Interrogating Racialized Global Labour Supply: An Exploration of the Racial/National Replacement of Foreign Agricultural Workers in Canada*

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Dans cet article, on analyse le remplacement des travailleurs antillais par des Mexicains dans le Programme des travailleurs agricoles saisonniers du gouvernement du Canada, en mettant l'accent sur le rôle des interprétations racialisées dans la mise en œuvre de ce genre de programme. On y soutient qu'un mécanisme de racialisation étaie les discours des agriculteurs ontariens à la recherche de la main-d'œuvre la plus laborieuse, fiable et flexible. Parfois même, les discours des agriculteurs affichent un racisme grossier, dépeignant les hommes antillais comme des Noirs hypersexués qui présentent un risque pour les Canadiennes, alors que, d'autres fois, ces préjugés raciaux sont formulés en termes de prédispositions physiques ou psychologiques à travailler à certaines récoltes.

This paper analyses the replacement of Caribbean workers by Mexicans in Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program, highlighting the role of racialized understandings in implementing foreign worker programs. It argues that a process of racialization underpins the discourses employed by Ontario growers in search of the most hardworking, reliable and flexible labour force. Sometimes grower discourses manifest a crude racism, casting Caribbean men as hypersexualized Black subjects who pose a risk to Canadian women, while other times these racialized assumptions are framed in terms of physical and/or psychic dispositions to the production of certain crops.

FOR THE LAST 40 YEARS, the Canadian state has facilitated the movement of up to 20,000 foreign workers annually for fixed periods of employment into the horticultural sector under the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program (SAWP). Originally designed to enable the temporary migration

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of Jamaican workers, since its inception in 1966 the SAWP has expanded to include participants from a number of other countries in the Commonwealth Caribbean, as well as Mexico. Although Jamaican men constituted the majority of SAWP workers for the first 20 years of the Program's history, Mexican workers now represent the majority of participants. Questions of racial or national replacement in this labour market have not been the subject of scholarly attention in the emerging literature on foreign workers in Canadian agriculture, which has tended to focus on theorizing unfree labour, documenting migratory experiences, and gauging impacts for sending and receiving communities (Basok, 1999; 2000; 2002; 2003; Binford, 2002; Colby, 1997; Preibisch, 2000; 2004; Smart, 1997, among others). Furthermore, most studies have tended to remain methodologically focussed on workers from one particular country of origin, with Mexico receiving the bulk of attention since the mid-1990s (Basok, 2002; Binford, 2002; Binford, Carrasco, Arana and Rojas, 2004; Cecil and Ebanks, 1991; Colby, 1997; Smart, 1997). Ironically, the literature has not explored racism and processes of racialization to any significant degree, despite the compelling evidence of a pioneer study that stressed the centrality of these issues to the organization of labour in Canadian horticulture (Satzewich, 1991).

In order to begin to uncover the racial dimensions of the agricultural labour market, this paper seeks to explore the racial/national transformation of the SAWP work force that has occurred over the past 20 years. We detail how Mexican foreign workers have gained an increasing share of the labour market at the expense of Caribbean workers and offer some explanations of this trend. In addressing this process whereby workers from one nationality come to replace those from another, we highlight the role of employers' racialized preferences in influencing the level of demand of workers from source countries and their incorporation in the production process. We also shed light on how social relations of inequality—in particular those based on race, ethnicity, citizenship and gender—intersect in the contemporary context of globalization, as multiple low-income countries compete for labour placements in migrant-receiving nations. In particular, our focus on the case of foreign farm workers in Canada emphasizes the role of race in organizing labour incorporation and shaping global production, lending further evidence of the racialization of the global labour supply within what some authors have termed a "global hierarchy of states" or "global apartheid."

Racialization and Citizenship

Contemporary patterns of accumulation under globalization increasingly rest on a labour market flexibility achieved through deepening labor segmentation on the basis of race/ethnicity, gender and citizenship. The employment of (im)migrant workers has played a central role in strategies aimed at achieving greater flexibility, particularly within high-income

countries seeking to restructure labour-capital relations in an increasingly competitive global economy (Rai, 2001; Sassen, 2000; Sharma, 2006). Between the 1960s and 1990s, the rate of growth of the world's migrant population more than doubled (ILO, 2006), with developing countries accounting for the dominant, and growing, share (Stalker, 2006). Pressures to migrate from the South, rooted in legacies of colonialism and imperialism, have been exacerbated by processes integral to globalization that that have deepened income inequality among the world's rich and poor (ILO, 2006; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005).[1] As opposed to the massive migration flows of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, most of today's migrants originate not in Europe but developing countries and face much greater restrictions on their mobility in terms of border controls (Sharma, 2005). The growing gap in wealth between the North and the South, accompanied by tightening borders, have created what some authors have termed "global apartheid" (Hardt and Negri, 2000; Richmond, 1994) or a "global citizenship divide" (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005). In this context, state citizenship becomes an ever more relevant basis for inequality among workers in the global economy (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005). Immigration policy thus continues to serve as a powerful arena for migrant-receiving states in determining the incorporation of (im)migrants into labour markets, including legitimizing discriminations based on the social relations of race, class and gender (Sharma, 2006; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Ball and Piper, 2002).

The intersection of gender and citizenship has been the subject of recent scholarly attention, particularly given the surprising growth of feminized migration flows. Although migration studies have tended to obscure gender as a relation of power that shapes the movement of people, feminist scholars have shed light on the ways in which sexism structures migration patterns (Nyberg-Sørensen, Van Hear and Engberg-Pederson, 2002; Oishi, 2005; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003; Pessar, 2003). The importance of racial discrimination in determining (im)migrants' access to economic and social opportunities, on the other hand, has received considerably less attention. While it is generally recognized that people from developing countries constitute the majority of contemporary migrants, "analyses of migration have tended to either miss or under emphasize the racio-cultural factors governing and regulating labour regimes" (Persaud, 2001: 378).

Research in Canada suggests that racism shapes the movement of people and their incorporation into labor markets. Racial and ethnic considerations have played a central role in Canada's immigration policy, including blatant discrimination against non-Whites prior to 1965 (Galabuzi, 2006; Li, 1988; Persaud, 2001; Sharma, 2006). Current research on the position of racialized groups in Canada has suggested that racial discrimination is a fundamental factor in the class formation of Canadian society,

1. The ILO reports that the gap in per capita GDP between the developed countries and the less developed countries has quadrupled over the past two decades (2006).

to the extent that a "colour-coded vertical mosaic"[2] or social hierarchy of race has emerged (Galabuzi, 2006; Geschwender and Guppy, 1995; Li, 1988; Lian and Matthews, 1998). In addition to studies on Canada's settled population, several authors have documented the centrality of racism and processes of racialization in the recruitment and allocation of non-citizen foreign workers (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Satzewich, 1991; Sharma, 2002; 2006). For example, in the 1950s, Caribbean domestic workers were subject to a number of restrictions, including compulsory live-in domestic labour and the threat of deportation, conditions that did not apply to domestics coming from Europe, who also received government assistance in the cost of passage (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005). In regards to the agricultural sector, Satzewich's persuasive archival research on the incorporation of foreign workers into horticulture shows how, in the 1960s

> . . . decisions about whether to allow [farm workers from the Caribbean] were made, in part, on assessments of the implications this movement would have on social stability in the country in general and in the workplace in particular, on the likelihood that the "Black" population would get progressively larger, and the belief that they would be the cause of social problems in the future (1991: 190).

Black Caribbean farm workers were allowed to enter Canada as temporary labourers, but effectively prevented from seeking permanent settlement. Satzewich writes: "'Black' migrants were defined as potential problems, or as individuals who might disrupt the social order . . . because of the racist belief that as a 'race' they were unable to 'assimilate' to the other 'Canadian way of life'" (1991: 191).

The use of social relational analysis had not been applied in the study of Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program until recently, when the growing numbers of women and their increasing visibility in rural spaces instigated the use of a gender perspective (Preibisch and Hermoso Santamaría, 2006).[3] This is remarkable considering this approach has been the starting point of feminist researchers studying Canada's other long-standing program for foreign workers, the Live-in Caregiver Program (LCP) (Arat-Koc, 1989; Giles and Arat-Koc, 1994; Macklin, 1994; Pratt, 1997; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005, among others). These Canadian studies, along with the broader body of research on the international migration of domestic workers, hold important findings regarding the role of racialized understandings and assumptions in implementing foreign worker programs, as well as the consequences for workers themselves. These studies have shown convincingly that governments, employers and migrant placement agencies hold racialized (and gendered) preferences for migrants

2. This term is in reference to John Porter's 1965 description of Canadian society as a vertical mosaic stratified along ethnic lines, a portrayal that was no longer accurate for the majority of ethnic groups by 1991 (Lian and Matthews, 1998).
3. For studies using gender analysis, see Barndt (2000) and Becerril (2003).

(Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Oishi, 2005; Pratt, 1997; Winter, 2005). A number of researchers also document the malleability of these social constructions when they no longer suit employers (i.e., facilitate capitalist accumulation). For example, Stasiulis and Bakan's work (2005) on Canada and Oishi's work (2005) in Hong Kong show how preference towards one nationality of domestic workers has declined in response to rising militancy and organized resistance to abusive working conditions. Furthermore, these studies point to the material consequences of racially and sexually oppressive stereotypes, not only in terms of one group losing employment opportunities to another, but also in terms of social hierarchies and the construction of migrant workers as subjects less deserving of the rights afforded citizens (Pratt, 1997; Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Sharma, 2006; Winter, 2005). Indeed, their findings further underline processes of racialization as central to constructing the vulnerability of workers in society and making them more exploitable as cheap labour (Persaud, 2001).

The Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program

The SAWP is a temporary labour program that brings foreign workers to Canada for periods of between six weeks and eight months annually in order to resolve the purported labour shortages in the horticultural sector. The Canadian government employed a variety of stop-gap measures during the period between 1945 and 1965 to ease these shortages, in order to uphold a decidedly racist immigration policy that denied temporary visas or permanent residence to people of colour. The 1965 White Paper and a reformed immigration act passed in 1966 that eliminated most overtly racist clauses paved the way for the recruitment of Jamaican workers (1966) and, during the course of the next ten years, the citizens of other Caribbean countries: Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados in 1968 and the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) in 1976. Mexico entered the Program in 1974.

Participating growers, government officials and some academics (Verduzco, 1999; 2000; Verduzco and Lozano, 2003; Muñoz, 1999; Greenhill and Aceytuno, 2000) view the SAWP as a resounding success, a model program based on labour market complementarity and bilateral co-operation that provides benefits to all participants. Canadian growers obtain access to a cheap and reliable work force, poor farm workers from developing countries get access to the more lucrative Canadian labour market, and labour supply countries benefit from hard currency remitted by migrants. Finally, Canadian businesses in rural areas benefit from increased sales (Preibisch, 2003). Other researchers have criticized the SAWP for perpetuating an unfree labour force tied to a single employer for the duration of the contract, legally prevented from unionizing, represented by ineffective home country officials, and whose further participation is largely dependent

on favourable employer evaluations (Basok, 2002; Binford, 2002; 2006; Binford, Carrasco, Arana and Rojas, 2004; Preibisch, 2000; Satzewich, 1991). This weak or non-existent bargaining position, which is a structural—as opposed to a contingent—feature of the SAWP, works to ensure that foreign workers work hard (even through illnesses and injuries), accede to growers' requests to labour through the weekend during peak periods, and to suppress complaints and avoid conflicts if they want to stay out of "trouble" and be "named" by the employer to return the following season. They do this despite a lack of control over the duration of the contracts, an absence of overtime pay, a high level of social isolation, and with virtually no possibility of obtaining permanent residence in Canada (Preibisch, 2004). On this last point, Sharma (2000; 2002; 2006) notes how the deracialization of Canadian immigration policy in 1966 was followed in 1973 by the passage of the Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program (NIEAP), as well as by a significant proportional decline in people admitted as permanent residents "destined" to the labour market and a proportional increase in the category of temporary visa workers, who have no possibility of gaining permanent residency.[4] Sharma argues that the NIEAP solved the "problem" of the permanence of non-Whites within Canadian society being discussed in Canadian parliament at the time: "The racialized criteria of admittances in Canadian immigration policy was shifted from the pre-1967 categories of 'preferred races and nationalities' onto the new category of non-immigrant (or migrant) worker" recruited primarily from developing countries (2006: 23). The NIEAP, of which the SAWP forms a part, provides Canadian employers with easy access to developing country labour markets at the same time that it serves as a mechanism to control the racial/ethnic mix of the Canadian body politic, thus shoring up the hegemonic conception of the (White) "Canadian citizen."[5]

The SAWP has been a resounding success for Canadian growers, whose increasing participation in it manifests a high level of satisfaction. The Program began in 1966 with the arrival of 264 Jamaicans; by 2001 it involved close to 20,000 participants from the Caribbean and Mexico assigned to participating growers in Ontario, Quebec, Manitoba and Alberta. More recently, growers in Nova Scotia (1999), New Brunswick and

4. Sharma's work documents how the increasing use of temporary employment visas since 1973 has shifted the balance between immigrant and non-immigrant people recruited to work in Canada. While 57% of all people classified as workers entering Canada arrived as permanent residents in 1973, sharing most of the same rights as Canadian citizens, by 1993 the percentage of workers entering the country with this status had fallen to 30%, with 70% entering as foreign workers on temporary employment authorizations (Sharma, 2006). By 2004, while the share of temporary visa workers as a percentage of workers entering Canada (65%), in comparison to permanent residents (35%), was similar to that of the 1990s, their actual numbers had risen considerably, from 153,988 to 228,677 (*Ibid.*).

5. Sharma (2006) disaggregates Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) data to document that the majority of workers recruited under the NIEAP are from less economically developed countries (LEDCs). Further, the NIEAP mirrors the racialized and gendered labour market in Canada by assigning workers from LEDCs to subordinate occupational categories and women to the service sector (2006: 125–26).

Prince Edward Island (2001), Saskatchewan (2003) and British Colombia (2004) entered the program. From an important, minor complement to a Canada-based labour force in 1983, when they accounted for 18.2% of all workers and a lower 14.5% of "hours supplied" in the important fruit, vegetable and tobacco sectors, foreign workers grew to 52.4% of the labour force and supplied 45% of total hours in 2000 in the two provinces hiring 90% of the workers, Ontario and Quebec (Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). Weston and Scarpa de Masellis conclude that Canadian seasonal agricultural "workers can no longer be considered a minor part of the work force; in fact, if present trends continue, it is likely that [non-]Canadian workers will account for a larger share of total hours worked than Canadian workers" (2003: 26).

Fuelled by foreign labour, Canadian horticulture experienced a vertiginous growth during the 1990s. Horticulture and floriculture accounted for $3.7 billion or a quarter of all Canadian crop receipts in 2001, up from 11% in 1981 (Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). More significantly, horticulture and floriculture crop receipts grew from 30% of 1981 provincial crop receipts for both Ontario and Quebec to 56% of Ontario crop receipts and 42% of those in Quebec 20 years later. Yet foreign agricultural workers are paid less than Canadian workers (Basok, 2002: 108; Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003: 34), despite contractual provisions that they receive an equal or higher hourly wage. Furthermore, in Ontario foreign workers' wages fell in real terms for most crops by an estimated 7% between 1992 and 2003. It seems fairly clear that many Canadian growers seek to displace the rising costs of agricultural land and inputs, as well as to mitigate the effects of highly competitive, globalized markets in which retailers hold the upper hand, by minimizing the wages of the most vulnerable sector of the work force (Binford, 2006).

Growers and their official representatives argue that the cost of foreign labour actually exceeds that of domestic labour when program user fees,[6] worker housing, subsidized transportation and a series of other contractual guarantees are factored in. However, this argument overlooks the advantages of employers' access to a captive labour force that can, through both direct pressures and ancillary cultural mechanisms, be encouraged to work for durations and at rhythms unacceptable to most Canadians, whose freedom to move about the labour market gives them the option of "voting with their feet" when employment conditions become too onerous (Basok, 1999; 2002; Binford, 2004).[7] Even so, none of the foregoing explains the racial/national transformation of the SAWP work force that has taken place

6. Growers from Ontario and Nova Scotia who hire foreign workers pay a small fee per worker to Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS), a grower organization that manages the day-to-day administration of the SAWP in Canada for Human Resources and Social Development Canada (HRSDC).

7. The ancillary cultural mechanisms include, at least for Mexican workers, the transmigration of a conception of patron-client relations that predominates in large areas of both rural and urban Mexico.

over the past 15 years, through which Mexican foreign workers have gained an increasing share of the SAWP labour market at the expense of Caribbean workers.[8]

Despite minor variations in the bilaterally negotiated agreements, both groups of workers receive the same pay and benefits: partly subsidized transport to and from their home countries, free housing, employer provision of cooking facilities at no cost, access to the public health system, and a guaranteed contract at a known wage. The contract provides a minimum of 240 hours of work during the first six-week period, and an average of 40 hours of work weekly over the course of the season, which ranges from a low of six weeks to a high of eight months. Foreign workers are ostensibly protected from abuse and contract violations on the part of employers by consular (Mexico) or liaison (all Caribbean nations) officials, who provide workers with a 24-hour telephone number through which they can solicit intervention for personal or work-related problems or obtain emergency assistance. In terms of worker responsibilities, candidates from all participating nations are required to reside in owner-designated housing, perform their work in a timely and responsible manner, and follow without complaint all employer requests that do not place their health in danger. The contracts designate at least one rest day weekly, but where circumstances dictate, that day can be postponed on the basis of mutual agreement. The principal difference between Caribbean and Mexican workers lies in the amount deducted for transportation, as well as the deduction of 6% of Caribbean workers' salaries to help subsidize the liaison services and deferral of an additional 19% of salaries until their return home at the end of the contract season (FARMS, 2003: 15). Both groups of workers occupy equally weak and vulnerable structural positions vis-à-vis Canadian employers, but the terms of the contract do nothing to explain the replacement of one racial/national group with another.

Documenting Racialized Labour Replacement

Yet racial/national replacement, or at least a shift, has certainly occurred. Jamaican workers gained an early, dominant position as a result of their 1966 entry into the Program. By the time the first 208 Mexicans arrived in Canada in 1974, Caribbean workers numbered more than 5,500. The number of Mexicans grew slowly, exceeding 1,000 only 13 years later in 1987, at which point they represented less than 20% of all participants. Between

8. In this paper we will group all Caribbean workers together, regardless of their country of origin. Some growers may well differentiate between Jamaicans and Barbadians, but it is our impression that most rural dwellers see only "Black" (Caribbean) and "Brown" (Mexican) among the contract worker population. Our use of "Caribbean" is emic (from the dominant Canadian view) as opposed to etic. Where Caribbean workers see difference—between, for instance, Barbadians and Trinidadians, Afro- and Indo-Caribbeans—most Canadians of European descent see sameness (see Larkin, 1989).

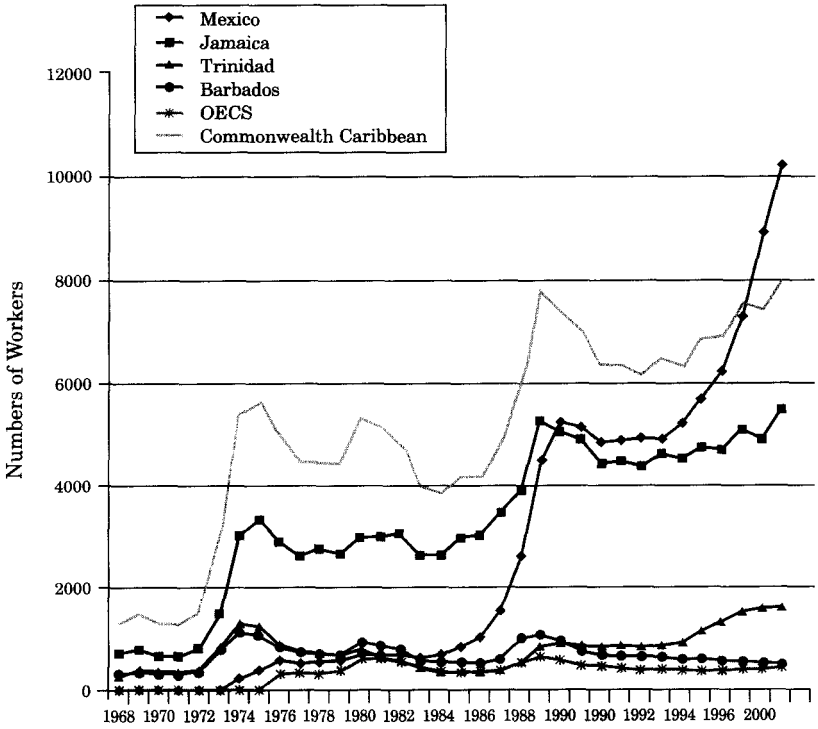
1986 and 2002 the SAWP experienced two periods of rapid expansion. The first period began in 1987, when Foreign Agricultural Resource Management Services (FARMS) took over management of the Program from the Canadian government. That period ended in 1990, by which time the number of foreign migrants had experienced an overall 100% growth. Both Caribbean and Mexican workers increased in number, though Mexicans, with 19% of the workers at the beginning, obtained almost half (49%) of the new placements, raising their overall participation to 37%. Following several years of stagnation, during which total SAWP numbers declined, labour demand grew once again between 1994 and 2001. This time, Mexican recruitment accounted for 70% of the increase, as Caribbean numbers fluctuated between 6,500–7,000 during the period, well below the high of 8,000 attained in 1989. By 2001, Mexican workers represented 51% of all foreign workers in the SAWP (Figure 1).

We use the word "replacement" with some care, given that gaining a disproportionate share of Program growth does not imply replacement per se. In a narrow sense, racial/national labour replacement occurs when an enterprise abruptly or gradually over time substitutes workers of one group for another. When a significant proportion of employers within the same economic sector—for example, Southern Ontario horticulturalists—take similar decisions, then we can speak of a racial/national "shift" or transformation in labour force composition. As we noted above, temporary visa workers from developing countries account for a growing percentage of agricultural workers and hours worked on Ontario farms, evidence of a labour force transformation in which *both* Caribbean *and* Mexican workers have played (and continue to play) important roles. Without doubt this is the more important issue. However, we are interested here in interrogating the dimensions and implications when significant numbers of growers decide to change from one highly exploitable racial/national group to another, in this case from Caribbean workers (broadly conceived) to Mexicans, or when new entrants choose a specific country based on their neighbours' racialized beliefs.

As noted above, Caribbean workers had an eight-year head start on Mexicans, enjoying a virtual monopoly on recruitment until 1974. Despite Mexico's successful penetration of the SAWP, particularly from the late 1980s, the absolute number of Caribbean workers did increase by 2,500 between 1974 (5,500) and 1989 (8,000), falling back somewhat over the course of the succeeding decade. It is possible that *all* of the Mexican increase resulted from growth in the SAWP, and that *none* of it was a product of growers engaged in "country surfing" for what they perceive to be the hardest-working, most docile (and thus most exploitable) work force. Unfortunately, available quantitative material does not allow us to separate out and analyse comparatively the results of country preferences declared by newly entering growers from possible "country surfing" engaged in by prior participants who have become disenchanted with a particular group

Figure 1

Historical Growth of the SAWP



Source: Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003.

of workers. In this article, therefore, "country surfing" will be documented through interviews with growers, liaison officers and farm worker advocates. It is also important to note that the racial/national preferences of currently participating growers likely exert an important influence on entering growers via networks of formal and informal contacts centred in churches, farmer organizations and recreational golfing, among others.

A second difficulty that we will attempt to negotiate in this paper concerns racialized labour market segmentation, as growers identify certain groups (e.g., Jamaicans or Mexicans) with certain tasks (e.g., picking tree

crops or stoop labour) and particular crops (e.g., peaches or ginseng). Such associations would represent a form of racialization analogous to the gender typing voiced by maquiladora managers who argue that women's natural dexterity and patience give them advantages over men when it comes to industrial assembly (Wright, 2001). With this in mind, let us note that Ontario figures for 2000–2003 indicate substantial racial/national segmentation by commodity sector. Mexicans dominate flower (87–93%), nursery (75–80%) and greenhouse (85–90%) production; Caribbean workers predominate in apple (75–80%) and tobacco (65–70%) cultivation. The remaining commodity sectors fall in a more amorphous middle: canning is wash; Mexican have the edge in vegetables (55–60%) and ginseng (50–55%); and Caribbean workers predominate in tender fruits (around 60%). Putting these into columns makes the relationship a bit clearer:

Mexican Domination	**Caribbean Domination**	**Mexican Edge**	**Caribbean Edge**	**No Edge**
Greenhouse	Apples	Vegetables	Tender fruit	Canning
Flowers	Tobacco	Ginseng		
Nurseries				

We discuss this material in more detail below, but to the degree that commodity-based racial/national segmentation has some level of historical depth, as opposed to being a recent innovation, then recruitment of this or that group would be expected to follow the rise and/or decline in production and labour demand for that product. Thus, if Mexicans predominate in greenhouse, flower and nursery industries, and if those industries enter into an expansive phase as those dominated by Caribbean workers enter a stagnant or regressive one, then demand for Mexican foreign workers would be expected to "naturally" rise. But it is also possible that recent results are the culmination of an historical process of racial/national replacement whereby a once-Caribbean greenhouse work force, to take a hypothetical example, came to be replaced by a Mexican one. Such replacement might represent a change, as opposed to continuity, in the judgments that Ontario growers make with respect to the discipline, skill and dexterity of particular groups of racialized peoples from the "Third World."

Finally, it is important to note that exploration of these issues necessarily takes us into the mechanics of the SAWP—in-country recruitment policies, consular relations and negotiations over salaries—all of which affect the categories (beyond race or nationality) of workers, their tolerance for the on-farm working and living conditions, and other issues that shape their reliability and capacity for hard labour. It also requires some exploration of the changing parameters of Canadian horticulture in the global market. We emphasize that no one set of relationships or beliefs in and of themselves accounts for the racial/national shift that we document. Overt

racism and racialization certainly exists in rural Ontario, but the more common, "garden" variety is channelled through a series of paternalistic ideologies and practices that make it possible for their bearers to ensure, before themselves and members of the rural community in which they reside, that they are determinately not "racists."

Accounting for Racial/National Changes in Labour Force Composition

In the following sections we discuss change in labour force composition in terms of racial/national segmentation and the evolution of commodity sectors, growers' country surfing in a quest for the most docile, exploitable labour force, and blatant racist beliefs that make Mexicans "naturally" more desirable employees than Caribbean participants. Throughout we will see how racial and cultural discourses, on the one hand, and everyday experiences, on the other, constitute a power/knowledge nexus that underpins labour force recruitment practices in Ontario horticulture. In specific cases, however, some growers country surf, playing source country representatives off against one another in order to ensure the most hardworking, reliable labour force, regardless of origin.

The analysis presented in this article is based on both authors' extensive research on the use of foreign labour in Canadian agriculture. In particular, it relies on in-depth interviews conducted in the period 2002–2004 with growers (n = 36), administrators (n = 14), and community representatives (n = 22), including migrant worker advocates, labour organizers, religious leaders and merchants in communities with a strong migrant presence. Growers were recruited through snowball sampling and were interviewed in their homes or, in the cases of larger enterprises, at office headquarters. Administrators and community representatives were chosen for interviews based on their involvement with foreign workers supplied under the SAWP. Formal interview information was supplemented by informal contact with migrant workers at Catholic masses, Migrant Worker Resource Centres, grocery stores, flea markets and restaurants. We interviewed most community representatives in their places of work or in restaurants. FARMS Ontario provided a great deal of statistical information that proved useful in developing our analysis of changing labour demands by commodity sector.

Racialization, Labour Market Segmentation and the Evolution of Commodity Sectors

Canadian growers, whether small family farmers or the owners of medium- or large-sized capitalist enterprises, are concerned about the bottom line. They have limited control over most non-labour costs or market prices; furthermore, they find themselves embroiled in a cutthroat global competition

with agricultural operations located in the United States (apples), Mexico (tomatoes), Columbia (cut flowers) and elsewhere, many of which benefit from longer growing seasons, significant government subsidies, and access to cheap domestic or (im)migrant labour. Furthermore, the Ontario tobacco industry is subject to a quota system on the part of the provincial government, currently engaged in a highly publicized anti-smoking campaign.[9] Even successful hothouse growers are concerned with rising energy costs, which are exerting additional pressure to cut production costs.

Changes in the relative success and decline of commodity sectors explain part of the racial/national replacement. It is likely that growers of one commodity began with one labour supply country and, being satisfied or risk-averse, decided not to "try" another country's workers. Switching labour supply country requires new investments in training and worker recruitment, since a naming system[10] allows growers to ensure that most of their best workers return. In interviews, many growers claimed that they based their decisions about labour supply country on their neighbours' apparent success with their workers. As one grower stated: "At the time Mexicans were most common in the neighbourhood and . . . in the greenhouse industry in Leamington and I knew that. Jamaicans, I had heard that a couple people had gotten into trouble with them, so I just thought to avoid that."

In addition to the reasons related to regional variation in the distribution of nationalities of workers due to the historical incorporation of commodities and producers into the SAWP, Canadian growers and government administrators hold racialized ideologies about the suitability of different nationalities to certain crops. One grower, who began with Caribbean workers and later switched to Mexican labour, justified his decision as follows: "We talked to other growers around who were in the Program already, and they said for the type of work that you're doing, the Mexicans are probably a little more suited to that type of agriculture." In general, Mexican workers are considered to be shorter in stature and are preferred for work that involves stooping close to the ground, while Caribbean workers are considered more suited to fruit tree-picking. The words of one Canadian administrator illustrate this view:

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9. According to an industry representative, total tobacco production cannot exceed 300 million pounds (136.4 metric tonnes), although a Tobacco Advisory Committee generally establishes a much lower annual production figure. Each of about 900 tobacco growers has the right to grow a certain proportion of the total. Farmers can sell a part or all of their quota to others. For instance, in 2003 the Advisory Committee set total production at 94 million pounds, a bit less than a third of the maximum. A farmer holding a maximum quota of 300,000 pounds (0.1% of the total) was permitted to grow 94,000 pounds, equivalent to 42.7 tonnes. These numbers simultaneously set tobacco acreage and determine the industry's labour needs (Interview, 2003).
10. This policy allows employers to request their workers for the following year by name. As a result, a number of foreign workers have established lengthy labour trajectories, sometimes remaining on the same farm for a decade or more.

> The reason for the shift to the Mexican . . . is that the Mexican workers were shorter so they had the field crops. And then they had the West Indian men who were taller men for the fruit trees so they didn't have to use a ladder, or break their backs from bending over for the vegetable crops.

Another grower further explained the widely held perception that Jamaicans are better at picking fruit:

> I know some guys have Mexican men for it, but I have heard of more people switching from Mexicans to Jamaicans for picking peaches than I have going from Jamaicans to Mexicans. I think that Jamaicans, for picking in the orchards, are just bar-none the best, so that's why we have it set up the way we do.

Some growers expressed that different nationalities "liked" different types of work. As one grower who hires both Mexicans and Jamaicans stated:

> Jamaicans like more physical work. In their society work is culturally either male or female: digging or lugging pots for men, weeding for women, while Mexicans don't discriminate between these types of work. They like more variety. They don't like to dig evergreens, but give them a hoe and they will outwork the Jamaicans every time.

As this last statement indicates, growers will strategically allocate workers from different supply countries and of different genders as an intentional labour strategy. For example, the owner of one diversified fruit farm hires Jamaican men for picking peaches, Mexican men for pruning, Mexican women for packing, and ethnic Vietnamese Canadians for vineyard work. It is worth quoting his explanation for this racialized and gendered allocation of labour:

> We have the Mexican women who just strictly stay in the packing barn. I tried using Jamaicans in the vineyard and you know, you can call it stereotyping, but they don't hold a candle to the Vietnamese. For tying and that, it's unbelievable how fast they are, they're just like machines, they're really good . . . . Jamaicans are better peach pickers. I mean I could take the Vietnamese and put them in the field but they don't like it, it's a complete turnaround, I'll lose my shirt that way. I mean, as fast as they are at tying, they're just so small and petite that they have no arms, no strength.

The benefits to production of this strategy include dividing the work force and potentially pitting workers of different groups against one another (Binford, Carrasco, Arana and Rojas, 2004; Binford, 2006).

In so far as such racialized assignments enter the cultural repertoire of employers, the evolution of hiring practices will follow the evolution of the different commodity sectors, as well as the labour demands that accompany that evolution. If greenhouse production grows, so will the demand

for Mexicans, while if apples enter into crisis, the demand for Caribbean-origin workers will decline. Commodity sector data for racial/national hiring preferences exist only for the years 2000–2004; this can be combined with a more complete ten-year record for overall labour demand by commodity sector. The following graphs break down the vacancies filled by crop and number of employees for the period 1994–2003.[11] To aid comparison, separate figures 2 and 3 graph the evolution of sectors in which Mexican workers dominate (greenhouses, nurseries, flowers) and those dominated by Caribbean workers (apples, tobacco). Figure 4 (below) graphs the recent employment requirements of sectors in which one or the other group has an "edge" (tender fruits, vegetables, ginseng). Note that labour demand in most commodity sectors fell in 2002–2003, though more steeply in some than in others, for which reason we focus on the 1994–2001 period here.

Figure 2 indicates that greenhouse vacancies increased more than fourfold, from around 500 in 1994 to more than 2,200 in 2001. Nursery vacancies increased more than 150%, though the small numbers at the beginning meant that they had a smaller overall effect on total vacancies. Flower vacancies grew as well from 1998 on, when flower producers were admitted to the SAWP. The growth in SAWP vacancies in these crops reflects how these commodities have performed in recent years. Indeed, greenhouse vegetables and floriculture are Canadian agriculture's greatest success stories under globalization. Between 1980 and 2000, greenhouse tomatoes and cucumbers increased in value by 1,058% and 994%, respectively (Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). By the end of the decade, Canada went from being a net importer of tomatoes to a net exporter. Between 1996 and 2001, the greenhouse industry increased area under cover by more than 40% (Statistics Canada, 2001). Ontario accounts for 50% of Canada's greenhouse industry; the town of Leamington alone hosts the largest concentration of greenhouses in North America (Basok, 2003; Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003b; Statistics Canada, 2004). Floriculture and nurseries have also experienced success in recent years, and now rank as the number three commodity in terms of market receipts (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003b).[12] In 2000, the floriculture and nursery sectors recorded the highest production value in the Canadian horticultural industry of $1.6 billion, representing nearly 40% of the total horticultural industry (White, Bills and Schluep, 2002).

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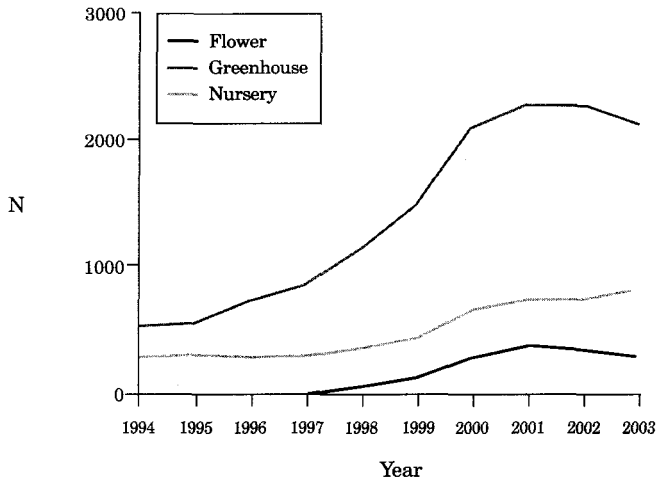
11. "Vacancies" refers to the total number of worker-positions requested by employers through FARMS. Most positions are filled by returning workers "named" or requested back by employers from the previous season. Some positions are filled by experienced workers who have requested transfers. The remainder will be new hires—technically known as "nominal" workers—entering the program for the first time and assigned by sending country authorities to one or another Canadian employer. Because some workers are expelled or voluntarily quit the Program, there will be some nominal workers even where overall employment on the farm, in a commodity sector or in Ontario, remains stable. However, the number of nominal workers will increase faster when hiring in a particular commodity sector expands, either because farmers already in the SAWP have made the decision to devote more acreage to that sector and/or because previously non-participating farmers join the Program.
12. Greenhouse vegetables account for 30 cents out of every dollar of revenue to greenhouse growers, while flowers account for 70 cents (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003b).

Figure 2

Evolution of Mexican-Dominated Commodity Sectors



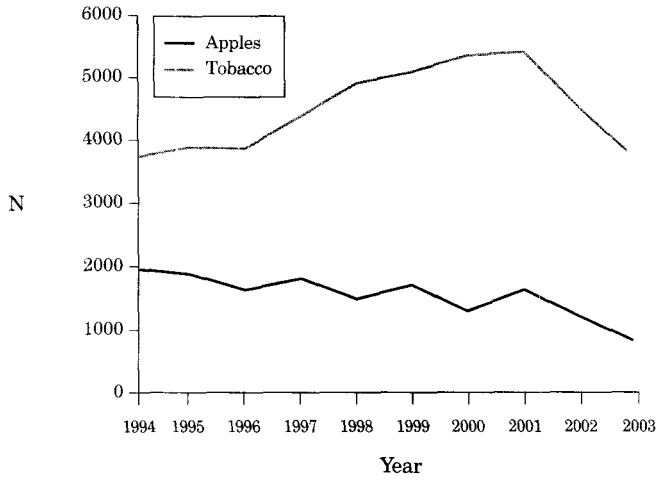
Source: Calculated from information provided by FARMS.

The recent evolution of apples and tobacco, commodity sectors in which Caribbean foreign labour predominates, reveals a different story. Although apples are the largest fruit crop in Ontario, with several large producer associations and storage co-ops that export and locally market apples year-round (DeEll, Slingerland and Murr, 2001), producers of this crop have been facing considerable challenges in recent years, specifically in terms of changing phytosanitary standards, a general decline in producer prices and the flooding of the Canadian market with U.S. stock, to the extent that Canada is now a net apple importer (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2004; Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). Although apple production has grown in the last two decades, both in value and volume, farmgate prices have fallen relative to the growth in SAWP wages (Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). It is not surprising that SAWP vacancies in apples have been sliding gradually since 1994.

Like apples, decreased demand for SAWP workers in tobacco is an indication of the industry's challenges. After almost a decade of sustained

Figure 3

Evolution of Caribbean-Dominated Commodity Sectors

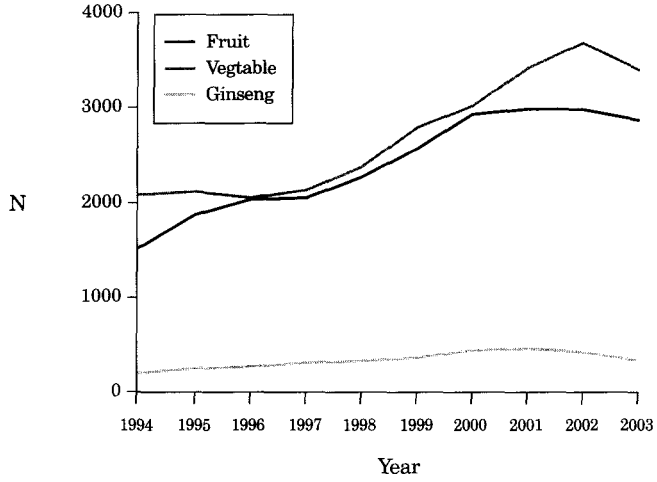


Source: Calculated from information provided by FARMS.

demand for foreign labour, SAWP vacancies in tobacco dropped in 2001, reflecting the industry's persistent decline. Between 1980 and 2000, tobacco production fell in both value and volume (Weston and Scarpa de Masellis, 2003). While the industry was fairly robust until the 1970s, it underwent considerable restructuring in the early to mid-1980s. A confluence of economic forces (most notably high interest rates), multi-faceted government actions seeking to reduce the use of tobacco, changing public attitudes, inclement weather and crop diseases, and changing production factors led to a significant decrease in the number of tobacco growers and the volume and area of tobacco grown (Ramsey, Stewart, Troughton and Smit, 2003). Although there was an increase in exports, improved prices and improved demand by the late 1980s that allowed the remaining growers to recover, the industry still faces problems. Government policy to curb tobacco consumption continues to gather steam, while increased quantities of lower-priced imports exert downward pressure on production volumes and prices (Wyatt, 2005).

Figure 4

Evolution of Commodity Sectors with Mexican or Caribbean "Edge"



Source: Calculated from information provided by FARMS.

Finally, we see above that vacancies in fruit (Caribbean edge) and vegetables and ginseng (Mexican edge) both rose during the mid-to-late 1990s. The state of the fruit industry is mixed, with some commodities in decline and others enjoying considerable success. Canada remains a net importer of tender fruit, a commodity that has faced increasing competition from imports. Production acreage is on the decline, mainly as a result of the increased density of plantings, as well as foreign competition (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003a). Most of the growth of foreign worker employment in fruit crops has been in berries, which are increasingly filling the market demand for fresh, high quality produce, as well as grapes for wine production. Strong demand for high quality Canadian wines is encouraging an increase in planting, and production is expected to continue to grow as the vines mature (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2000).

In Ontario, where production is concentrated, grapes represent 22% of the farm value of commercial fruit produced in the province (Grape Growers of Ontario, n.d.). Farmgate income grew by 137% from 1997 to 2001 and, in the period 1989 to 2001, the volume harvested increased 642% (Grape Growers of Ontario, n.d.). However, few SAWP participants are currently employed in vineyards.

There are also winners and losers in vegetable commodities. Consumer demand for field vegetables has dropped, as preferences shift to greenhouse varieties (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 1999). The 2002 Canadian preliminary field-grown marketed vegetable production (fresh and processing) was 1.81 million metric tonnes, down 10% from revised 2001 figures and 11.8% below the five-year average (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003b). Throughout the 1990s, there was little growth in terms of value of field-grown vegetables (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, 2003b).

Taking stock, it seems clear that a significant part of the growth in Mexican labour vis-à-vis Caribbean labour derives from changes in the fortunes of commodities. Vacancies in apples (Caribbean workers) have been falling for a decade, while those in greenhouses (Mexican workers) have been rapidly rising. These trends alone explain a significant percentage of the change in employment patterns over the 1994–2003 period. We reiterate, though, that even where it is naturalized, there is nothing natural about racialized associations with particular commodity sectors or crop regimes. If there were, then tobacco growers in Mexico would probably be importing Caribbean workers, while Caribbean flower growers would be looking to the Mexican labour market to meet their needs. The racial/national segmentation of the agricultural labour market and the varied fortunes of different commodity sectors can only be part of the story. The fact that Mexican workers were called upon to fill 20–25% of the vacancies in apples, 30–35% in tobacco and around 40 per cent in tender fruit—all predominantly Caribbean areas—suggests that factors other than racialized stereotypes regarding work abilities also play a role.

Country Surfing and the Quest to Provide "Reliable" Workers

Within the SAWP, a powerful mechanism for disciplining both workers and their representatives is employers' ability to choose the supply country. When employers are dissatisfied with the workers from a specific country or the service provided by the labour supply country representatives, they can switch countries the following year. Competition is generated both through the practice of switching labour supply countries itself—referred to as country surfing—as well as employer threats to do so. Further, if one country decides not to supply an employer due to poor labour relations, other countries will step in to offer their workers. Liaison officers and consular staff are responsible for generating and preserving their country's

market share of labour placements in the SAWP and, consequently, foreign exchange earnings derived from remittances, which in the case of both Mexico and the Caribbean region are an important source of revenue. Labour supply country officials are thus reluctant to become too aggressive with employers for fear of losing the farm to a competitor nation. Growers are well aware of the power they hold. One farmer claimed that his reduction in the number of workers requested from a Caribbean country precipitated a diplomatic visit from a top-ranking official from the Ministry of Labour, who reportedly begged, "I know you've had a problem and I want to talk to these men. Please don't give up on [our country]."

According to employers, reliable, "good" workers are hardworking, obedient and have the physical and emotional stamina to work until the end of their contracts. In addition, "good" workers should have prior farming experience at least, and agricultural training at best. When placing orders for foreign workers, some employers make requests for specific skill sets: international driver's licenses, proficiency in English, or experience driving a tractor. Being able to fulfil these requests indicates good recruitment capacity on the part of the labour supply country, a point we detail below. Further, "good" workers do not question employment practices or housing conditions. As one liaison officer stated: "[voicing rights] causes some employers to switch, because a lot of them don't want backchat or voicing of rights." Mexicans' low or non-existent facility in English restricts "backchat"—or relegates it to a language that most employers do not understand—as a result of which the workers experience a higher degree of vulnerability (Basok, 2002). As one Caribbean liaison officer explained:

> Caribbean people tend to question things and they don't back down on what they perceive to be their rights. That could be a negative because some employers don't want that. They want a peaceful life, a guy who comes and works hard and doesn't mind if he gets a ten-minute break or not. Somehow our guys use their sense. Why should I work from six in the morning till five in the evening without at least two 20-minute breaks? Some employers don't see that as a necessary thing. And they don't see that the guys get some time off or a day off. Working seven days a week is not an easy thing. So when our boys raise their concern about these things, they get looked at or they might even get switched. So that is one of the reasons why I could see us losing a lot of ground. Eventually (pauses) . . . well, you know, we have already lost a lot of ground.[13]

As this official suggested, "good" workers limit their social commitments and accept overtime hours. The following grower confirms:

> The Jamaicans are no good because they complain a lot, and spend their time partying. A lot go AWOL. With the St. Lucians, when there were

13. For an excellent discussion of how employers and contract labour employees (Caribbean workers in this case) engage in "the mutual construction of a divided world," see Larkin (1989).

> quite a few around here, they started to party. There are all kinds of Mexicans around. The Jamaicans also have relatives in Toronto, so weekends they don't want to work.

The previous passage points to another reason behind the replacement of Caribbean workers by Mexicans: the existence of a large immigrant Caribbean community in the Greater Toronto Area. The presence of social networks multiplies Caribbean workers' social commitments outside of the workplace compared to Mexicans, who are more openly enthusiastic about working longer days and through weekends, in part because they have few options for social contact with members of their own cultural community. More importantly, the Caribbean diaspora in Toronto provides a social network into which migrants interested in seeking more permanent settlement can easily disappear. FARMS keeps careful track of persons who go absent without leave (AWOL), as well as those who breach their contracts, usually by abandoning the farm prior to its ending date. From 1986–2003, combined Caribbean AWOLs and contract breaches experienced two periods of cyclical increase and decline. They rose during the late 1980s, reaching a high of 7.8% of hires in 1988, before falling to 2.4% in 1994. There followed a second, albeit less steep, increase to approximately 5.0% during 1999–2001, followed by another fall to 2.0% in 2002. By contrast, the figures for Mexican workers followed no regular pattern. For the period reviewed, violations never rose above 2.6% and at times dipped below 1%, with no clear pattern (see Table 1). As the percentage of Caribbean "problem workers" rose, the Caribbean-Mexican gap (Figure 5) tended to widen. In 2002 alone, 147 Jamaican workers "absconded," an almost 50% increase from 2001. When workers go AWOL, work is disrupted and other associated costs are incurred by employers. Employers generally order replacements, each of which involves payment of an additional $35 administration fee (2003) to FARMS, as well as a portion of the new employee's airfare. If the deserter left soon after arriving, it is possible that the employer will also have to absorb the unpaid portion of the airfare that would have been deducted from the worker's pay.

Supplying capable, reliable, and skilled workers who finish their contracts—quality control—is the responsibility of the labour supply country representatives. Employers' expectations for the labour recruitment process in labour supply countries and the competition among those countries was expressed in the following comments of a Canadian administrator:

> The [labour supply governments] could do a better job of selecting more suitable workers for agriculture . . . . Employers would like nothing better than to have farmers come up, people that come from a farming background. This might be a nice thing on their wish list, but the supply countries, knowing this in advance, should be working towards that. And that's when, over time, you build up the confidence in their workers and hopefully the employers will come their way. It's a five-horse race here: four Caribbean countries plus Mexico, and the employer has the choice of which ones they want to go to.

Table 1

Caribbean and Mexican Contract Violations 1986–2003

Year	Caribbean Recruitment (1)	Mexican Recruitment (2)	Caribbean Breaches (3)	Mexican Breaches (4)
1986	4160	847	37	6
1987	4802	1229	80	11
1988	5947	2100	124	2
1989	7742	3560	144	1
1990	7364	4214	148	15
1991	6950	4136	116	1
1992	6278	3818	89	38
1993	6319	3887	76	63
1994	6067	3857	63	36
1995	6443	3825	105	56
1996	6254	4187	67	67
1997	6761	4581	103	83
1998	6892	5272	146	114
1999	7476	6078	166	68
2000	7377	7281	134	191
2001	7919	8060	146	68
2002	7382	7538	131	95
2003	7390	7082	75	59

Source: Calculations based on Thomas (1997: 56–57) and information provided by FARMS.

Mexican officials claim that they place a great deal of emphasis on matching farm workers to farms, sourcing workers from regions that specialize in the commodity being produced in Canada. Indeed, Mexico has a highly capitalized agro-industrial sector that produces a number of the same commodities grown by its northern neighbours. According to Mexican officials, the agricultural experience and skill set of their workers explains their country's growing share of labour placements.[14]

The number of AWOLs also reflects poorly on a labour supply country's ability to recruit "reliable" workers. One Caribbean official attributed the AWOL problem to a flawed recruitment policy that focussed on urbanites ill-suited to agricultural work and more likely to have social networks in Canada. In 2003, the Canadian High Commissioner to Jamaica stated: "If

14. The main Mexican recruitment areas, however, remain located in the high *altiplano*, where dryland grain farming predominates and most small-scale agriculturalists have no or limited experience with commercial horticulture (Binford, Carrasco, Arana and Rojas, 2004; Basok, 2002; Verduzco and Lozano, 2003).

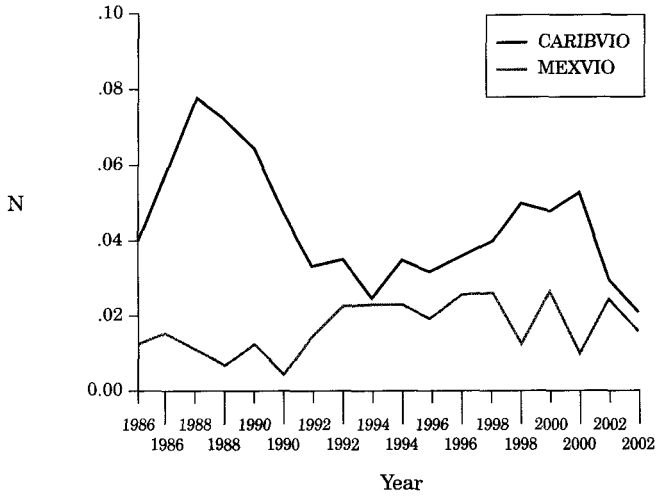
Caribbean AWOLs (5)	Mexican AWOLs (6)	% Caribbean Violations 7 = (3+5)/1	% Mexican Violations 8 = (4+6)/2	Violation Gap 9 = (7-8)
123	4	.04	.01	.03
195	7	.06	.01	.04
340	20	.08	.01	.07
410	21	.07	.01	.07
325	35	.06	.01	.05
205	17	.05	.00	.04
115	18	.03	.01	.02
147	24	.04	.02	.01
84	52	.02	.02	.00
114	30	.03	.02	.01
132	11	.03	.02	.01
139	34	.04	.03	.01
125	23	.04	.03	.01
204	7	.05	.01	.04
220	1	.05	.03	.02
273	0	.05	.01	.04
87	89	.03	.02	.01
74	54	.02	.02	.00

the numbers [of AWOLs] increase, we will then turn to other sources [of labour]" (*Globe and Mail*, 2003). Following these remarks, the Jamaican government shifted recruitment to rural areas in an effort to reduce AWOLs and implemented an iron-fist policy of temporarily removing from the SAWP all workers who failed to be named by their Canadian employer.[15] After tripling in number from 1994 to 2001 (84 to 273), the number of Caribbean AWOLs declined to 87 in each of the years 2002 and 2003, which approximated the Mexican level. Furthermore, when three Jamaican workers were allegedly caught smuggling drugs into Canada in 2003, the Jamaican Ministry of Labour punished the workers' entire home parish by banning its participation in the SAWP for the next three years (*Jamaican Observer*, 2004).

15. The effect of a rising number of AWOLs or contract breaches depends on the total number of foreign workers. The *number* of Caribbean AWOLs grew 225% between 1994 and 2001, but the percentage increase relative to the total number of Caribbean employees was a lower 121%.

Figure 5

Caribbean and Mexican Contract Violations in Proportional Terms, 1986–2003



In addition to recruiting suitable workers, labour supply countries must provide good service for everyday concerns. Employers expect to have their calls responded to and their questions answered. They expect home country officials to be willing to visit the farm if a dispute arises and mediate that dispute (in their favour) as soon as possible, limiting interruptions in production. Furthermore, employers expect labour supply countries to deliver workers quickly, just in time for production. For example, in 2001–2003, the Mexican consulate was roundly criticized by the industry because of delays in processing employer requests for workers. As one Canadian administrator remarked:

> [The Mexican Consulate is] not quick on response and I even have a joke that Mexico works on siesta time and they do. They take their time and nothing's ever an emergency. Growers do get frustrated with it and we've had a few growers switch back to the Caribbean Program in the last year.

In order to meet these demands, both the Mexican and Jamaican governments ran the enormous expense of establishing a satellite consular office and a Ministry of Labour Liaison Service, respectively, in the town of Leamington, where over 27% of SAWP employees are concentrated.

Blatant Racism

Blatant racism also plays a role in racial/national replacement among the foreign work force in horticulture. There were some indications in the research that growers and others considered Mexican workers "closer" in appearance to the Canadian population, which "naturally" makes them more desirable workers. For example, we gathered some information that indicated immigrant employers from Southern Europe preferred Mexican workers to Caribbean workers. One administrator commented that the concentration of Mexican workers in Leamington was due to the "closer association" between Mexicans and the region's Southern European–origin growers (cf. Basok, 2002). Furthermore, a liaison officer speculated that employers face community pressure to hire "Brown" (Mexican) workers as opposed to "Black" (Caribbean) workers:

> I get the impression that there is a lot of pressure for [growers] to move towards Mexican workers. Not necessarily from the government point of view, but from the community point of view. There is this feeling that the Mexican worker, who is closer in complexion to the White Canadian, would be more acceptable.

While such statements might be conjecture, government discourse between 1947 and 1966 reveals that Black workers were not defined as suitable permanent settlers by the Canadian state, which feared the emergence of a "race relations" problem (Stasiulis and Bakan, 2005; Satzewich, 1991). Racism is clearly illustrated in residents' and growers' concerns with Caribbean workers having sexual relationships with Canadian women (Larkin, 1989; Preibisch, 2003). One rural resident suggested that the labour replacement of Caribbean workers with Mexicans was in part to deter sexual relationships and, consequently, served to discipline Caribbean workers:

> Originally it was all Jamaicans [here] and some of them got a bit cocky and stuff like that because they had never had money before and now they had this money, so they felt like the big rich guy. So some of them got more advanced with the women and a few other things; that was back a few years ago. So then the farmers brought in some Mexican workers and some of the farmers switched to Mexican workers, and they couldn't go out and communicate with the women and generally back home they were more family orientated and that's the way they were living here. The Jamaicans found out that they could be replaced and so some of the farmers have gone back to Jamaicans and other ones have Mexicans and Jamaicans (cited in Preibisch, 2003: 99).

Cases have also been reported of Canadian men physically assaulting foreign workers for fraternizing with local women in a public establishment (Ibid.). More seriously, a labour advocate alleged that a dance hall was burned to the ground in one rural community "because West Indian workers were dancing with the White women" (Ibid.). Throughout the history of the SAWP, employers have been subject to community pressure to conceal worker housing from the main roads, symbolically marking the workers' exclusion from Canadian society (Cecil and Ebanks, 1991; Preibisch, 2003). Fears surrounding the sexual behaviour of Black Caribbean workers, documented in the negotiations preceding the formation of the SAWP (Satzewich, 1991), still permeate the rural landscape. Despite racist fears, relationships have formed between foreign workers and the local population. Between 1994 and 2002, some 269 Caribbean workers ended their contracts for reasons of marriage, an average of 30 marriages annually, compared to a mere three Mexicans during the same period (Preibisch, 2004). The fact that more than 95% of SAWP participants are males makes it obvious that, in all but a few cases, the matrimonies involved migrant men and non-migrant women.[16] The English-language facility of Caribbean men, combined with the existence of social networks, contributes to their greater ability—relative to that of Mexicans—to circulate geographically and socially, and ensures that racist fears will find substantial experiential sustenance.

Growers continue to harbour fears that the SAWP will be eliminated or interfered with, for which reason community pressure from racially homogeneous rural towns is a lobbying force they prefer to avoid. They are concerned not only about their neighbours' perceptions, but how these might affect production. Many growers do not want their SAWP employees to exercise a social life in Canada, including forming sexual and other relationships, in part out of productivity considerations, and thus take steps to limit workers' social activity (Preibisch, 2003). As one administrator noted:

> The employer will say "I don't want any young ladies coming on my farm." Now the [migrant] workers may take that to mean he is racist, what that really means is that he is a businessman and he recognizes when young ladies have to come on the farm, your focus of what you are here for begins to be interrupted.

This has taken on a racialized dimension that may have implications for growers' choice of labour supply countries, as illustrated in the following interview excerpt from one farm operator:

> The Caribbean men, culturally, have multiple wives [so] it's not unusual, [to] have girlfriends, being the free love. The whole idea is not unusual so they'll have girlfriends here and children here. We've seen a large

16. Our qualitative data suggest that the Canadian partners of migrant workers are local White women, but we have no precise means of determining how many marriages were interracial.

> amount of mulatto children in this area because of local girls meeting up with the Caribbean guys. Growers got kind of, and they still do, they get upset with the domestic situation that is happening on their property. There are girls coming in and saying, "I want to see the father of my child, he owes me child support" you know, all these kinds of things happening. With the Mexican men, that, it wasn't happening quite so much. These people were also very hardworking and wanted to work very hard for their money, more so than the Caribbean guys (cited in Preibisch, 2003: 99).

In addition, in order to avoid social activity on the "shop floor" or the country field, some growers who employ both men and women choose genders of different nationalities. For example, some farm operators have mixed Spanish-speaking Mexican women with English-speaking Jamaican men to inhibit communication and avoid fraternization (Preibisch and Hermoso Santamaría, 2006).

Conclusions

While scholars have made inroads in understanding the role of citizenship status and, more recently, how it intersects with gender in shaping and organizing Canada's horticultural labour market, this paper has emphasized racism and processes of racialization. In our efforts to explain the rapid racial/national transformation of the SAWP over the last 20 years, a number of factors come into play. In part, the significant growth in Mexican labour vis-à-vis Caribbean labour can be explained by mapping the changing fortunes of Canada's horticultural commodity sectors under globalization. For example, we can note the decline in the profitability of apples—a crop in which Caribbean workers have been predominantly employed—as a result of foreign competition, alongside the remarkable expansion of Canada's greenhouse sector, in which Mexican workers predominate. However, this does not explain why Mexicans were called upon to fulfil a significant portion—between 20 and 40%—of the vacancies in commodities in which Caribbean foreign workers predominate.

Pairing this data with growers' narratives added another dimension, revealing how employers' use of racial stereotypes "naturally" associated different groups of workers with particular crops. Furthermore, we saw how racialized and gendered notions of the efficiency of different groups of people have been and are deployed as a labour strategy, evidencing how the racialization—or the gendering, for that matter—of the production process operates as a discursive process to produce the labourers demanded by agricultural producers in the high-income countries of the North. Whether or not Mexicans are any more docile than Trinidadians, or whether Jamaicans are more efficient at picking peaches than Mexicans, matters less than the discourse of what makes a "good" worker, a discourse that is constantly evoked by industry and Canadian government officials in annual provincial

and federal meetings, as well as communicated to the representatives of remittance-hungry labour supply countries. Growers' country surfing is a quest for the most docile, reliable and, therefore, exploitable labour force—regardless of their country of origin. Of secondary, but still noteworthy importance, is how essentialist discourses revealing preferences for Mexican workers are buttressed by the lesser-voiced racist beliefs that "Brown" people from former Spanish colonies are closer physically and culturally to Canada's imagined White community.

The analysis presented here helps us grasp the ways in which racism governs and regulates labour regimes, particularly when paired with issues of citizenship. As Stasiulis and Bakan (2005) emphasize, racial and gendered ideological stereotypes are crucial elements in implementing Canada's foreign worker programs, as they contribute to effective gatekeeping between certain populations of the North and the South. Racialized understandings and assumptions of foreign workers produce subjects "just like machines," yet less deserving of the rights afforded citizens, or more specifically, White citizens. Our analysis also contributes to furthering our understanding of how contemporary patterns of accumulation under globalization are in part based on a flexibility achieved through deepening labour segmentation in terms of social relations of inequality such as race/ethnicity, gender and citizenship. This paper serves as an entry point into a compelling area of research that is worthy of further attention, in particular as Canada's agricultural labour market widens to include new groups of migrants from different racial and national backgrounds through a new temporary visa worker program created in 2003, and due to recent indications from the federal government that it will speed up recruitment of foreign workers. Future avenues of research might explore if and how the arrival of new racialized groups may impact Mexico's position as the most preferred nation supplying farm workers. Given intensified efforts by the labour movement to organize Mexican SAWP workers through Spanish-speaking activists, this scenario appears likely.

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