the addition of Sesame Chicken to a menu. Bruce opened his restaurant in Fort Collins five years ago. He is continuing a business that has been in the family for a decade. The restaurant's previous location shaped the menu that Bruce brought with him to Fort Collins. Dishes were not as spicy as Bruce would have liked in the previous town. Also, a smaller variety of menu items were required to please consumers in this small town.

Bruce began receiving customer requests for Sesame Chicken soon after opening his restaurant in Fort Collins. Bruce sent out an employee to gather menus from other restaurants while he continued listening to his customers' requests. He realized that he was the only restaurateur in Fort Collins that did not offer Sesame Chicken. Through experimentation, Bruce found a spicy lemon garlic sauce that complimented the breaded chicken breast he used. According to Bruce, spicy sesame chicken has become a sensation among his customers. Bruce did not find an immediate need to source a new wholesaler to create the new dish, however, he now had a greater demand for products that he already stocked. Over time Bruce gained buying power due to an increased volume of ingredients needed to produce sesame chicken. This, combined with other menu changes, lead to an eventual switch in wholesalers. Bruce sampled the service and quality of a number of wholesalers by making small purchases. He eventually settled on an Asian wholesaler who carried chicken. Bruce had been working with this supplier for eight years. Past experience gained at his and his father's restaurant lead him to feel confident that this wholesaler would provide the best combination of price, quality and service.



## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Figure 5.1



### *Choosing in a GCC Node*

Ft. Collins residents currently support sixteen Chinese restaurants. Upon opening in 1971, the owners of the first Chinese restaurant were faced with a dearth of specialized Asian commodities when creating their menu. The availability of goods, or lack thereof, has been one choice shaping influence on Chinese restaurateurs (Figure 5.1). In the early 1970s a Denver-based Japanese wholesaler provided the only Asian commodities available in Colorado. According to one informant, “complications with this wholesaler occurred readily due to a lack of competition”. Ingredients such as Hoisin sauce and

Five-Spice Powder could only be acquired through one outlet. Specialized produce, spices and roots that couldn't be purchased were often grown in the yard from seeds sent over by relatives, a practice that persists today. Lack of competition among wholesalers and greater demand from Denver-based Asian businesses meant that a small Chinese restaurant in Fort Collins could do little to shape the outcome of restaurateur/wholesaler transactions. For Fort Collins' first Chinese restaurateurs, the lack of available produce, spices and canned goods made "Hong Kong Style Cuisine" such as Egg Fu Young, Chow Mein, Lo Mein and Chopsuey central menu items.

A simplified menu requiring few Chinese ingredients became an adaptation strategy that worked well for 1970s Fort Collins Chinese restaurant owners. One owner explained, "our menu consisted of seven or so items such as Chopsuey, and other varieties of minced and diced meals... our restaurant had twelve seats and no decorations". These same owners, thirty years later, manage modern mirrors of popularly perceived Chinese restaurants, complete with highly specialized menu items, mosaic dragon walkways, and customized roof tiles, all imported from China. The stories of Fort Collins' first Chinese restaurateurs parallel those of many enclave bound counterparts described by Kwong (1987) and Wong (1982). As one informant stated "we did not have a choice in jobs... opening a restaurant was the only option".

In the 1970s, American wholesalers considered Chinese restaurants a niche market in its infancy and not worth investigating. With time, the availability of Chinese ingredients began to improve, more restaurants opened, and both American and Asian owned wholesalers began to explore the Chinese restaurant market. Increasing numbers of wholesalers are entering the market today. According to one informant,

About fifteen years ago more options became available to Chinese restaurant owners. Local wholesalers began to offer more canned goods. At this time the Asian Markets in Denver were much cheaper. These markets are still cheaper on some products but the quality and service are not always great. Poor service and high wholesale prices marked the experiences of early Chinese restaurateurs in Ft. Collins. In the 1970s and early 80s, there were no American wholesalers attempting to service the Chinese ethnic food market.

The availability of Chinese specific commodities no longer limits restaurateur's choices. Today, nine Chinese owned and fifteen American owned wholesalers service the Ft. Collins Chinese restaurants. Twenty-two of these wholesalers are based in the Denver area, each delivering to Ft. Collins on a weekly or biweekly basis. Chinese restaurateurs may choose between wholesalers that are Asian or American in ownership offering a plethora of similar commodities.

Asian wholesalers are primarily of Chinese ancestry and have moved to the US from a variety of South East Asian countries including Vietnam and Cambodia. Large Asian wholesalers carry items such as woks, more than 15 types of soy sauce, paper products for delivery and carryout businesses and hundreds of dry, perishable and canned goods. Frequently, these wholesalers extend their businesses to include retail supermarkets for individuals without bulk buying power.

The most successful American wholesalers have hired Chinese purchasers and sales representatives. These people have been hired to work among the 100+ Asian restaurants in Denver and with large import firms located in California. American companies hire these individuals following the logic suggested by Jenkins (1997), that

business partners build trust and commitment more easily within ethnic boundaries.

One Chinese manager working for an American owned company admits that working for an American owner has made it difficult to get the pricing needed to compete with Denver based Asian owned wholesalers. In response to losing the price battle some American wholesalers attempt to capitalize on the Chinese restaurant market by offering higher standards of service. For instance, American sales representatives who service Fort Collins Chinese restaurants are provided with product lists that have been translated into Chinese characters. When language barriers exist between Chinese restaurateurs and local American salespersons, a speaker of the restaurateur's regional dialect is called in to make sales.

Adjusting to the influences outlined earlier in this thesis, American wholesalers have significantly altered their inventories to accommodate the demands of Chinese restaurant consumers. One small American broad-line wholesaler now offers 80 line items singled out on a "Chinese list" when five years ago they did not offer specialty Asian goods. These items are mostly canned and dry goods that are common to Asian restaurants such as rice, water chestnuts and soy sauce. Sales representatives carry the Chinese list on visits to Asian restaurants and work from it as they conduct their brief weekly visits. A second, large regional wholesaler has over 200 line items on their "Asian Product List".

To balance the success stories, one American wholesaler was forced to close its "Asian sector" after learning that it takes more than just co-ethnic sales representatives to succeed. The largest wholesaler in the region overlooked the need for an Asian purchaser who could get good pricing on commodities. They found that their Anglo purchasers

were paying far more than Asian competitors for similar products. Chinese restaurant businesses have clearly impacted the wholesaling of food in Colorado.

Pressures from consumers rank highest in shaping visual and culinary ethnic expressions found in Fort Collins Chinese restaurants. Gereffi et al. (1994) supports this assertion suggesting that agricultural commodity chains are buyer-driven. As I have shown, one restaurateur added Sesame Chicken to the menu because of numerous customer requests. After some months of deliberation and customer consultation, the owner had the menu re-written, which can cost between 500 to 1000 dollars depending on the menu painter one chooses. The cost of rewriting a menu demonstrates another of the many pressures informing the choices of Chinese restaurateurs.

The commodities market also impacts restaurateurs. While menu prices are fixed, commodity prices change weekly. American wholesalers believe that fluctuations in the market influence Chinese restaurateurs to shop around. Furthermore, some wholesalers claim that a stereotypical Chinese “lack of loyalty” leads to poor business relations. Chinese wholesalers, on the other hand, do not claim loyalty is a problem. After investigating this perceived problem, I found that Chinese restaurateurs maintain relations with an average of two wholesalers, both American and Asian depending on the product, picking the best combination of price, quality and service for that week. This adaptation strategy has the benefit of getting price while maintaining allegiances.

#### *Restaurateur Choice as Seen Through a Menu:*

As mentioned earlier, Chinese restaurants in Fort Collins offer many items that consumers anticipate. I reviewed the history of menu creation with one informant to



has been developed and mediated between the demands of consumers and the wishes of Chinese restaurateurs. I found that tracking the development of menus offers evidence of changing consumer tastes. Furthermore, this inquiry suggests that a relationship may exist between the movement of goods and the creation of urban ethnicity.

As you see highlighted in blue, 87 out of 115 or 76% of the owner's menu consists of items the public expects to find in a Chinese restaurant. These menu items are uniformly present on the menus of Fort Collins' sixteen Chinese restaurants. Furthermore these items were present in 1986 (highlighted in Pink). The temporal presence of these menu items suggests that the Fort Collins public has long embraced these dishes. In doing so they are unconsciously supporting the flow of these goods into Fort Collins.

Concurrently, owners project what is unique to his or her sending community. For example, this menu includes House specialties that highlight both the local flavors of the sending community and the chef's creativity. On this menu, we have items such as "Jade Scallops" and "Chicken Sautéed with Mango and Snow Peas" representing the owner's sending community of Toishan. The items highlighted in orange (representing 10% of the total menu) are considered unique to this city in Southern China according to the owner of this restaurant. Six out of eleven menu items unique to Toishan were added after 1995.

The temporal movement of menu items into Fort Collins Chinese restaurants suggests that the tastes of consumers are changing. At the same time, it is important to remember that some of these dishes are rarely ordered by Fort Collins diners and are only present to appease the demands of co-ethnic employees and family members. Many

dishes that originate in a restaurateur's sending community are prepared exclusively 'back stage' for family and employees. For instance, I rarely observed seaweed porridge being ordered by a customer, however, many types of fish soup are prepared for personal consumption. These items have not gone through the process of commoditization spoken of by Kopytoff (1986). The movements of menu items are brought to life when speaking with owners and looking at the menus of Fort Collins Chinese restaurants.

Following the suggestion of Harvey (1989), I continue this investigation by looking at actions associated with commodities. While Chow Meins and Lo Meins adorn almost all menus, customers purchase them less often than in years past. Today, Fort Collins restaurateurs believe that their diners identify most prominently with Sesame Chicken and Kung Pao Chicken. I found variations (mostly in sauce and spice) of these dishes on every menu. In order to serve these and other chicken dishes Chinese restaurateurs purchase about 400lbs of chicken meat per week. The sauces used to cook Sesame Chicken vary from none at all to a spicy lemon and garlic sauce. The dish may be garnished with plain white sesame seeds or a combination of black and white sesame seeds. Kung Pao Chicken is based in a heavier sauce easily distinguished by the hot peppers and peanuts. These dishes account for up to 30% of the orders made by Fort Collins diners. Variation in cuisine, and culinary themes that reoccur, point to changing histories of immigration and to consumers' influential collective palettes.

The process of menu creation in urban ethnic places demonstrates a complex interaction between consumers, wholesalers and restaurateurs. When enough customers walk into restaurants asking for a Chinese menu item that they believe every Chinese restaurant should offer, an owner will respond regardless of the restaurant's culinary



theme or the restaurateur's preferences. The egg roll and seaweed porridge will persist in Fort Collins, the first out of customer demand and the later because it is the owner's favorite dish from home. As consumption patterns change restaurateurs move items on and off of menus. We also see decor change. I have shown that these instances of agency, performed daily during interactions with customers and weekly during transactions with wholesalers, are informed and adjusted during interactions with consumers, wholesalers and personal networks of friends family and employees.

This project set out to understand the complexity residing within the nodes of a GCC. After isolating two nodes in GCC, the first between restaurateur and wholesaler and the second between restaurateur and consumer, I asked what influenced restaurateurs to choose one wholesaler over another. It was revealed that networks of co-workers, friends, employees and family influence restaurateur choice. Other important influences on restaurateur choice included the combination of quality price and service, the cost of menu writing, the perception of good and bad customers, and the number of wholesalers competing for a limited market.

The varied and complex influences on restaurateur, wholesaler and consumer choice presented in my data suggest that, when investigating GCCs, we shift some of the importance off of 'the State' or 'the Corporation' and onto individuals. Chinese cuisine in Fort Collins is changing because of the choices made by individuals. These choices, in turn shape the tastes of daily life in this small city.

## Endnotes

<sup>i</sup> A further discussion of the import role networks play in immigrant choice can be found in work on voluntary associations. See Chan and Cheung 1985, Portes and Sensenbrenner 1993, Portes 1995.

<sup>ii</sup> Literature on ethnic entrepreneurship substantiates this point. See for example Portes 1995, Wong and Ng 1998, Wong 1985 and Breton 1990.

<sup>iii</sup> Breton's definition of institutional completeness is as follows: "Institutional completeness would be at its extreme whenever the ethnic community could perform all the services required by its members. Members would never have to make use of native institutions for the satisfaction of any of their needs, such as education, work, food and clothing, medical care, or social assistance (Breton, 1964:194).

<sup>iv</sup> Using SPSS, I asked for cross-references between the ID# of restaurateurs, the categories of goods, and wholesaler ID#s. Wholesaler ID#s were designed to show Asian or American ownership. I then enumerated the contracts that existed for types of goods being purchased from types of wholesalers.

<sup>v</sup> See discussion in chapter 2

<sup>vi</sup> The quantity of egg rolls produced and sold is an important measuring device among Fort Collins restaurateurs because they are given away free with all lunch and some diner items. Hence, the number of egg rolls roughly equates to the number of people being served at a restaurant on a weekly basis.

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**Appendix A:****Interview Questions**

## Wholesaler Unstructured Interview 1

1. Name Personal and Company?
2. How old is this company?
3. How large of a territory does it serve?
4. Is this company part of a larger group of companies?
5. What are this company's primary... secondary products? Has this changed greatly over time?
6. What do you think has caused this change?
7. How long have you been dealing with the Chinese restaurants in Ft. Collins?
8. What products are popular with Chinese restaurants? Has this changed over time?
9. When did you first approach Chinese restaurants for business?
10. Who approaches these restaurants for their business?
11. Who else is in contact with these restaurants
12. Has the relationship between Chinese restaurants and your company changed? And has this relationship changed your company?

**Unstructured Interview Number 1: *Personal background and choices.***

1. Name?
2. When did you come to Ft. Collins? Where did you come from?
3. Why did you choose Ft. Collins?
4. Were there other places you thought of moving?
5. Did you come alone?
6. Was there a Chinese community in Ft. Collins when you arrived? If so, how big/small?
7. When you first arrived, where was the closest Chinese restaurant?
8. What choices did you have for work when you arrived?
9. Do you feel that these job choices were reflective of your education?
10. Did you have help opening this restaurant? How long did it take to get the restaurant opened?
11. Who were your customers originally? What did they want in a Chinese restaurant?
12. Have your customers changed over time? If so how?
13. What were the most difficult/ easy ingredients to acquire when you first opened?
14. How did you first learn of where to find these ingredients?
15. Is it still a problem to get some ingredients?
16. What are the names of all the Chinese food distributors? Can you think of any others?

**Questions for Sales Representatives:**

**Alternate Documentation:**

1. Name?
2. Company Name?
3. What brought you to this job?
4. What is your territory?
5. How many restaurants do you work with in Ft. Collins?
6. What products do you make available to these restaurants?
7. Has your company targeted the Asian food industry and if so, how?
8. Is there a special product base available to Chinese restaurants?
9. How often do you visit a single Chinese restaurant in a month? Does this vary?
10. Could you describe a typical visit to a Chinese restaurant?

**Questions for the Denver Asian Market:**

Additional Documentation:

Name:

Company:

1. How do Chinese restaurant owners outside of Denver find out about your business?
2. What kinds of restaurants are included in your target market?
3. What are the requirements for restaurant owners who would like to do business with your company?
4. Could you give me a brief history of your business, when it started, by whom, how it has grown, and the state of competition? When did you begin doing business in Ft. Collins?
5. What products do you offer Chinese restaurant owners that *are not* available through other wholesalers? What percent of your total business are these?
6. What products do you offer Chinese restaurant owners that *are* common to other wholesalers? What proportion of you total business are these?
7. Could you name some products that tend to sell only to Chinese restaurant owners?
8. How do you build relationships with customers?
9. Under what conditions are transactions with a customer terminated?
10. Do you have a sales list of products specific to Chinese restaurants?
11. How do you access special Chinese ingredients?
12. Do you know any of the Chinese restaurant owners in Ft. Collins? How did you meet?

13. Do you believe that Chinese Restaurant Owners are loyal customers? Could you give me an example?

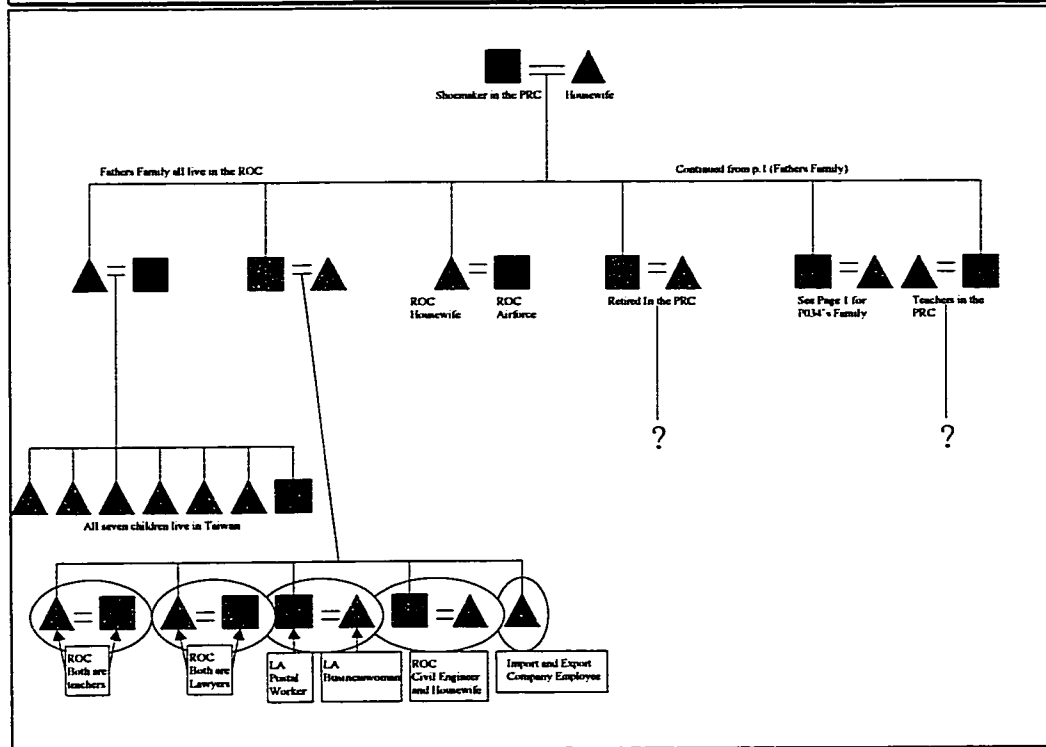
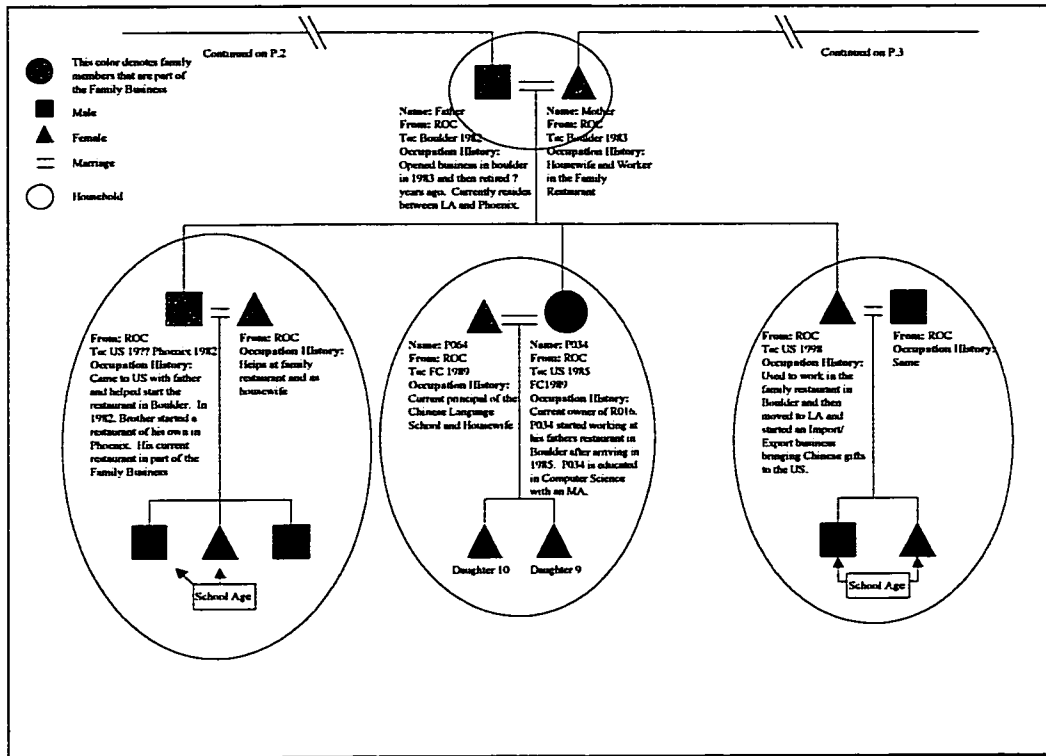
**Questions for Chinese Entrepreneurs 1:**

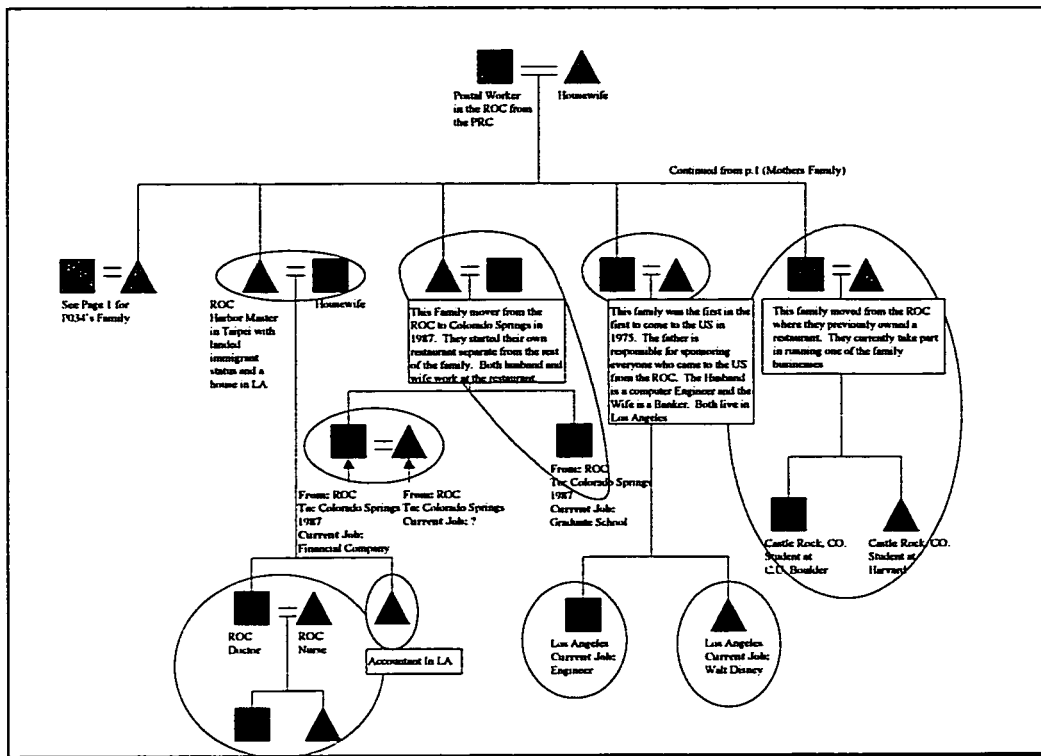
1. Could you give me a brief description of your entrepreneurial experiences here in Ft. Collins?
2. What brought you to Ft. Collins, and from where?
3. What choices did you have for work when you first arrived in Ft. Collins?
4. What factors influenced these choices?
5. Who were your major influences as you established yourself in Ft. Collins?
6. What are the limiting factors when starting a Chinese run business in Ft. Collins? Do you feel these factors are unique to being a Chinese businessperson?
7. Are there times when it is better to be Chinese when doing business in Ft. Collins?
8. What types of information are available to Chinese businesspeople getting started in this area? Where does this information come from?
9. Have efforts been made to encourage the expansion of Chinese businesses in Ft. Collins? Who has been central to this expansion?
10. How has the availability of Chinese goods changed over time since you first started business?
11. Do you know anyone at the Asian Markets in Denver that might be able to help me with these types of questions?





Genealogy 2





Appendix C:

Structured Interview 1:

<p>4. What other person do you know this person?</p> <p>1. Mother, Father, etc. 2. Friend, Good Friend 3. Husband, Business Partner 4. School</p>	<p>5. How close do you feel to this person?</p> <p>1. a family member 2. a business relation 3. a social acquaintance 4. other (please name)</p>	<p>6. Where does this person live?</p>	<p>7. Please list the person you know of from the list on page 1. Circle the name of each person listed.</p> <p>8. Cut out the name list for use with each question. Slide the name list along as you fill in the information for each person listed.</p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____	12. _____

P.1

Cut along the dotted line

<p>9. How long have you known this person?</p>	<p>9. How close do you feel to this person?</p> <p>Please circle the appropriate number.</p>	<p>6. Where does this person live?</p> <p>1. Ft. Collins, Loveland, Denver 2. ROC, PRC, Vietnam, etc.</p>	<p>7. How close do you feel to this person in the family?</p>
1. _____	1. close   2 3 4 5 distant	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. close   2 3 4 5 distant	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. close   2 3 4 5 distant	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. close   2 3 4 5 distant	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. close   2 3 4 5 distant	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. close   2 3 4 5 distant	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. close   2 3 4 5 distant	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. close   2 3 4 5 distant	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. close   2 3 4 5 distant	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. close   2 3 4 5 distant	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. close   2 3 4 5 distant	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. close   2 3 4 5 distant	12. _____	12. _____

P.2

<p><b>1. How often do you call them?</b> a. monthly</p>	<p><b>2. How often do you call them?</b> (Please check one box) a. social relations b. academic c. spiritual d. financial e. family f. health g. business advice h. other (please name)</p>	<p><b>3. How often do you call them?</b> a. you call regularly if they know you were having problems? b. ask you to give up time if they need help? c. ask you to lend them money to help cover bills if they had a problem?</p>	<p><b>4. How often do you call them?</b> a. weekly b. monthly c. yearly d. daily</p> <p>Please place a check on the line of those who apply.</p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____	12. _____

P.3

<p><b>1. How often do you call them?</b> a. monthly b. yearly c. weekly d. daily</p>	<p><b>2. How often do you call them?</b> (Please check one box) a. social relations b. academic c. spiritual d. financial e. family f. health g. business advice h. other (please name)</p>	<p><b>3. How often do you call them?</b> a. you call regularly if they know you were having problems? b. ask you to give up time if they need help? c. ask you to lend them money to cover bills?</p>	<p><b>4. How often do you call them?</b> a. weekly b. monthly c. yearly d. daily</p> <p>Please place a check on the line of those who apply.</p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____	12. _____

P.4

16. How did you react to the...  
 a. calm and rational  
 b. tense but controlled  
 c. heated and emotional

17. How did you react to the...  
 M= male  
 F= female

18. How did you react to the...  
 a. calm and rational  
 b. tense but controlled  
 c. heated and emotional

19. How did you react to the...  
 Please circle the appropriate response

- |           |           |           |  |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|--|
| 1. _____  | 1. _____  | 1. _____  | 1. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 2. _____  | 2. _____  | 2. _____  | 2. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 3. _____  | 3. _____  | 3. _____  | 3. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 4. _____  | 4. _____  | 4. _____  | 4. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 5. _____  | 5. _____  | 5. _____  | 5. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 6. _____  | 6. _____  | 6. _____  | 6. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 7. _____  | 7. _____  | 7. _____  | 7. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 8. _____  | 8. _____  | 8. _____  | 8. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 9. _____  | 9. _____  | 9. _____  | 9. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u>  |
| 10. _____ | 10. _____ | 10. _____ | 10. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u> |
| 11. _____ | 11. _____ | 11. _____ | 11. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u> |
| 12. _____ | 12. _____ | 12. _____ | 12. <u>very</u>   2   3   4   5 <u>not satisfied</u> |

20. How often do you think...  
 Please circle the appropriate response

1. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
2. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
3. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
4. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
5. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
6. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
7. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
8. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
9. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
10. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
11. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied
12. very | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 not satisfied

**Please check the boxes of people who know each other**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												

Please do not write in this area

P.7

**Please check the box(es) of people present when you see this person**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1												
2												
3												
4												
5												
6												
7												
8												
9												
10												
11												
12												

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Structured Interview 2:

<p>1. Please list the 12 products you use most often with each person. List only one time only, please.</p>	<p>2. Please list the 12 products you use most often with each person. List only one time only, please.</p>	<p>3. Please list the 12 products you use most often with each person. List only one time only, please.</p>	<p>4. Please list the 12 products you use most often with each person. List only one time only, please.</p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____	12. _____

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Cut along the dotted line

<p>5. What country is your salesperson from?</p>	<p>6. Why are you doing business with this company?</p>	<p>7. How do you rate the company's service quality?</p>	<p>8. How do you rate the company's product quality?</p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. High 1 2 3 4 5 Low	12. _____

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<p><b>11. With printing of our total mail do you buy from the following?</b></p> <p><b>C-10% of total</b> <b>Estimate</b></p>	<p><b>12. What companies did you do business with (discuss)?</b></p>	<p><b>13. How did you learn about this company?</b></p> <p><b>A- Newspaper (please name)</b> <b>B- They contacted you</b> <b>C- Phone Book</b> <b>D- Friend (please name)</b> <b>E- Other (please name)</b></p>	<p><b>14. Which of the following is your favorite?</b></p> <p><b>A- Color Postcard</b> <b>B- Golden Dragon</b> <b>C- Golden Dragon</b> <b>D- King of Kings</b> <b>E- Oriental History</b> <b>F- Pink Yoke Club</b> <b>G- Pink Yoke Club</b> <b>H- Royal China</b> <b>I- Royal China</b> <b>J- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>K- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>L- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>M- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>N- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>O- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>P- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>Q- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>R- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>S- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>T- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>U- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>V- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>W- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>X- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>Y- Chinese Postcard</b> <b>Z- Chinese Postcard</b></p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____	12. _____

<p><b>12. What wholesaler did you buy from before this one?</b></p>	<p><b>13. How long were you with this company before switching? (please answer this question using your response in question 12)</b></p>	<p><b>14. Why did you switch to this company? (Please answer this question using your response in question 12)</b></p> <p><b>(Choose one of the following)</b></p> <p><b>a. Price</b> <b>b. Quality</b> <b>c. Service</b> <b>d. Other</b></p>
1. _____	1. _____	1. _____
2. _____	2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____	5. _____
6. _____	6. _____	6. _____
7. _____	7. _____	7. _____
8. _____	8. _____	8. _____
9. _____	9. _____	9. _____
10. _____	10. _____	10. _____
11. _____	11. _____	11. _____
12. _____	12. _____	12. _____



**Appendix D:****Interview schedule**

#	LID#	IID#	Receptive	Intro Date	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	Interview 4	Interview 5
1	R001	P001	Y	05/27/99	06/03/99	07/21/99	08/05/99		
2	R002	P002, P001	Y	06/00/99	07/09/99				
3	R003	P003, P004	Y	06/01/99	06/02/99	06/16/99	07/20/99	08/03/99	08/10/99
4	R004	P052	Y	06/14/99	06/23/99	08/11/99			
5	R005	P010, P040	N	06/03/99	06/16/99	07/20/99	08/06/99		
6	R006	P053, P042, P021	Y	06/03/99	07/02/99				
7	R007	P013	Y	06/02/99	06/03/99				
8	R008	P020	Y	06/03/99	06/16/99	07/20/99			
9	R009	N/A	N/A	N/A					
10	R010	P033	Y	06/09/99	07/15/99				
11	R011	P017	Y	06/03/99	06/10/99	07/29/99	08/11/99		
12	R012	P026, P027	N						
13	R013	P012	N	06/02/99					
14	R014	P019	Y	06/03/99	06/17/99	07/22/99	08/12/99		
15	R015	P037	N	06/14/99					
16	R016	P034	Y	06/09/99	06/11/99	08/03/99	08/10/99		
17	R017	P038, P039	N	06/17/99	06/18/99	07/21/99	08/12/99		
18	R031	P018, P036	Y	06/03/99	06/08/99	06/09/99	08/11/99		
19	R018	P028	Y	06/00/99	06/15/99				
20	R020	P011	Y	05/29/99					
21	W001	P021	Y	06/03/99	06/08/99	06/30/99			
22	W002	P022	N	06/00/99	06/14/99				
23	W003	P051, P045	Y	06/00/99	06/21/99	07/24/99			
24	W007	P047	Y	06/29/99	07/10/99				
25	W008								
26	W009	P049	N	06/29/99					
27	W010	P048	Y	06/29/99	07/07/99				
28	W011	P046, P059	Y	07/03/99	07/03/99				
29	W012	P056	Y	07/15/99	07/15/99	08/10/99			

**Appendix E: Ethics****1999 Study of Chinese Restaurant Owners and Produce Wholesalers****In Ft. Collins, Colorado****Statement of Ethics: Robert B. Snyder**

I will be studying the transactions that take place as produce changes hands between Chinese wholesalers and retailers in Ft. Collins, Co. I am a Colorado resident, receiving my BA at Colorado State University in Ft. Collins. I have inquired at Colorado State University as to my need for ethical clearance from Ft. Collins and/ or State of Colorado Governments to carry out research in the United States, and found that none is needed as I am a resident.

The methods used during this study will be participant observation, structured, and unstructured interviews. These methods require the establishment of a strong rapport between the informant and the researcher. Observations will only be recorded when they apply to the research question I have posed. I will be observing wholesalers and retailers, partaking in informal and formal conversation. I will also observe co-workers that influence the decisions made between wholesalers and retailers. On first meeting potential informants, I will clearly state my purpose. I will explain that "I am a graduate student from the University of Calgary, and I am here hoping to research how Chinese restaurants acquire the produce needed for Chinese dishes".

With my objectives known, I will assure informants that their responses will be held confidentially. All information from informants will be kept confidential, first, through the use of a coding system in my notes, and second, by mixing generalizable information between different informants so that no one can be singled out. There are a total of eight Chinese restaurants and four produce wholesalers in Ft. Collins. I will need to enter their workplaces in an agreeable manner if I am to achieve a realistic representation of the community. For this reason, I do not intend to immediately approach informants with consent forms. I will have consent forms available if informants feel more comfortable using them. Furthermore, informants will maintain the right to withdraw information at any time.

The proposed research will pose no physical or psychological risks to participants. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time. I will follow these ethical provisions and carry out conscientious, quality research.

Thank you for your consideration,

Robert B. Snyder

**1999 Study of Chinese Restaurant Owners and Produce Wholesalers****In Ft. Collins, Colorado****Information for Participants**

You have been asked to participate in a study of the Chinese restaurant owners and produce wholesaler transactions in the Ft. Collins, Co. area. If you agree to participate, you will be asked questions about your choices, and the factors influencing these choices, in doing business with your partners. You have the right to refuse to answer part or all of any question, and you may withdraw from the interview at any time. Your name and any information, which could be used to identify you, will be held in confidence. Data collected will be used in the preparation of a graduate thesis at the University of Calgary in Canada.

**Agreement to Participate in this Study**

I, \_\_\_\_\_ understand the nature of my involvement in the 1999 study of Chinese restaurant owners and produce wholesalers in Ft. Collins, Colorado. I voluntarily consent to participate in this study. I may withdraw my consent at any time.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Investigator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date