

PRODUCER AGENCY IN DECISIONS TO HIRE FOREIGN LABOUR IN THE SASKATCHEWAN APIARY SECTOR

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Abstract

Labour-intensive agricultural industries in Canada, and most recently in Saskatchewan, have become reliant on a foreign labour source as a means of ensuring survival within the structure of the global agricultural economy as domestic sources have declined or become too expensive. This study considers Anthony Giddens' structuration theory in the examination of the hiring practices of producers operating within the apiary sector in Saskatchewan (1984). I argue that the inability of Saskatchewan apiarists to attract and retain an adequately sized and reliable labour force has caused producers to seek temporary foreign workers. In-depth interviews with producers were conducted in order to determine their reasons for shifting their recruiting and retention efforts to include foreign labour. Qualitative analysis of these interview data suggests that Saskatchewan producers have concluded that their only option is to take advantage of the opportunity to source labour from outside of the Canadian market.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

The economies and social landscape of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba as the three Prairie Provinces in Canada have long been defined by their reliance on agricultural production and the concomitant rural lifestyle of their population. This has been changing significantly however, in recent years, as the majority of the agricultural industry has become mechanized. The mechanization of the agricultural industry has not been able to reduce labour needs in all sectors, leaving some continually reliant on labour to ensure production. In Saskatchewan, labour-intensive agricultural operations, such as the apiary sector, continue to depend on human labour and as a group, are struggling to both attract and retain a reliable work force. At the same time, structural changes in the provincial economy of Saskatchewan have brought diversity over time, to the point where oil and gas production and potash mining have become increasingly important industries for the province. The diversification of Saskatchewan's economy has increased the labour needs in these other industries. Some of these industries are able to offer employees benefits, such as higher pay rates and permanent employment status, which agriculture is not able to match.

In an effort to ensure agricultural producers are able to fill their labour force needs adequately, the Government of Canada has implemented several programs that allow employers to legally hire foreign workers on a seasonal basis. Two of the better-known and well-subscribed programs are the Skilled Worker's Program and the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). The SAWP, in particular, is a mature program,

and has been operating in Canada since Ontario first introduced the program in 1966 as a temporary means to alleviate labour shortages experienced by agricultural producers (Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2006). The program has persisted and has expanded into most other provinces. Ontario remains the primary beneficiary, with about 80% of the share of workers arriving nationally under the SAWP, but other provinces, including Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, are increasingly employing more workers each season (Preibisch, 2007).

The question to be answered by this research is how does the structure of the agricultural industry, using Giddens' structuration theory, affect the ability of producers in Saskatchewan to attract and retain an adequately sized labour force? By situating the producers in a middle position, with power over workers but having less power in their relationship with international agribusiness, the employment of a qualitative method is necessary to both understand the social structure of the agricultural system *and* the individual experiences of producers. This research evaluates how producers make decisions regarding labour and their operations in the context of their position within the existing power structure of modern global agriculture. It considers the perspective of producers regarding their agency within the structure of the global agricultural economy, and how their hiring decisions are enabled or constrained within this structure. Further, this research seeks to understand whether temporary foreign labourers have become a structural necessity within the agrarian economical structure, as posited by Basok (2002).

1.1 Agricultural Labour and the Structure of the Canadian Economy

Canadian industries are experiencing significant labour shortages that hinder the economy and limit the ability of the government and private sector to provide services and commodities to the general public (Martin, Abella & Kuptsch, 2006). One solution to this dilemma has been to seek labour from outside the country's borders, and this has emerged as part of Canada's national policy. Canadian permanent immigration laws now stress the need for skilled employees, and particularly for those skills in high demand within the country. Moreover, the government has also sought to alleviate these shortages through programs encouraging the temporary migration of foreign workers, many of them directed at the agricultural sector.

Although the SAWP was meant to be a temporary program with benefits to both producer and labour force, this has not necessarily been the case. Basok (2002) argues that by not discontinuing the SAWP, as planned, it has allowed producers in Ontario to regard foreign labour as a *structural necessity*. She explains that producers have become so dependent on having access to foreign labour, primarily because this enables lower labour costs than the employment of domestic workers, that they are not willing to seek labour within the domestic market. Several studies based in Ontario (Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2004, 2006; Preibisch, 2007) and one in Manitoba (Mysyk, 2000), have found that workers are poorly treated. Workers are said to be housed in crowded accommodations, are isolated from the local community and are often the victims of workplace health and safety hazards. Despite the seeming consensus in the

literature that the SAWP has structural problems that make abuse of the migrant labour force possible, it is not clear that this is universally the case. Almost all of these studies have focused on the Ontario agricultural industry and do not consider the position of producers in relation to the hiring of foreign workers (with the exception of Prebisch [2007] who included producers as research participants).

Over the past several decades Canada has continued to be an important exporter of agricultural products within the global economy. Consequently, Canadian producers have attempted to remain competitive with global agribusiness (Prebisch, 2007), in order to maintain their share of increasingly tight agricultural markets. Producers can exercise only limited control over the costs of most inputs, including pesticides, transportation costs and machinery (Basok, 2002; Satzewich, 1991), all of which tend to have fixed rates. They have greater discretion over labour costs. As long as producers are paying workers the minimum wage as regulated by the Canadian government they are free to seek less expensive sources of labour (Bauder, 2006). In particular, and given increasing competitiveness (and costs) for domestic sources of labour, will producers operating in labour-intensive agriculture decide to hire foreign labour if they perceive no other option in order to remain competitive within the structure of the current global economy?

In this thesis, I argue that the inability of Saskatchewan apiarists to attract and retain an adequately sized and reliable labour force has caused producers to seek temporary foreign workers. Without foreign workers, producers may need to downsize and

ultimately discontinue their operations. The thesis further asserts that apiarists are mid-level actors exhibiting limited agency in the light of global structuring parameters beyond their control. This thesis provides an understanding of the position of apiarists within the structure of the global agricultural economy and the shift to the hiring of a foreign labour force through the concept of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984). This thesis will answer a couple of related questions:

- 1) How do agricultural producers exercise their human agency in the decision to hire a foreign labour source?
- 2) Have foreign workers, in fact, become a structural necessity of Saskatchewan labour-intensive agriculture?

The qualitative research approach taken in this study contributes to an understanding of the motivations, perspectives and position of the producer in respect to the hiring of a foreign labour force within the structure of the global agricultural economy.

The study area for this thesis is the province of Saskatchewan, Canada. Saskatchewan is one of the three Canadian Prairie Provinces, with Alberta to the west and Manitoba to the east (Figure 1.1). Saskatchewan's population in 2006 was 968,157 people with a population density of 1.6 people per square kilometer (Statistics Canada, 2006). The province's population declined by 1.1% between 2001 and 2006 (Ibid, 2006); however, the subsequent years have seen a net population growth. Saskatchewan's population is also aging, a trend common across most of Canada. The aging population means

that fewer people will be replacing those retiring, primarily those who fall within the “baby boom” generation, born between 1946 and 1966 (Ibid, 2006). Combined with a decreasing number of children from farm families choosing to enter the agricultural industry means that Saskatchewan’s agricultural producers are having a difficult time passing on their operations once they are ready to retire (Jaffe, 2003).

The current agricultural population of Saskatchewan comprises 11.5% of the total population of the province, the largest share of the total population by province in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008). Nevertheless, this is a substantial decline from the share in earlier decades. Saskatchewan’s agricultural economy emerged during the early twentieth century when European settlers were encouraged to open up the Canadian prairies, with agriculture as the centre of the economy (Waiser, 2005). As the Province of Saskatchewan developed following its creation in 1905, it produced food for distribution in central Canada. This system of food production and distribution allowed other industries to grow in the more densely populated and urbanized regions of Canada (Warnock, 2003).

In 2005, the net average farm operator income was \$15,204 from the farm operation and \$27,595 from off-farm sources (Saskatchewan Agriculture, 2008). Research based in Ontario on foreign farm labour has focused on region-specific forms of agriculture that are not reflective of operations in other jurisdictions (Bauder, 2006; Preibisch, 2007). Although there is concentration of operations in some areas of Saskatchewan, for the most part they remain fairly dispersed. The apiary industry is the most concentrated,

being primarily located in the east-central portion of the province (Saskatchewan Agriculture, 2008).

The Province of Saskatchewan, in 2006, accounted for the third highest number of agricultural operations among Canadian provinces, with 44,329 operations (Statistics Canada, 2006). The total number of farms in the province is declining with a loss of 12.4% of farms for a total of 6,269 fewer farms. At the same time farms are becoming much larger, as there was only a 1% decrease in total farm area, even with a 12.4% decline (Statistics Canada, 2006). Agriculture continues to be an important industry for Saskatchewan's economy. Although some sectors have been able to mechanize, the sectors that have not remain increasingly dependent on labour.

Saskatchewan is an ideal study area for this research because:

- 1) Agriculture is a key driver of the province's economy;
- 2) The province's agricultural producers have only recently shifted to hiring a foreign labour source; and,
- 3) The shift of Saskatchewan's agricultural producers to the hiring of a foreign labour force is under-studied relative to other provinces, especially Ontario.

This study focuses on the agency (decisions) of actors (producers) through the concept of structuration theory (Giddens, 1984) regarding labour in the restructuring of the agricultural operations in order to compete in the new global agricultural economy. It is important to mention that this thesis considers only the apiary sector, a labour intensive sector of agricultural production in Saskatchewan, for which the role of labour cannot, or has not been, easily substituted by mechanization. Within this sector, although the production process may be family owned and operated, the family is not the core source of labour. I will use the term producer rather than grower as the apiary sector (and other labour-intensive sectors) produces honey rather than growing a product.

1.2 Thesis Overview

The analysis of the position of apiarists in Saskatchewan and their decisions to hire foreign labourers is separated into five chapters. Chapter two examines the existing research on the use of foreign labour in Canada situating this work within the shifting global economy and the structure of the agricultural industry. Chapter three reviews the

research methods, used in this study, and defines the study population. Chapter four explores the results of the research while the final chapter presents the study's conclusions, and suggests further directions for research in this area.

Chapter 2. Labour Supply and the Shifting Structure of Agriculture in the Global Economy

The agricultural industry in Canada has seen significant changes to its commodity supply chain, particularly since Canada's expansion into the Prairie Provinces for food production. The Canadian agricultural industry was initially established in order to supply food to both domestic markets and European markets (Lawrence, Knutilla & Gray, 2001). Although Saskatchewan's agricultural industry has always been focused on generating profits rather than on subsistence farming, it has shifted from being directly under the control of producers themselves to what Warnock (1987, 2003) considers industrial agriculture. Industrial agriculture is more than simply agribusiness but has moved into the realm of industrial relations, and the Fordist model of work.

Troughton (2002) considers the increased efficiency of the agricultural industry to require three criteria: "...increased scale of enterprise, increased specialization and increased capital intensification. Together these three characteristics mean that the industrialized farm more closely mimics the industrial firm," (p. 133). Agribusiness thus can be defined as "... the incorporation of agriculture into sectors which deal with both the provision of farm inputs and the marketing and processing of agricultural produce" (Ilbery 1985, p. 179).

Agriculture is an important part of the social landscape of Saskatchewan.

Saskatchewan emerged as a province in 1905 with the expectation that early settlers

would develop the land, farm it and ensure surplus food production could supply Eastern Canadian and European markets (Diaz & Stirling, 2003; Waiser, 2005). The land that became Saskatchewan came under the ownership of the Canadian government in 1870, following which settlers were encouraged into agricultural development (Mackenzie, 2002; Waiser, 2005). While many small family farms emerged, in what was considered the “wheat belt”, over the twentieth century, Saskatchewan’s agriculture slowly shifted towards the industrial model of the agricultural system (Warnock, 2004).

The family farm has decreased in numbers, but the size of farms has increased (refer to Table 1). At the time that European settlers first embarked on transforming the Prairie region into a primarily agricultural landscape, the proportion of the population involved in agriculture (11.5%) was much higher (Statistics Canada, 2006). Farm families were fully engaged in the day-to-day operations of the farm, in which all members of the family were a productive entity of the farm labour force (Jaffe, 2003).

Although Saskatchewan itself is a small agricultural producer within the global economy, it exports nearly 80% of its agricultural products, making access to the global economy essential to the continuation of the industry itself (Kubik & Moore, 2003). In 1946, agriculture accounted for 29% of employment within the Canadian economy, while by the early 1980s, agriculture had declined significantly, accounting for only 4.4% of employment (Veeman & Veeman, 1984). Apiary production has followed the same

trend, evidenced again in 2009, when there were 200 fewer beekeepers but 5,600 more managed hives (Statistics Canada, 2009).

Table 2.1: Number of Farms and Size for Saskatchewan, 1986-2006.

	1986	1991	1996	2001	2006
Total number of farms, Saskatchewan	63, 431	60, 840	56, 995	50, 598	44, 329
Average area/farm in hectares	419	442	466	519	587

Source: Statistics Canada, Census of Agriculture, 2006

Growth in farm size has also led to more investment in machinery and overall greater productivity (Statistics Canada, 2006). Although much larger farm operations tend to have greater amounts of debt, they are also financially more viable as they have less difficulty dealing with the fluctuating nature of agricultural economics, in which it is difficult for producers to plan (Lawrence et. al, 2001).

For most types of farming, such as grain farming, the shift to larger and more productive farms occurred with the advent of mechanization, in which labour needs did not increase and often actually decreased as machines replaced people (Diaz & Stirling, 2003). A few agricultural industries have not become highly mechanized and therefore have not replaced their labour needs. The same trend of growth as other types of agriculture, with larger and fewer operations, has occurred, while increases in output have also created increases in labour needs (Mysyk, 2000).

The apiary sector of Saskatchewan agriculture is a labour-intensive sector that has shifted to the hiring of foreign labour in recent years. The apiary sector is considered to require a skilled labour force, therefore opening potential foreign worker programs to allow apiculturists to hire under the Skilled Workers Program. The skill is considered to be the knowledge and ability to work with bees as it is an integral part of the work required by apiarists. Saskatchewan's apiary sector is important to Canada's overall honey production and pollination needs, and accounts for 23% of honey production throughout the country (Saskatchewan Agriculture, 2009). The pollination provided by Canadian beekeepers is important to other agricultural sectors including canola, blueberries and tree fruits with the total value of pollination in Canada being \$1.3 to \$1.7 billion annually (Canadian Honey Council, online). Without bee pollination, other agricultural sectors would be less productive. In 2008, the Canadian honey industry was valued overall at \$105.2 million with the Prairie provinces accounting for over 80% of production (Statistics Canada, 2009). Production in Saskatchewan increased from 7,514 metric tonnes in 2008 to 7,713 metric tonnes in 2009 (Statistics Canada, 2009). In 2007, Saskatchewan apiarists had the highest rate of production per hive in Canada (Canadian Honey Council, 2009). The industry is geographically clustered to the North-East of Saskatoon, as seen in Figure 1.2.

Locations of Commercial Beekeepers in Saskatchewan

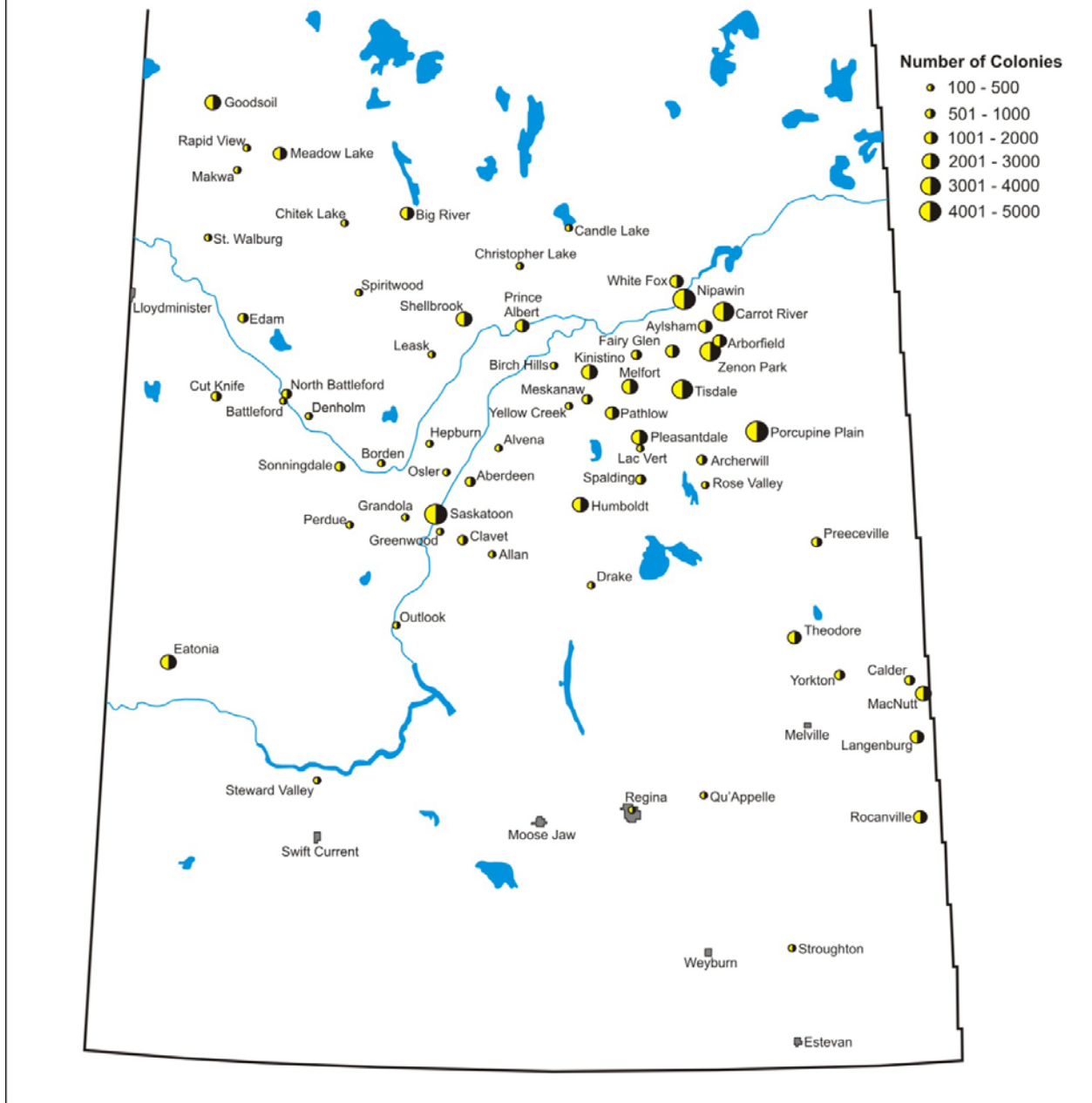


Figure 2.1: Distribution of Commercial Beekeepers in Saskatchewan. Adapted from Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization, 2004. <http://www.agriculture.gov.sk.ca/Default.aspx?DN=5a4ae1a0-7830-46d1-84ad-7604d581fbe8>. Accessed online November 25 2009

The Canadian Honey Council (2009) identifies several areas of concern for the apiary industry alone that include issues with high production costs (competition), the loss of bees due to pest issues and the difficulty of wintering bees. Saskatchewan has harsh winters, but since the closure of the American border due to pest issues affecting American bees in 1987, producers shifted to wintering bees themselves, increasing colony losses (Saskatchewan Agriculture, 2010). American honey producers have been experiencing their own production issues, particularly the decline of colony numbers due to Colony Collapse Disorder (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2009).

Other issues affecting honey production in Canada include the increasing competition of new producing countries. China and Argentina have become important exporters of honey in recent years, and as such have lowered the commodity price of honey on the global market, making it more difficult for Canadian producers to remain competitive (Ibid, 2009). In the past, China has experienced problems with antibiotic residues, pulling China out of the global market and raising honey prices due to a global shortage. As China rectifies the problems, honey prices will again fluctuate (Saskatchewan Agriculture, 2010). Saskatchewan apiarists have to manage year-to-year price changes as they trade primarily within the export market. The input of tariffs and production issues in some countries has produced fluctuation in profitability of global honey trade.

2.1 Structuration Theory and Producer Agency

Within the structure of the agricultural industry itself, producers are not able to easily make decisions regarding the operation of the farm. Sociologists and human geographers have applied the concept of structuration theory in their research, in which the structure of society limits the agency, or choice, an individual or group has in making decisions (Cloke, 1991; Loyal, 2001; Grabb, 2007). Giddens theorizes that within society, there exists social structures, in which actors (people) enable their agency as a means of making decisions. Structuration theory posits that actors are able to work within social structures, by which they can exercise agency among various constraints (Giddens, 1984; Grabb, 2007). Structures within the agricultural industry place constraints on producer's agency, restricting the range of decisions that can be made.

Structuration theory is useful to conceptualize the interactions of agri-business, producers and workers within the framework of the global agrarian economy. Giddens (1982; 1984) argues there are several elements that encompass structuration theory that are useful in understanding the interactions of people within a social institution. The social institution in this case is the global economy, which includes the labour market. People are referred to as 'actors' within this theory, and their ability to make choices or decisions (and the limits thereon) is their 'agency'. Therefore, within the structure of the agricultural industry, multi-national agri-business, producers and workers are the actors. Actors therefore employ their agency in their decisions in a way that generally they believe is going to have the greatest positive impact for them.

Giddens emphasizes the importance of acknowledging that actors are informed and knowledgeable, and they are able to defend their reasoning regarding the decisions or choices they make. As such, Giddens (1984) explains “Human agents or actors ... have, as an inherent aspect of what they do, the capacity to understand what they do while they do it” (p.xxii).

In regards to the agricultural industry and the shift to a foreign source of labour, structuration theory can be applied in order to understand how each actor or collection of actors enables their agency. By focusing on structuration theory in order to understand why producers have shifted to a foreign labour source, we are able to analyze how producers make decisions within the structure of the agricultural system, including what may influence or restrain producer’s agency. Previous research on foreign workers in Canada has often limited acknowledgement of the agency of workers as capable humans, but rather positioned them as victims who are incapable of enacting their own agency. On the contrary, foreign workers enact their agency in several regards, including deciding to migrate to a foreign country as well as deciding to return subsequent years. There are constraints within the economy (e.g., work in foreign countries might be higher paying) that influence the agency of workers but this does not mean that workers themselves are neither capable nor knowledgeable agents. Giddens (1982) explains that within structuration theory,

... it is important to insist that action analysis must be complemented by institutional analysis in social theory; we have to acknowledge that the knowledgeability/capability of human agents is always *bounded*, or constrained by elements of the institutional contexts in which their action takes place. But it is a major error to treat the structural features of social systems as coterminous with such bounds. ... The structural properties of social systems should rather be seen

as both constraining and enabling, in respect of human action; and the traditional dualism between action and structure has to be reinterpreted as a duality, in which structure is both the medium and outcome of knowledgeably sustained social practices (page 30, emphasis original).

Giddens's theory of structuration is not one to be applied to a study, but one rather that is able conceptualize and inform on a phenomenon (Dyck & Kearns, 2006). In particular, for geographical analysis. Dyck & Kearns (2006, p.86) explain that:

Interest in the complex relationship between human agency and the constraints of structure brings common ground to the domain of human geography inquiry; while this problematic is taken up variously through different theoretical perspectives, Giddens' highly focused explication provides a strong foundational statement from which to examine processes of enablement and constraint.

Structuration theory posits that there exists a duality in society, in which society or human actors have full and complete control over the other, but rather coexist (Pot, 2000). This duality is central to Giddens' concept that there is no primary focus or cause of actions, but rather that when considered together, there are constraining and enabling elements (Dragos, 2006). Thus, actors can also take action, which in turn can have both intended and unintended consequences (Haugaard, 1997).

There are several actors within the structure of the agricultural industry in relation to the hiring of temporary foreign workers. The actors include agribusiness, agricultural producers, temporary foreign workers, government officials and policy makers, the population of the local community as well as the consumer. Agribusiness has economic power over the producer and workers, but is limited by the agency of the workers, consumer, the local community and government/policy makers. Agricultural producers have power over the workers as employers but are also constrained by the agency of

the same actors limiting agribusiness. Temporary foreign workers are constrained by the structure of the agricultural industry and the global economy, but they also have agency in regards to their decision of where they work, as well as whether they remain with the same employer and/or to return each season. Government officials and policy makers have power over agribusiness and producers directly, and workers and consumers indirectly, through the ability to impose various policies and rules that affect how business operates, such as the development of a temporary foreign worker program itself. Government/policy makers are also constrained by the agency of the producers who will advocate for changes in some policies to improve their own position.

The position of the consumer is also important. Consumers make decisions regarding their purchases which will ultimately affect the demand for consumer goods within the market. If consumers decide not to purchase honey because it is not produced organically, producers will need to shift their practices to accommodate the consumer. The same consideration can be made based on the price of agricultural goods. If consumers prefer lower prices in the store, and China is able to produce honey at that lower price, then Canadian producers will need to become competitive. The consumer is limited by what they producer can provide, but also has agency in the choices made regarding their purchases.

In relation to the structural features of the agricultural system, producers are confined to decisions they feel will best support their business practices. The course of action producers take might not have the outcome they anticipate. The same can be applied

to the agency of workers. If a worker decides to migrate to Canada for a summer under a foreign worker program, they may anticipate certain outcomes such as making more money and financially positioning themselves and their families in a better place.

Unintended or unforeseen consequences of that decision may be that they actually place their families in a poorer situation, as the conditions of work in Canada are not as good as they had expected. This set of consequences, focused on the negative environment of agricultural operations, has been the subject of much of the previous research on seasonal migrant labour for agriculture in Ontario (Basok, 2002, 2004; Bauder 2006). However, while such research may provide insight into some aspects of agribusiness, a more complete interpretation may require considering other approaches, including structuration theory. Structuration theory allows us to better understand how human actors work within a social system, such as the agricultural industry, and the constraints and enabling factors associated within (Pot, 2000). This allows for a potentially broader view of the system itself and the associated celebrations and problems. Furthermore, structuration theory allows for the incorporation of all human actors into analysis, including the State, the producer and corporations, actors who are often excluded in consideration of labour migration processes (Morawska, 2001) but whose decisions nonetheless are crucial.

For the most part, the agricultural producer in Canada today is in a middle position, with control over the agricultural labour force and operation, but in turn, controlled by multinational agri-business corporations. As Shields (1992) explains, “[c]learly, farmers occupy an intermediate class location between labour and agribusiness. But this middle

position does not mean they are 'independent' commodity producers," (p.254). The full shift to an industrial agricultural market has left producers moving along a continuum in which they are shifting towards a new role, more closely reflect a managerial position within the international commercial farm spread across regions and countries. Warnock (2003) describes the position of producers as "[t]he new 'super farmer' who is seen as 'the piece worker' for the food corporations, the 'new share cropper' operating a 'station on the food production assembly line'..." (p. 307). Warnock continues to explain the position into which producers have been placed thus: "Vertical integration has removed most decision-making power. ... Even in this situation of corporate dominance over agricultural production, however, today's farmer still assumes all the risk" (2003, p.307).

Within industrial agriculture, international agribusiness ultimately controls the market, as they can shift from one country to another, whereas the producer continues to operate a place-based business that does not have a yearly guarantee of profit, or a long-term guarantee of viability (Knuttila, 2003). Agribusiness will simply shift to a market with lower input costs (labour, technology, land costs) if they cannot receive the profit expected from the current location of production, leaving producers in a precarious position between worker and employer. With limited decision-making abilities, ties to the land and community where production is located, and capital invested in the operation, producers are not mobile in their ability to shift employment or production (Kubik & Moore, 2003). The result is a limitation to the agency of producers. In other words, their agency is restricted by structural factors that are international in scope and largely beyond their capacity to adjust.

Bauder (2006) explains that there is a large, alternative source of labour that is mobile, therefore providing producers with access to a cheap labour source and regulating the labour market. Mobility is an important aspect to the structure of the agricultural industry. Previous research regarding the migration of foreign labour to Canada's farms have set the structure of the industry as a dichotomy, in which there are the producers and the labourers (Mysyk, 2000; Bauder 2001; Basok 2002, 2004). Within this simple dichotomy, the producer exploits the labourer as a productive commodity. The structure of the agricultural industry actually has *three* elements, which include the labourer, the producer as well as agribusiness. This thesis is the first study to critically engage with the simplistic dichotomy used in earlier studies which mostly ignored the relationship between structure and agency, which constrains the decision-making of producers.

2.2 Reserves of Labour: Managing Labour Shortages

Bauder (2006) considers that there exists a "reserve army of labour" that can be used on a seasonal basis to ensure a successful harvest. The labour intensive agricultural industry, and the apiary sector specifically, falls neatly into this category, as producers require a substantial number of workers, for long hours, but only on a seasonal basis. Guest workers end up being an important component of this reserve labour source as citizen workers, who might generally fall into this category, seek work in other, better paying industries (Bolaria, 1992). Within the domestic labour market, there is also a small percentage of people who are not employable for various reasons, but the expectation that there will be zero unemployment is not realistic. Agricultural producers

have been criticized for employing foreign workers, when Canada has a higher unemployment rate, but studies show that producers cannot attract or retain domestic labour, even though unemployment exists (Coulombe, 2006).

Canadian workers have increasingly sought work in other industries, particularly as agricultural wages have declined, making it difficult for employers to both attract and retain domestic employees (Satzewich, 1991). A similar shift has been experienced in other industries in developed countries, which have shifted to being primarily dependent on immigrant labour, available at lower costs, rather than domestic employees (Sharma, 2001). Employers will shift to a new labour source if there are opportunities to employ skilled or able people at prices (including benefits and other associated labour costs) that are either equal with or lower than domestic employees (Martin & Ruhs, 2008).

As Greenhill & Aceytuno (2000, p.11) point out:

With respect to the program's [SAWP] impact on domestic low-income labour, initiatives that encourage the hiring of Canadians (particularly students and EI [Employment Insurance] recipients) in the agricultural industry have been implemented in the past as an alternative to bringing in workers from abroad. In general, these programs have not been successful as evidenced by high turnover and quit rates, which can result in losses for producers during key periods of the harvest season.

Labour is a critical part of the system, as “[m]any seasonal jobs reflect the biological production process in agriculture, and importing seasonal workers who return home when the season ends helps farmers to minimize their production costs” (Martin, Abella & Kuptusch, 2006, p. 109).

Guest worker programs have been in effect in various industrialized countries since the early 20th century, primarily as a means to temporarily supply employers with persons during times of serious labour shortages (Greenhill & Aceytuno, 2000; Satzewich, 1991). Arguments prevail that without foreign labourers filling agricultural positions, the labour-intensive agricultural industries would not be able to remain in operation. As Greenhill & Aceytuno (2000, p.4) explain: “Farmers in the horticultural industry, for instance, affirm that without access to foreign labour, production would decrease substantially making it impossible to remain in business.” Guest worker programs solve the temporary issue of labour shortages, but overall have proven to have induced long standing changes to the structure of the agricultural industry, labour relations and the social fabric of the host country (Basok, 2003; Bauder, 2006). They bring up issues of citizenship rights, worker rights and migrant rights in an international context.

Bauder (2006) contends that this movement of people actually regulates labour markets, rather than the traditional view that the labour markets regulate migration. He asserts that the common understanding is that people are drawn to a destination to work due to the labour market needs and therefore attraction to available jobs. The alternative perspective, as Bauder argues, is that the availability of workers, being the reserve army of labour, ensures that the costs to employ labour remain low. The willingness and ability of workers to migrate for employment in developed countries suggests that migration is regulating the labour market. Producer agency is therefore constrained by the mobility of labour within the global economic structure.

Bauder's assertion that migration is regulating the labour market also considers that migrant workers are exercising their agency as actors within the structure of the global economy. By considering the agency not only of producers, but also of workers, it becomes clear that there is a mutually beneficial agreement through which producers have access to labour and the labour has access to better employment. Migrant workers are not tied to the producer nor to Canada's agricultural industry, but rather they make a choice to come to Canada and to return each subsequent year. Basok (2002) is correct in asserting that workers are limited in their ability to change employers once they have arrived in Canada for the season, for example, but the initial decision to migrate to Canada for employment is a more flexible exercise of worker agency than they are able to enact once in Canada.

Temporary foreign workers have become vulnerable to low wages, poor working conditions and lowered health and safety standards while on the job as they are unable to demand better conditions for fear of losing their employment and being deported back to their home country (Martin, 1999). Similarly, Basok (2002) contends that workers in Canada, even though they arrive under a guest worker program, are vulnerable for fear that they will be fired and sent back to their home country if they disappoint their employer. She considers guest workers in Canada's agricultural sector as "un-free" labour, and portrays foreign labourers as powerless rather than informed actors exercising their agency regarding their own decision to work in Canada each successive season. The hiring of foreign labour affects the agency of producers/employers when making hiring decisions within the confines of their

industry's structure. Access to foreign labour, especially when facing labour shortages, provides producers/employers with a greater level of agency.

This section has focused on how the Canadian agricultural system has been restructured as a result of globalization. Producers continue to manage or own the land they operate and have control over the farm labour force. Producers are now a part of a hierarchy in which they are also constrained by the expectations and demands of international agribusiness corporations which control the industry. The family farm, as a result, has been forced to restructure its operation and adapt to the changing industry. This thesis considers how honey producers have adapted to the changing agricultural industry and how the restructuring of the family apiary farm in Saskatchewan and of the global agricultural industry itself, have influenced the agricultural producer's agency in deciding to seek labour from foreign sources.

2.3 Foreign Labour as the Inexpensive Alternative in Canada: Issues of Citizenship and Migrant Rights

Making it possible for migrants to work legally in the host country's labour force is important to ensuring the rights of workers are maintained rather than violated. Guest worker programs ensure, to some degree, that workers are treated fairly and do not become vulnerable to poor working conditions that are often experienced when workers fall out of government regulated protection (Martin et al., 2006). Regardless of the presence of a guest worker program, labour migrants will continue to cross borders in

order to find gainful employment (Martin, 2000). Although Ontario has been the predominant host of migrant workers in Canadian agriculture thus far, other provinces are quickly beginning to demand labour through the SAWP and other programs, in increasing numbers, therefore making the SAWP much more important throughout Canada.

Although generally intended as a means to providing necessary employment to workers in developing countries, while filling seasonal labour needs in Canada, problems arise when producers view and use foreign labour primarily as a cheap labour force, as has been found in Ontario's horticultural industry (Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2006). The same criticisms of the SAWP are not necessarily true in other provinces. The extent of the SAWP's use and history in that province is much larger and longer than other places in Canada, and is not necessarily representative of the situation in Canada as a whole.

Other provinces have taken a different approach to hiring under the SAWP.

Saskatchewan in particular has only allowed producers to access the SAWP since 2003, and other guest worker programs in the time since. This delay may have allowed other provinces to begin their programs from a more positive footing, having learned from the past mistakes in other provinces. Producers are able to learn and be informed of issues with the use of the SAWP and are able to better exercise their agency.

Basok (2002) refers to the reliance of Ontario producers on foreign labour as a structural necessity of labour-intensive agricultural industries, which have become

dependent on a reliable, dependable and readily available foreign labour force. Bauder (2006, p.166) explains that there is a narrative based on the economy, by which

[t]he term “safety valve” apparently does not refer to a small number of workers, but to a large labour reserve army, which provides flexible, powerless, and temporary workers. A common thread that weaves through the economy narrative is that offshore workers fill the void created by Canadians, who left the seasonal agricultural sector for work in more stable industries.

Bauder further explains that other narratives set migrant labourers in problematic positions within the Canadian social landscape, including as people desirable to do work Canadians refuse to do while at the same time being undesirable permanent citizens. Although these points are important and provide a focus on the position of migrant labourers in Ontario’s agricultural industry, it should not be considered the standard for all of Canada. Positioning workers as victims of the agricultural system denies the agency of the migrant workers themselves, while suggesting that producers have a greater level of agency as well.

Temporary migrant workers remain citizens of their home countries, rather than having the right to become Canadian citizens, even though some workers spend upwards of eight months in Canada (Mysyk, 2000). The movement of people globally has brought up the debate on citizenship, and, how through the new global mobility of workers, responsibility for the rights of citizens has become uncertain. International borders continue to exist and limit citizenship, even though the mobility of people crossing international borders has increased alongside globalization. Baines & Sharma (2006) refer to temporary foreign workers as “non-immigrant” migrant workers, explaining that “[i]n the context of globalization, and the increased movement of people and capital

across borders, citizenship continues to be used to define who is entitled to rights and protections and who is excluded,” (p. 204). They further stipulate that migrant workers are the contemporary form of indentured labour, in that their temporary, and thus, non-belonging status to Canada ensure their access to rights as citizens within the country they work are limited and even non-existent.

Temporary workers often face issues of exclusion, isolation and a lack of access in relation to their rights and needs within the local community. Studies in Ontario and Manitoba (Basok, 2002, 2004; Bauder, 2006; Mysyk, 2000) identify these three characteristics as being problematic in ensuring the well-being of workers while in Canada. Workers can essentially remain excluded as citizens due to their inability to access citizenship rights in a global context, in which citizenship becomes flexible and inclusive (Nyamnjoh, 2007). Citizenship is no longer simply tied to the concept of the nation-state, but rather to the shifting mobility of populations willing to migrate globally, such that new concepts of citizenship and the associated benefits are emerging or “mutating” the traditional concepts of citizenship (Ong, 2006). Due to the limitations in their ability to permanently reside within Canadian boundaries, a question to be considered is: “To whom do we owe obligations and rights?” (Bakan & Stasiulis, 1997, p. 29).

The limits to the rights of the workers as non-citizens under the SAWP include the inability to change employment or employer (including within the same type of employment) and the right to migrate within Canadian borders (Basok, 2002). The

costs associated with including migrant workers with full access as Canadian citizens increases the costs to the government in granting individual citizenship rights (Bakan & Stasiulis, 2005). By limiting the rights of workers, the Canadian government is able to ensure that the labour market has access to workers beyond the Canadian border while at the same time limiting the government's responsibility in regards to their citizenship rights (Preibisch, 2007).

In summary, the incorporation of foreign farm labour has become an important aspect in restructuring agricultural operations within Canada. Producers have often relied on international labour in order to access a cheaper labour source that is both dependable and hard working. Canadian immigration policy has encouraged the employment of non-citizens within the country without the opportunity to become citizens, nor access all of the benefits of Canadian citizens. Considering the current knowledge regarding the employment of foreign labour on Canadian farms, this research addresses what factors and decisions have led to the incorporation of foreign labour on farms in Saskatchewan through the use of structuration theory as a concept to guide understanding.

The perspective of the agricultural labourer is an important component to fully understanding guest worker programs and their impacts; however, so is the perspective of the producer. Previous research has used a dichotomy of producer/labourer as a means of understanding how foreign farm labourers are being 'exploited' on Canadian farms (Basok, 2002; Bauder 2001, 2006). The producer side of that dichotomy remains little understood. In fact, it is a false dichotomy to begin with, as it neglects important

structural forces in the agricultural economy that constrain agency by both producers and labourers, such as international agribusiness. This false dichotomy neglects that there is a more complex hierarchy that stretches beyond the producer. It is also important to consider all perspectives to gain a more complete knowledge of the agricultural industry and the need for a temporary labour program.

The research in Ontario attempts to generalize the extent and impact of the SAWP within Canada, but fails to consider the implementation of the SAWP or other temporary foreign worker programs in any other provinces. The nature of the agriculture practiced in Canada can be quite different from one region to another, therefore making generalizations about the country as a whole problematic. Considering these limitations and the need to expand the knowledge of the temporary migration of foreign workers, research needs to be done outside of Ontario. The present research regarding temporary farm labourers in Saskatchewan will provide insight into the level of agency and the decision-making process of producers in regards to the employment of foreign farm labour. It will contribute to the growing research considering the changes occurring within Canadian agriculture within a global economy.

Chapter 3. Methodology

A qualitative approach was employed for data collection, with primary evidence obtained through semi-structured face-to-face interviews with Saskatchewan apiarists. Qualitative data collection and analysis permits a more in depth, yet a flexible interview format than quantitative methods provide. A qualitative approach enables the researcher to understand a phenomenon, but does not necessarily require them to test an hypothesis (Bradburn 2004). In keeping with this, the goal of this research was not to test a hypothesis concerning producers' decision making, but was to gain insight into this process. Using qualitative methods, this research is open to generating a better understanding of the perspectives of participants that may otherwise have been overlooked without the flexibility of the semi-structured interviews (Werngraf, 2001).

It can be argued that the use of a qualitative research approach, rather than a quantitative one, allows for a more humanized approach to research (Winchester, 2000). In human geography, the qualitative approach is important so as to better understand a phenomenon (Bradburn, 2004). For the purposes of this study, understanding the perspectives and experiences of producers themselves is important to understanding why producers are unable to attract and retain an adequately sized and reliable labour force and further, their decisions to hire a foreign labour force.

Winchester (2000, p. 5, emphasis original) contends that, "Qualitative researchers are concerned either with **social structures** or with individual experiences," and this

determines their choice of research questions. However, it can be argued that for some research, it is critical to understand both social structures *and* individual experiences. In the case of the present study, in order to fully understand the structure of the agricultural industry, and how social agents (producers) fit within it, it is important to understand their perspective based on their individual experiences. Winchester (2000, p.5) further elaborates that:

Qualitative geographers balance a fine line between the examination of structures and processes on the one hand and of individuals and their experiences on the other. ... An overemphasis on structures and processes rather than individuals could lead to a dehumanised human geography. On the other hand, individuals do not have all-powerful free will and ability, which would enable them to overcome the powerful structures embedded in society, such as capitalism, patriarchy, or racism.

An important question posed by Sayer (1992) that addresses the purpose of using a qualitative approach for this research in particular is “What is it about the structures which produce the effects at issue?” (p. 95 as cited in Winchester, 2000, p. 5). In order to adequately answer this question, in-depth interviews that focus on the thoughts and experiences of the producers are essential in order to ensure that they are able to express their opinions. Sayer’s question allows this research to employ a qualitative research method in a way that evaluates how the structures embedded in the agricultural system and its operation on a global economic scale affect the position and therefore perspective of agricultural producers at the local scale in Saskatchewan.

Within the present study, the structure concerned is the agricultural economy and the agency that producers have as actors working within the global capitalist system. In

order to understand the perspective of the producers and their concerns regarding labour needs, this research focused on determining how producers came to hire labour from outside of Canada. Crang (2002) explains “[q]ualitative approaches have enabled the study of, and emphasized the importance of, seeing economic activity as a set of lived practices, assumptions and codes of behavior,” (p., 648). Human geographers do not only focus on understanding how structures are created but also how they are challenged or maintained by the actors operating within the system and reproducing the structured features of it (Winchester, 2000).

The data were collected from August 2007 to February 2008. The majority of interviews occurred in January 2008, as producers preferred to speak in their downtime, during the winter months. Research concerning the SAWP in Ontario has primarily employed the use of semi-structured interviews (Bauder, 2006; Preibisch, 2007). As this research method has been employed for the studies focused on Ontario, and for the flexibility within the format, this research opted to use the same method of interviewing. The researcher is able to ensure the discussion remains on topic, but is also able to navigate to other important points not covered by the interview guide (Dunn, 2000).

3.1 Study Participants

The interview subjects were 14 apiarists. Twelve producers have hired foreign labour in the past, while two intended to hire foreign labour during the 2008 season.

Interviewing apiarists who are interested in the program allows for a better

understanding of not only the reasons that producers participate in a guest worker program now, but also why they first became interested in it. This is important to understanding the decision farmers originally made to hire foreign labour, as well as which constraints they have faced when doing so. It gives us an understanding of their perspectives on structural constraints on their agency within the agricultural system and how they exercise their agency accordingly.

Selection of participants was based on several criteria. All participants operate within Saskatchewan as an apiarist, although some participants do operate across provincial boundaries with Manitoba and Alberta. The apiarists interviewed hired foreign labour either through their own recruitment or through a guest worker program.

As a matter of privacy, the specific location or areas where producers are located cannot be revealed since there is a risk of identifying participating producers. Although there are a number of producers hiring foreign labour in Saskatchewan, there are some producers in rural areas who are the only producers actively hiring a foreign labour source. As the pool of potential participants is small, especially in some rural areas, identification of specific communities cannot be made so as to ensure the anonymity of study participants.

3.2 Sampling

Research sampling is an important aspect of ensuring that a knowledgeable and experienced population is chosen to participate. In qualitative sampling, it is important to ensure that the population has an intimate perspective on the research subject, and thus is often more purposeful (Valentine, 1997). Sampling seeks to collect a pool of participants based on the expectations of the research, which is seeking to gain in-depth information about a subject. Paton (2002, emphasis original, p.46) explains, “[t]he logic and power of purposeful sampling derive from the emphasis on in-depth understanding. This leads to selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth”.

A snowball sampling technique was used as a means to develop rapport with people in the apiary sector and to make further contacts. Snowball sampling is often used in qualitative research when the researcher does not have enough knowledge of who would be potential participants. Another obstacle that this form of sampling can overcome is a lack of trust on the part of participants. It is used when participants would be hesitant to participate if they suspect the research may negatively affect them in some way. As recruitment of participants began, it became very clear that apiarists in Saskatchewan are aware of the media and activist criticisms regarding the hiring of foreign labour and therefore may have been hesitant to participate in research that could portray them negatively. This suggested the need for a study to consider the perspective of the producer and their perspective on the hiring of foreign labour. Important studies in Canada (Bauder, 2004, 2006; Basok 2002) have focused on the

perspective of workers, the media and the host community, with the exception of Preibisch (2007) who included producers in her consideration of the use of SAWP in Ontario greenhouses.

The purpose of choosing a sample that is not random is to ensure that the interviewer is able to speak with participants regarding their own personal experiences (Valentine, 1997). By focusing the task of sampling on a specific set of criteria, the researcher is able to select participants that will provide a wealth of information required for the research rather than for general inquiry purposes, often provided by quantitative techniques (Paton, 2002). For this study, purposeful sampling using a snowball technique was most appropriate due to the lack of the researcher's knowledge of Saskatchewan's apiary sector, but also as a means to understand the position and agency of producers, particularly amid negative criticism regarding their hiring practices.

Approximately 50-60% of the apiary producers hiring temporary foreign workers were interviewed for this research. It is difficult to state the precise number, as some producers prefer not to highlight their decision to hire foreign labour, due to the negative attention they fear may focus on their hiring practices. A total of 18 apiary producers were approached to participate, which was all of the producers identified through the snowball technique as hiring foreign labour. Saturation was reached in the final couple of group interviews, as the discussion did not bring new information or ideas but reinforced the statements of other producers.

Some apiarists hire under both the SAWP and Skilled Workers programs concurrently while some used one or the other exclusively. The main differences between the two programs is that under the SAWP the Mexican government takes care of the recruiting of workers, while under the Skilled Workers Program, producers are responsible for recruitment themselves.

Workers hired under the SAWP are hired based on specific criteria designed to ensure they are in need of work and will be able to fulfill their contracts in Canada. Such criteria include being underemployed in their home country, living in a poverty-stricken area and having an agricultural background (Preibisch, 2007). The Skilled Workers Program, on the other hand, requires that producers find potential employees in another country and submit a request to hire the individuals to HRSDC. Workers are expected to be skilled in the type of agriculture they are hired for, thus only employers in some industries have access to this program, such as in apiculture.

Producers hiring under the SAWP had recruitment out-sourced to the foreign government, being the Mexican government, as the SAWP operates only with a bi-lateral agreement between Mexico and Saskatchewan. The method of recruitment for this study differs from research in Ontario. Studies conducted in Ontario have focused on producers recruiting workers only under the SAWP, particularly as in some communities, such as Leamington, producers hire thousands of workers each season only under the SAWP (Bauder, 2006; Basok, 2002; Preibisch, 2007). As this research indicates, apiarists in Saskatchewan have employed a variety of recruitment techniques,

including direct recruitment, recruitment through acquaintances and recruitment through a guest worker program.

3.3 Semi-structured Interviews for In-Depth Analysis

Interviews were conducted face-to-face with producers in a semi-structured format. The interview structure followed an interview guide (Appendix 1: Interview Guide) approved by the Behavioral Research Ethics Board of the University of Saskatchewan. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format to ensure flexibility of the interview. Qualitative researchers using interviews have the choice of using semi-structured or unstructured interviews. Unstructured interviews depend on the participant to direct the discussion, such as with the collection of an oral history (Dunn, 2000). Further, Dunn (2000, p. 80) describes the importance of research in which the participant is both informing and informed through the process, as

Research interviews are used ... when a method is required that shows respect for and empowers those people who provide the data. In an interview the informant's view of the world should be valued and treated with respect. The interview may also give the informant cause to reflect on their experiences and the opportunity to find out more about the research project than if they were simply being observed or if they were completing a questionnaire.

The purpose of this research was to better understand the decisions of producers in regards to the hiring of a foreign labour force, therefore requiring that producers have the opportunity to direct the interviews to a degree. It would have been inappropriate for the researcher to assume the experiences of producers, therefore making it important

that producers have some flexibility in explaining their position and the reasons for their decision to hire a foreign source of labour.

Questions were divided into several sections, including demographics (for comparison between operations), the foreign labour force, domestic labour issues and the nature of the agricultural industry itself. The questions asked in the first part of the interview guide were developed to provide demographic and other background information on the producer's operation such as farm size, types of agricultural products and changes to the operation in the past 20 years. The second set of questions examined the general farm labour force and the extent of labour shortages the operation has been dealing with. Following the information on the domestic labour force, the third set of questions was developed to understand the views of producers and their decision to move to a foreign source of labour. This section further sought an understanding of the experiences of producers in hiring foreign labour. A third set of questions was aimed at gathering information on the level of work provided by the producer themselves and their families, including work off farms. During the interview process however, these questions proved to be irrelevant as all producers only work on the farm and had no alternative incomes.

Interviews were done both on an individual basis and in a group setting. The initial recruitment of producers set out to conduct interviews at the producer's operation on an individual basis. At the request of producers in the apiary industry, group interviews were also conducted. A decision was made that group interviews would be conducted

to accommodate the producers. The producers preferred the group interview format as it reduced time and travel distances. They suggested conducting the group interviews at the Annual General Meeting of apiarists in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, where many of the participants had time available for an interview. The flexibility in approach allowed for a greater rate of participation.

The group interviews followed the same structure as the individual interviews, in that questions were asked of each individual on a one on one basis. Participants consented to the group interview both on the consent form as well as verbally, agreeing they understood their thoughts and comments would be heard by fellow participants in the interview. The format of the group interview also encouraged discussion and allowed for consideration of responses among each participant. Richer data was generated as the group dynamic brought out concerns not captured through the semi-structured interview schedule. The group interview format, rather than a focus group format, was utilized so as to remain comparable to the individual interviews conducted while also accommodating the requests of the producers involved. .

The interviews were recorded and transcribed. The transcripts were returned to each producer to allow them the opportunity to review the interview and make any changes, additions or deletions they felt appropriate. The producers were given a one-month period to return completed transcripts, if changes were required. Once returned, the transcripts were coded manually and analyzed for common themes. Eight of the transcripts were returned and of those returned, only minor changes were required,

such as grammatical errors and clarification of words that were difficult to understand during transcription.

The transcripts were analyzed for thematic importance regarding the position of producers and their experiences in hiring foreign labour. Further, they were considered based on type of farm, size of farm and number of employees, both domestic and foreign. For the purposes of this study, the data was analyzed as what Creswell (2009) refers to as basic qualitative analysis, in which open-ended questions lead to the delivery of information, which is then analyzed for thematic consistency. Basic qualitative analysis leads the researcher to pull themes from the data and to interpret this information (Creswell, 2007). Through the collection of information, notes taken and several different periods of analysis, the themes presented in this research emerged and informs this thesis of the perspectives of Saskatchewan's apiarists in regards to their hiring decisions.

3.4 Limitations

There are a few limitations to the research presented in this thesis. The extent of the fieldwork was limited by both the time and funding available. By design, this research only considered the perspective of the producer, rather than focusing on a collective perspective of all stakeholders involved in the provision of foreign labour migration to Saskatchewan. Specifically, the perspectives of government officials, of the workers, and of other members of the rural communities were not brought out. Future research

in Saskatchewan should consider the perspective of all three, so as to better understand the relationships between all involved.

My own position, as a researcher, contributes to some limitations within this research. As a researcher, I have taken on the responsibility of interpreting from the data, and thus representing the views of producers in Saskatchewan. There are some inherent differences between myself and the study participants that affect the collection and interpretation of the data. I am female and in my twenties while the majority of the participants are older (one participant is a similar age). I am from Winnipeg, Manitoba and although Manitoba is a Prairie province, Winnipeg is an urban centre and I do not have a background in agriculture nor rural areas. The producers are from rural Saskatchewan. There may be some interpretations I have made that are not consistent with the perception of producers who have spent their entire lives in such settings. As I am not connected to the communities the producers are operating within, I was able to listen to the producers and focus on the information the participants were providing without some preconceived ideas.

The participants for this research are all business owners, while I am a Master of Arts student. As this is only my second research project focusing on the migration of temporary foreign workers, I was able to remain open minded and flexible in regards to this research. As a student at the University of Saskatchewan, however, I do represent an institution which the participants were suspicious of. I needed to acknowledge this

position, but also understand the concern of the producers in regards to my representation as an institution.

Chapter 4. Economic Realities which Influence Producer Agency

The academic literature provides a good background for understanding how the agricultural industry, both in Canada and globally has changed through the 20th and into the 21st century. There is no guarantee for producers that simply because crops can be grown well in Canada that the market will ensure those crops continue to be grown in Canada. The Canadian industry is continually susceptible to the changes in the market and the competition within the global market. As globalization has become the dominant structural force for most economic production, the agricultural industry has followed. There are certain characteristics about the industry itself that separate food production from other global industries (such as manufacturing), particularly in regards to the mobility of goods and people as well as the location of production.

4.1 Is Foreign Labour Really Cheaper?

Consumer demand expects that manufacturers are able to compete with one another and make a quality product at the cheapest price possible. The agricultural industry is structured in the same manner as other industries, with distinct differences, as noted by the participants:

1. The products being produced are perishable, and thus only considered of good quality for a short period of time.

2. Significant weather events and pests can seriously hinder production for a season, limiting profitability.
3. The industry operates on a seasonal basis.
4. Although companies are mobile, the mobility of the industry overall is still dependent on locations that can produce agricultural products.

As opposed to information presented in previous Canadian research, apiarists in Saskatchewan do not support seeking an alternative labour force as a cost reduction method in order to compete within the global agrarian economic structure, but do acknowledge that economic realities dictate that they must do so:

The problem is, I guess, that the beekeepers that have eliminated that middleman, they're going into the stores with that top quality Canadian product, they still have to compete against the Chinese/Argentine blend on the same shelf. When they're bringing in honey from China at \$0.50 and from Argentina at \$0.60 and the average price is \$0.55 and it costs a Canadian beekeeper over \$1.00 to produce, the math is pretty simple (Apiarist 3).

The need to ensure that producers are able to finish off the year with a profit drives producers *not* to seek a less expensive source of labour, but rather to seek a source of labour that will be the most likely to complete the work. Foreign labour, particularly in Saskatchewan, is not a cheap source of labour. Producers must pay a particular set wage dependent on each industry and guest worker program used. The wages are above the minimum wages in Canada, and often above the starting wage that producers will pay first-time employees domestically. The combination of wages, housing, transportation and other needs of foreign workers provided by employers leave

producers feeling that they are not accessing a less expensive labour source, but certainly a reliable one.

With our Nicaraguan program, the wage set by human resources is \$12.75 and, on top of that, this past year, our guys had proven themselves to be worth \$12.75 so we also tacked on a performance bonus and an English incentive. ... It can be high at times, with the airfare, the accommodation and everything else, on top of that, but all things considered when you need the help, you need the help and you got to pay whatever it is to sustain that and keep them (Apiarist 4).

The shift to foreign labour has not necessarily been a major source of cost savings for Saskatchewan apiarists. Producers are finding that in order to retain labour, they are often forced to offer bonuses and wages that exceed the baseline, although these tend to be limited to returning employees. Additional costs associated with hiring seasonal foreign labour, including paying transportation, and providing access to amenities, housing and employment benefits, have driven up the cost of labour under these programs. As a result, labour from outside of Canada is no longer comparatively inexpensive. As one apiarist noted:

I didn't go foreign to get cheap labour. That was not my goal anyway and if it was, it just didn't work, no. It's not cheaper. I bought houses. I got 2 houses ... I have one house on the farm I use for them. They have to be up to snuff, you know, they have to have heat and water, and they have to be furnished. ... I mean if somebody goes there cause he thinks he'll get some cheap people, go ahead, find out (Apiarist 6).

In regards to also ensuring domestic employees are paid a fair wage in the same workplace another employer stated:

Their wage is set at \$12.75, so you have some people working at the place and they might not be making that much, so you have to bring their wage up too. So it's not just paying them, you have to adjust the whole pay scale (Apiarist 11).

The cost of bringing in foreign workers, in a time where employment relations are improved, regardless of unionization, is far greater for small Saskatchewan producers than one would first consider. Simply because foreign labour is less expensive to access in the home country does not mean that the employment of foreign workers in the host country is at the same cost. If large agribusinesses were able to move their operation to a country with significantly lower labour costs, this would mean that they would have the ability to access cheaper labour than is often the case in Canada. The lack of mobility for Saskatchewan producers is a constraint to their agency as it is difficult to relocate. Mobility is not a constraint to the agency of international agribusiness that is able to shift location and take advantage of lower domestic wages in other locations. The structure of the global labour market, the agricultural system, and changes to them both, affects the agency of producers when making hiring decisions.

4.2 Competition within the Global Economic Structure

Multinational corporations, involved in agribusiness pose a further threat as they are able to increase their competitiveness by vertical integration, in which they gain control of all means of the industry. Producers noted they are aware of the control multinationals have:

Vertical integration is what's going to happen, I think. ... I mean Kraft foods wants to buy a bee farm, it doesn't matter what the price of honey is anywhere, except what it is on the shelf and Kraft foods can put food on the shelf. So they buy a bee farm, they employ whoever it is, and you have vertical integration (Apiarist 2).

Due to the need to have both large tracts of land and productive land to produce crops, the mobility of the industry is limited. There is a need to have knowledgeable producers working the land, people with experience in agriculture, who are committed to the lifestyle of rural living rather than people who have never worked within the agricultural industry. There is increased competition from other parts of the world threatening Canadian producers' ability to make a decent profit, but this is limited to areas that are able to produce the particular product. Such competition comes from countries such as Mexico, China and Argentina.

The participants reinforced that power relations are often quite pronounced in the economy, in which generally, those with wealth also are those with power. The shift to a global market has also encouraged the expansion of the agricultural industry. This expansion also included a restructuring of the industry, by which the hierarchy changed. Previously, the hierarchy was simple: there was a producer and there was the labour. Much of the academic literature that has emerged focuses on the relations between the producer and the labour, presupposing that the producer has complete power over the labour force, but without consideration of who has power over the producer (see Basok, 2002; Bauder, 2006).

The changes in the agricultural industry have also had significant effects on the structure of power, in which a new level of power has formed, which is agribusiness. Agribusinesses now have much more control over the supply chain and the market than producers do, to the extent that producers are no longer able to make decisions

regarding their operation without considering how they will be affected by the expectations of the corporation or their ability at least to sell to those corporations. All but two operators sold their crops primarily to a food corporation or packer. Producers are now in the middle position, both being susceptible to the power of agribusiness and retaining some power over labour.

The costs of running an operation in Canada are continually increasing, and producers are continually at the mercy of the market. Producers cited that heavy media attention has focused on their decision to hire a foreign labour source and to continue their operations with an alternative labour force. Unfortunately for producers, such attention has portrayed the producer's position as mainly negative and does not consider the full weight of the situation that producers are facing, and how this constrains their individual agency (see Bauder, 2005, 2006; Basok 2002, 2004). The rising costs of labour both domestically and internationally makes it more difficult for Canadian producers to compete globally with producers in other countries who have access to cheaper labour.

4.3 Producers' Difficulty in Attracting and Retaining Local or Domestic Labour

Producers acknowledge that agricultural labour is primarily characterized as being low-skilled but highly physical and manual labour. Although the work does not require an employee to be highly skilled in order to fulfill the tasks at hand, there is a high level of difficulty in the work itself. Often referred to as "stooped" labour, agricultural work is

physically demanding and over a season can take a physical toll on the worker. As the skill level of the work is considered to be low, the rate of pay is substantially lower than other types of physically demanding work, such as mining or working in the oil industry. Workplace health and safety considerations make agricultural labour a fairly dangerous occupation, although the industry lacks the financial incentives other industries provide that make working within a dangerous work area more enticing.

The participants indicated that domestic farm employment has generally been held by high school students from rural areas, particularly because they are able to work the seasonal summer hours. Participants interviewed acknowledged that the rate of pay is sufficient for high school students and considered to be a good means of teaching youth the responsibility required within the workforce. Agricultural producers have relied on having a low-skilled, young workforce available through the summer months, that is willing to work long hours for a fairly low rate of pay. Over the years however, shifts in the low-skilled labour force have changed the access the participants have to such a labour force, primarily as the service industry continues to attract a lower skilled workforce with a slightly higher rate of pay.

Participants explained that previously, producers were often able to rely on university students to fill much of the seasonal labour need, as they would return to their home communities and hope to find employment there. The producers perceive that much of the university student population now does not want to work through the summer, and if they are able to, will take other opportunities, such as the ability to travel and study

abroad. Other students choose to remain in the city and seek part-time employment. The perception producers have of students has changed as noted succinctly by one participant:

More and more kids would rather work on a computer than work the physical part of it. There used to be lots (Apiarist 11).

Other producers commented that they were still able to hire some students, however this was usually less than they had in the past. The decrease in the number of students willing to work in agriculture, along with the increase in labour needs for many producers has led to a shortfall of employees for the amount of work available. According to the participants, labour needs for producers have consistently increased for those operating on a commercial level, as they continue to grow and expand their operation in order to meet demand, but the ability to increase labour numbers from the domestic labour pool has decreased.

Each producer interviewed was adamant that the hiring of a foreign labour force was crucial to their business remaining competitive and viable. They used words such as “survival”, “stress”, “suffer” and “detriment” to describe what would happen to their business if they could not hire labour from outside of the country. Essentially, most believe downsizing would be the only option and some go as far to remark they would have to close their business if access to foreign labour were to be denied. Although they are required to advertise for Canadian labour, many have little to no response domestically although many receive responses from international applicants. The participants agreed that Canadian employees would be their first choice for hiring, and

many still hire Canadian employees as their primary source and supplement them with a smaller number of foreign workers. One producer explained his frustration with hiring domestic labour as:

...the Canadians are more of a, they'll show up and then they won't show up. They're sort of unreliable to a degree or the last ones we've had and they're not afraid to just walk out on you. ... They just shut down and they are done for the year and the trouble with finding someone to replace them when you've only got two weeks left. Then training becomes an issue because by the time you train someone new the season is over and you've wasted a lot of extra time (Apiarist 4).

Current economic conditions in the province offer unique challenges to Saskatchewan agricultural producers in terms of a domestic labour pool. Saskatchewan has a booming potash industry that is increasingly requiring more and more labourers, where agriculture cannot compete. Spin-off industries from the potash mines, as well as the diamond mine industry and oil in Alberta and Saskatchewan are increasingly attracting traditional sources of farm labour. To compensate, some producers have hired younger employees, as young as 12 years of age, but have concerns about workplace safety and the ability of children working within their operation. One producer noted:

Well I went as low as 12 years of age but I am going to get away from that. Last year we had a big accident. One kid just about cut his fingers off. He was young and he put his fingers where he shouldn't have. ... I think now it will be 17 years of age or something like that (Apiarist 6).

Those who have lowered their hiring age have decided to set an older minimum due to these concerns. They see their only viable options as either hiring too young or hiring from a foreign source, with the foreign workers being seen as by far the better choice. The perception that they are exploiting foreign workers to the detriment of the Canadian

workforce and economy is one that the Saskatchewan producers categorically rejected.

One participant stated that:

By the way, I heard on the radio, about people calling in about how we're damaging the economy, taking advantage. I heard someone almost refer to it as slave labour. You know, we're supporting slave labour, we're not hiring Canadians, we're hurting the economy, but most of these people don't have a clue what they're talking about. You talk to any beekeeper, you know, ya, your first choice would be Canadians (Apiarist 3).

Another observed that Canadian labour had inherent limitations:

The issue that comes up of why would we want to have migrant workers versus using regular workers? In a nutshell, is that, we hire a lot of students and when school starts, we're not done. We still have two months of intense activity to follow up with and we lose our students. And I do have a core of senior staff of about five guys, but that is not enough (Apiarist 10).

The Saskatchewan producers interviewed generally do not believe they discriminate towards or against any minority group in particular and have hired people from all over including Romania, Venezuela, the Philippines, Nicaragua and Mexico. The frustration comes from having few domestic applicants but many from elsewhere in the world. Hiring migrant labour is an option producers feel they have to consider in order to operate within the current structure of the agricultural system. Although there may be some Canadian producers that treat their migrant employees poorly (and possibly as many who treat domestic employees poorly), the producers that were interviewed claimed that the majority of producers in the province appreciate the labour provided by foreigners and would prefer to have a good relationship with their employees. In their

view this relationship is one that should benefit both and, further, they realize that there are certain accommodations that need to be made to ensure foreign workers are able to make the best of their time in Canada and are aware their work is appreciated.

4.4 Has Foreign Labour Become a Structural Necessity?

The majority of the literature regarding foreign agricultural workers in Canada places emphasis on the experiences of workers, which generally has portrayed a negative perception of employers (i.e. producers). Employers/producers are seen as having moved to seeking a foreign source of labour so as to gain access to a flexible and less expensive labour force and subsequently becoming an inherent part of the structure of Canadian agriculture. The small scale of worker recruitment and more recent shift to foreign labour has led Saskatchewan producers to recognize and avoid the same issues evidenced in other provinces, within their own operations. As a result of the current labour market losses that have beset industries in Western Canada, many employers have shifted to the hiring of foreign labour as a necessary complement for a domestic labour force. Such employers have faced much criticism for not focusing on hiring domestically, particularly when there are people who are unemployed within the country.

Although there might be some people available to work, employers overall are finding it difficult to source those who are unemployed, or retain them. Producers are

experiencing significant labour shortage, but when they advertise for positions, the response they receive is not enough to fill the need. Respondents explained that:

What I've seen and experienced is a shortage. I find lots of kids running around our town with nothing to do, they say they're bored, but don't want to work. Twenty years ago I was turning people away looking for work. Now I accept everybody that brings an application, which is usually only three a year maybe. So I still have to bring these people in, plus I still have to find more for extracting and stuff. But sometimes I can't find them so we work 7 days a week trying to get caught up (Apiarist 9).

I advertise in the Western Producer and SaskJobs but there's no response. ... I did in the past, like maybe five years ago but the last few years I got nothing (Apiarist 1).

In the present study, participants believed it important to treat workers well. If workers are treated fairly they are more likely to return year after year, ensuring retention.

Retention is important to producers in that they have fewer struggles each year in having to overcome language barriers, there is less need to continually train workers and a trusting relationship is developed between employer/producer and employee.

One producer commented on the view of labour solely as a commodity rather than as people, stating:

He takes the labour for his labour and does not get involved with them. Well, he's getting Mexicans and they change every year, they are never coming back. I got some of his actually. And they come back to me but they don't want to come back to him (Apiarist 6).

Saskatchewan producers see themselves as having *resorted to*, rather than being dependent on, a foreign labour force. In reference to Basok's (2002) idea of a structural necessity, producers view foreign labour as important to their operation but not as an inherent structure of the industry. Rather, the structure of the labour market and overall

capitalist economy allows Canadian employees more social agency regarding the type of work they choose to apply for. This is an important distinction as Saskatchewan employers understand that their labour force is an integral part of their operation, and, as such, employee retention is the primary concern. Retention, in their view, can only be achieved if employees are treated well. The retention of the workers outweighs the desire to access a cheap source of labour and producers do not believe it is good practice to treat their employees poorly, regardless of whether they are domestic or foreign. They certainly acknowledge that there are people within their industry that do not have the same perceptions.

Of the 14 producers interviewed, only two were hiring more than ten foreign labourers and the rest were hiring less than ten per season. This is in stark contrast to Ontario, where individual farms may have hundreds of foreign workers employed in a given season. As such there tends to be a much more personal relationship between workers and producers in Saskatchewan, in which the producer's appreciation for being able to access foreign labour is revealed. The participants in this study refer to the employees as being a "part of the family" and see their responsibility as employers to ensure they have as good a stay in Canada as possible recognizing that the situation is not ideal for the workers who have to leave their families behind for up to eight months a year.

The nature of agriculture requires that all work is done in a timely manner, particularly with tight deadlines that are not flexible. The bottom line for producers is that work must be completed on time or else there will be no product. Access to labour, and labour that

is reliable, willing to work long hours and willing to work hard is important to ensuring the continued success of an agricultural operation. Producers acknowledge that temporary foreign workers are more reliable than domestic employees due to a restriction within their work visas that does not allow mobility of workers between employers each season. Therefore, workers can change employers from season to season, but not within a season, ensuring the producer that the worker will be more likely to work through to the end of harvest. Saskatchewan's agricultural producers, particularly those in labour-intensive industries, face serious problems in ensuring that they are able to find an adequate supply of labour.

Well everybody has the same problem, a shortage of labour. And that's the only bad thing about our job. We can't buy machines to take place of workers, no matter how much money you have, you know? Unless you can afford a robot I guess, but that's not going to work. There's some assembly line work which we do have. There have been some automated machines that come out but we still have to labour those machines which still takes five people (Aparist 10).

The criticism that might be made in the hiring of a foreign labour force is worth the trade-off of not seeking labour from outside the standard adult labour force available in Canada.

Another concern for producers is the inability to attract people into the industry who would be interested in taking over the operation once the current producer retires. In contrast to operations in other provinces, those in Saskatchewan are still primarily owned and operated by a producer but sell on a commercial level. In order to continue the operation, the producer must find a candidate who is willing to not only manage the operation but also to invest their money and time into it. The attraction to the industry

solely as a worker is not great, and therefore, the interest in tying up income in an operation is increasingly less appealing. As the children of producers pursue other types of employment, the traditional means of passing on the farm to their children is no longer an option. Rather it is more important for producers to be training employees they believe would be interested and capable of taking on the operation in the future.

Young people would have a hard time financing. If you didn't have somebody involved, if you wanted to be a commercial beekeeper, financing would be a major, major step (Apiarist 10).

For the majority of producers interviewed, the realistic approach to retirement and the transfer and continued operation of the business is to retain and teach immigrant labour who will hopefully migrate to Canada permanently under their sponsorship and then be in such a position as to own the operation.

Without access to foreign labour, the structure of the apiary sector, and generally, all labour-intensive agriculture, would need to shift in order to support Canadian production such that it could remain competitive. Using structuration theory as a conceptualization, it appears as though the anticipated outcomes of not allowing producers to hire foreign labour would lead to the cessation of the labour-intensive agriculture in Saskatchewan, and perhaps Canada as a whole. As this chapter has shown, apiarists are not passive actors, powerless in the global agricultural system, nor are they particularly powerful actors in determining structural change at an international scale. The interplay between structure and agency is what allows the greatest insight into the position of the producer.

Chapter 5. Conclusion

This research set out to examine whether the inability of Saskatchewan apiarists to attract and retain an adequately sized and reliable labour force has caused producers to seek temporary foreign workers. Essentially, it sought to understand whether the migration of foreign labour to Saskatchewan agriculture has in fact become a structural necessity as Basok (2002) has asserted in previous research. Through the use of Giddens' structuration theory, this thesis has argued that the analysis of producer agency and their position within the global agricultural economic system has shown that workers have become a necessary component to Saskatchewan's labour intensive apiary sector, as it is currently structured. Without the access to foreign labour, agricultural producers in this sector and likely other labour-intensive agricultural sectors would not be able to remain competitive within the global agricultural system, leading perhaps to the demise of specific sectors of Saskatchewan's agricultural industry.

Without access to labour, the future of agriculture or at least of labour-intensive agriculture is uncertain. The main expectation from producers is that there are two anticipated consequences of not having access to enough labour. The ultimate problem would be that labour-intensive industries would no longer exist in Saskatchewan, and possibly even in Canada. The less extreme extent of this would be that there would no longer be a globally competitive and commercial industry in Saskatchewan, but rather one that would be significantly downsized and focused on the local market. No producer interviewed believed that the labour situation was going to improve

immediately, even though all producers preferred to hire domestically if they could. The structure of the global agricultural system has constrained the agency of producers in regards to their hiring decisions and has led producers in labour-intensive agriculture to find alternative labour sources.

An important note is that by situating foreign workers as a structural necessity and inherently as a marginalized labour source, their agency becomes limited in itself, placing the workers solely as victims of the agricultural industry rather than as actors within the global labour market. Considering workers to lack agency and be completely constrained by the structure of the global economy does not acknowledge workers as capable humans employing their own agency in the decision to migrate to Canada.

Employers purposely attach new benefits to their employment offers in order to influence the worker's agency, but this is no different than benefits offered to domestic employees. This fits within the concept of structuration theory in which there are constraints and enablers that lead to action by actors. Employers are using the tools available in order to influence the agency of workers, but ultimately, workers enable their agency and make their own decisions regarding employment within the structural constraints. To deny this is to deny that foreign workers are capable and knowledgeable humans. Yet, to suggest that moving to Canada to work seasonally is an exercise of complete unencumbered agency and is not in response to the structural forces that limit agency, would be misguided.

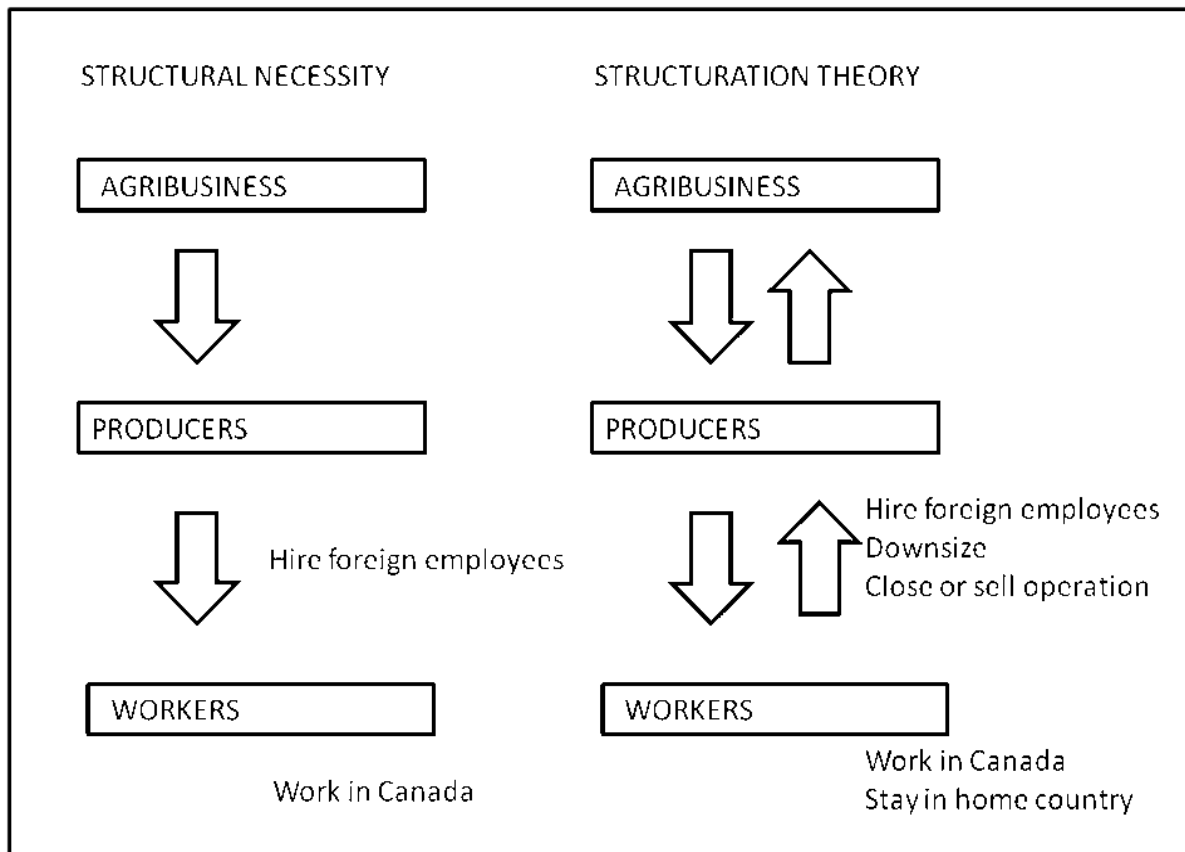


Figure 5.1: Comparison of Agency through Structural Necessity Model and Structuration Theory

As figure 5.1 demonstrates, Basok's (2002) concept of foreign labour as a structural necessity is too simplistic an approach and neglects the agency that flows between each actor rather than solely as a hierarchy of power. The concept of structuration theory and the duality of society means that the agency of all actors is considered, rather than the simple hierarchy supported by foreign labour being a structural necessity. Labour is an integral component to the structure of the global agrarian economy, but the agency of labour also affects the agency of producers, agribusiness and in turn consumers and government (policy). Figure 5.1 shows that although agribusiness may have power over producers, the agency of producers also affects the

actions of agribusiness and workers. For example, if producers were to decide that the production of honey in Saskatchewan was not economically viable, agribusiness would need to mobilize and seek a source of honey elsewhere, thereby enabling its agency. The structure of the agricultural economy, as well as the agency of the actors within, is much more complex than presented in the simple concept of foreign labour as a structural necessity.

In Saskatchewan, the limited use of guest workers has led to a greater appreciation of foreign labour as a core component of the overall labour force than in Ontario. By hiring fewer foreign workers (and mixing them with local labour in many cases), Saskatchewan agricultural producers appear to be more likely to foster a personal relationship with these employees, with positive outcomes for both. This is in contrast to Ontario, where the employee-employer relationship tends to be much more removed. Saskatchewan producers only moved to a foreign labour force following several years of labour shortages. Producers have moved to a new source of labour as the only means of ensuring they have enough employees to get them through the season. In learning from the criticisms leveled at Ontario agriculture, in which, it has been claimed, foreign workers are seen as an undifferentiated and easily replaceable commodity, producers in Saskatchewan have had time to recognize problems and reduce them within their own operations.

The lower prices paid by multinational businesses do not benefit the consumer, but instead serve to increase the profits of the multinational business. In such

circumstances Canadian producers struggle to remain competitive with those in other countries who have significantly lower input costs, including lower labour costs. In the case of Canadian (and Saskatchewan) producers, such competition is not without limits, as the floor of their labour inputs is subject to legislated minimum labour wages, established to protect the rights of the workers, but leaving the producers at a disadvantage compared to their competitors in countries without such restrictions. The structure of the global economy encourages competitive wage rates, while the agency of actors is hindered by various legislative policies.

The information accumulated within this research shows that the apiary industry is unique in relation to other labour-intensive sectors of agriculture, in that it requires not only a large labour force, but one that is skilled. As such, the challenges facing apiarists in Saskatchewan would be the same challenges faced by apiarists across Canada, as well as employers in other industries that not only require a large amount of labour, but of labour that is skilled. Canada's struggles to provide labour are not limited to the unskilled or low skilled labour force, but are also issues affecting industries requiring skilled labour. Canada is reliant, and will remain reliant on immigration for labour, regardless of whether the immigrant temporarily or on a permanent basis.

The Saskatchewan agricultural industry, and the apiary sector specifically, remains an important portion of the province's economy but it is continuously challenged to deal with issues that can affect the ability for producers to remain competitive. Overall, agriculture has become much more highly mechanized than previously, but not all

aspects of the industry have been able to replace labour needs. The seasonality of agriculture forces producers to hire a labour force they are confident will remain for the entire season, particularly at harvest, a critical and time-sensitive part of the season. Employee *retention* and *reliability* are key to ensuring a successful harvest, which is the primary objective of producers in hiring foreign labour in Saskatchewan. Foreign labourers have been able to provide producers with more of a guarantee they will remain, although this is ensured by them being tied to their contracts. If the structure of the agricultural economy does not change, producers will continue to seek a foreign labour force as a means to remaining competitive.

5.1 Policy Recommendations

The primary finding of this research is that agricultural producers in Saskatchewan have had to find an alternative labour source due to current labour force shortages and shifts. As evidenced in Ontario, guest worker programs are one means to provide employers with extra labour, but the programs need to be administered in a way that protects the workers as well. The programs that are used in Saskatchewan have been implemented following the success of programs in other provinces, thus ensuring that important regulations have been developed, such as the provision of housing and transportation for employees (under SAWP). There are a few issues that have not been improved based on the experiences of workers and producers in Ontario and other Canadian provinces.

The wage rate that producers are expected to pay is one issue that was cited by all apiarists, with fairly strong feelings towards the rate they are expected to pay. The apiarists primarily hired under the Skilled Workers Program, in which they had to do their own recruitment. Although the workers are expected to be skilled, they are not skilled as to the industry in Canada. There is a period of time, in which training is required of the employee pertaining to regional differences of the Canadian apiary sector specifically.

The wages are set at \$12.75 per hour for a foreign employee to start, but employers would prefer to have a more structured scale, in which a training period at a lower cost is set and then wages are increased as performance and time served warrant. Under SAWP, employers pay a wage of \$9.38 to start, but again there is no structure to encourage producers to increase wages. Those producers seeking a more inexpensive labour force will over time, if they have good retention rates, potentially be able to hire foreign labour at a rate less than a Canadian worker with the same experience might command.

Although many producers take responsibility for increasing wages in order to increase retention, they also acknowledge that there are producers who will not pay workers fairly if not regulated to do so. This would be similar to the structure of Canadian employment expectations, in which employees are paid raises based both on their job performance and their time working at a job. Canadian employees in apiary do start at about \$10 per hour, much lower than the \$12.75 per hour foreign employees receive.

By consulting with apiarists in Saskatchewan regarding a structured wage scale, producer-employers would be able to ensure both foreign and Canadian employees are paid a fair rate based on their value for the operation.

In regards to benefits, temporary foreign workers are entitled to specific benefits, such as the Canadian Pension Plan (CPP). The producers must deduct CPP from the employees pay as well as match the contribution themselves, but the workers are generally not aware that they are entitled to these benefits. Agreements between countries participating in the SAWP (Mexico and the Caribbean) are in place to co-facilitate CPP pensions and their distribution, however, workers arriving under the Skilled Workers Program are from various other countries and do not have similar agreements in place. A change in policy, in which the workers must be provided with some orientation materials and information in their native language, should be mandatory to ensure workers understand the benefits they are contributing to, as well as how to access those benefits when required.

Another important issue that frustrated employers is the long wait times and inability to contact potential employees. Although there is a consulate in Guatemala that deals with gathering workers' documentation in order to work in Canada, there is too much work currently under the direction of the consulate. The SAWP is a much more streamlined process, particularly as it has existed in Canada for a number of years, and the Skilled Workers Program should focus on becoming more efficient in order to ensure workers are in Canada in time for the season to begin. SAWP ensures there are

provisions in place to supply employees with adequate housing, transportation and access to amenities. Currently under the Skilled Workers Program, employers provide these provisions as a means to ensure their employees are satisfied. As producers themselves note, there are producers who will take advantage of the possibility of not providing for workers, or at least not to an adequate standard. The Skilled Workers Program should change provisions to ensure the program regulates fundamental features more stringently, rather than resting much of the responsibility on the producer-employers to both satisfy the needs of producers and ensuring workers are protected by regulations rather than by the responsibility of the producer.

Given these considerations, three policy recommendations emerge from the present research. Together they will act to better ensure that workers are protected and that producers are able to continue within the agricultural industry.

1. Wages in guest worker programs should be structured to account for increased experience and expertise, with a lower starting wage, but regular mandated increases.
2. Management of the Skilled Workers Program needs to be improved in order to ensure efficiency of program delivery.
3. Minimal levels of social needs provision, and in particular housing, should be mandated as part of the Skilled Workers Program, in order to make sure producers are providing properly and adequately for foreign workers in their employ.

5.2 Future Research

There are a few limitations to the research presented in this thesis. The extent of the fieldwork was limited by both the time and funding available. By design, this research only considered the perspective of the producer, rather than focusing on a collective perspective of all stakeholders involved in the provision of foreign labour migration to Saskatchewan. Specifically, the perspectives of government officials, of the workers, and of other members of the rural communities were not brought out. Future research in Saskatchewan should consider the perspective of all three, so as to better understand the relationships between all involved.

A study regarding the impact of the consumer and their choices will further contribute to the growing literature regarding the migration of temporary foreign workers to Saskatchewan. The consumer and their agency should be considered in order to understand whether the purchasing choices of the larger community can or would significantly impact the structure of the agricultural industry. Essentially, would foreign workers be required in Canada?

Finally, future research should consider the impacts of government policy on the migration of temporary foreign workers. As the SAWP was supposed to be a short-term program that has now existed far beyond the expectation, a study focused on the role of government policy would better inform us as to the extent government policy impacts labour migration, particularly in comparison to the United States. A study focused on

the role the government plays would shed light as to whether foreign worker policy is important and the role it may have in quelling illegal labour immigration.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Foreign Farm Labour in Saskatchewan MA Study. Alexis Poirier. Geography

Interview Guide

Part 1: Demographic Information

(Ask all the questions from Part 1 as respondent is willing to answer)

Size and Farm Type

1. How would you describe your farm operation?
2. What types of crops are you farming?
3. How many acres are farmed as part of your operation?
4. How has your farming operation changed in the past 20 years?

Prompts:

- a) Have you diversified the crops you are producing?
- b) Has the farm operation changed in size?

5. Why did you make these changes?

Prompts:

- a) personal
- b) environmental
- c) economic factors?

6. How do you see your particular sector of the agricultural industry changing in the future?

Part 2: Farm Labour Force

1. Is your operation a family run operation?
2. How many children do you have residing on the farm in each category?

0-5 years _____

6-10 years _____

11-15 years _____

16-20 years _____

3. Do your children work on the farm?

Prompts:

- a) If yes – What kind of work do your children do?
- b) How many hours per week during peak season?

4. How has the farm labour force changed in the past 20 years? (*Probe as to how these changes relate to overall changes on the farm Question 4*)

Prompts:

- a) Do you hire paid farm help?
- b) What is your primary labour source: domestic or foreign?

If domestic:

- c) Have you ever hired a foreign farm labour force?
- d) Can you elaborate on your overall experience in hiring foreign labourers?

5. How do changes within the agricultural industry, and your sector specifically, contribute to your hiring practices on the farm?

6. In your experience, how long do employees stay in Canada?

Prompt:

- a) Does this vary throughout the season?
- b) Are you limited in access to foreign labour at certain times in the season?

7. What types of jobs do the workers perform on the farm?

8. What changes in the available domestic labour force have you seen or experienced?

Prompts:

- a) Rural to Urban migration?
- b) Inter-provincial migration? "Alberta effect"

Part 3: Decision to Import (or not) foreign Labour

1. *(if they hire foreign labour)* What factors influenced your decision to import foreign labour?
2. Can you explain what the process by which you came to make use of imported farm labour?

Prompt:

- a) How did you learn about the available programs?
- b) Was it easy or difficult to gain access to the program?
3. *(if they **do not** hire foreign labour)* Have you considered hiring a foreign labour source? Why or why not?
4. What, if any, are the implications of not hiring a foreign source of labour?
5. What are your primary reasons for sourcing a labour force from outside of Canada?
6. What types of changes to this sector of agriculture have influenced your decision to hire foreign labourers?
7. How long have you been bringing in foreign workers?
8. What program(s) are you using to import labourers?
9. Are you satisfied with the program?
10. Will you continue to import foreign labour in the future?

Part 4: Financial Information

1. Do you have an alternative source of income apart from the farm?

Prompts:

- a) What is the alternative source?
- b) What proportion of your household income is from this source?

- c) What proportion is from the farming operation?
2. On the farm, are you currently employed:
 - a) Full-time permanent
 - b) Part-time permanent
 - c) Full-time seasonally
 - d) Part-time seasonally
 - e) Casually
 3. Off the farm are you currently employed:
 - a) Full-time permanent
 - b) Part-time permanent
 - c) Full-time seasonally
 - d) Part-time seasonally
 - e) Casually
 - f) Not employed off farm
 4. If employed off the farm, what prompted you to seek an alternative source of income?
 5. Has your net income from the farm remained relatively the same, been reduced or increased over your time within the industry?

Final Questions- (*Wrap up and Thank the interviewee*)

1. Is there anything else you would like to add in regards to this interview or the research being conducted?
2. Can you recommend anyone else that should be interviewed for this project?
(*remember to gather contact info- name, phone number, email, location*)
3. Are you interested in receiving a summary of the final results? Gather mailing information if so.