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Migrant Workers and the Problem of Social Cohesion in Canada

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Abstract This paper explores the Canadian Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP) drawing on the concept of "social cohesion," a concept that was prominent in federal political discourse in the late 1990s. Social cohesion has value in highlighting the social impacts of shifts in policy at individual, group, and societal levels. Our case studies of temporary foreign workers in nursing and trades in Alberta suggest that the TFWP encourages low trust and sense of belonging among migrant workers and resistance from domestic workers because it promotes inequality and exclusion. The inability of most migrant workers to access settlement services, to bring families, to change employers, or to enroll in further education and training overtly discourages their integration into the local community. The TFWP also impacts the domestic workforce and citizenry by creating a new class of workers and non-citizens without the same rights. The dynamics observed at a workplace level predictably impact local communities and Canadian society overall as patterns of diversity are destabilized, values of fairness and equal opportunity are challenged, and norms of reciprocity are weakened.

Keywords Social cohesion · Migrant workers · Policy · Globalization

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Introduction

> How do we foster social cohesion and a sense of national identity? How do we do that within a framework that promotes inclusiveness and equality? Key to our success in Canada has and will continue to be national integration programs. … In many ways, then, integration is the basis of our cohesion.
>
> (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Joe Volpe, speaking at the Progressive Governance Seminar, "Migration, Integration, and Diversity", May 19, 2005)[1]

> In the future, we must select those immigrants who are most likely to succeed in the Canadian economy. … We want advice from the public and, indeed, from you parliamentarians on how we can improve the points-grid as a way of selecting those workers who will best integrate and contribute to our prosperity.
>
> (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, speaking to Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, February 17, 2011)

The two quotations above reflect differences in federal government rhetoric around migration. The first indicates a tension within social cohesion discourse regarding whether greater priority should be given to fostering shared values or to equality as preconditions for a more cohesive society. The second emphasizes economic over social issues. Changes in policy discourse and in government policies since the 1970s arguably reflect the shift from a welfare state to a neoliberal state and, more recently, a social investment state (Saint-Martin 2007; Jenson and Saint-Martin 2003). The issue of social cohesion became a key part of political discourse largely because of the social stress caused by economic liberalization policies (Saint-Martin 2007). This paper argues that social cohesion, defined in terms of social inclusion and exclusion, is an important goal. Drawing on our case study of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP), we argue further that the way societies deal with diversity, including through government policies, affects social cohesion.

Social Cohesion in Canada

Beauvais and Jenson (2002, p. 30) identify social cohesion as "a *quasi-concept* with a variety of definitions, inserted in a range of theoretical frameworks, and operationalized in a variety of ways." Since the late 1990s, national governments as well as the European Union (EU) and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) have raised concerns about social cohesion, because of perceived threats (Jenson 1998)[2] that include rising income inequality, unemployment and crime, increased immigration, the segregation of migrant communities, and political

[1] These speeches were accessed online in November 2011 at http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/department/media/speeches

[2] Of course, concerns about social cohesion have a much longer history in sociological writings from Comte and Saint-Simon to Durkheim, Spencer, and Tőnnies (Green and Janmaat 2011).

extremism and terrorism (Green and Janmaat 2011). The "social cohesion argument" has been used to argue for restrictive immigration policies on the presumption that increasing ethnic diversity associated with immigration undermines social solidarity (Holtug 2010).[3] While there is less concern in Canada about increasing diversity because of its commitment to official multiculturalism as a framework for mediating ethnocultural differences, writers have expressed concerns about the impact of social exclusion of immigrants (Galabuzi and Teelucksingh 2010; Reitz and Banerjee 2007). In addition, perceived economic threat from newcomers is linked to increasing "ethnocentrism and out-group hostility" (Hooghe 2007).

A discourse of social cohesion was quite evident in Canada in the late 1990s. In 1997, the Liberal government in Canada established a *Policy Research Sub-Committee*, which defined it as "the ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunity within Canada, based on a sense of trust, hope and reciprocity among all Canadians" (Jenson 2002). A *Social Cohesion Network* involving several federal government departments and agencies later shifted the definition from values to behaviors:

> Social cohesion is based on the willingness of individuals to cooperate and work together at all levels of society to achieve collective goals. (Jeannotte 2003)

Freidkin (2004) acknowledges the problem of integrating the individual and group levels at which social cohesion has been defined. He argues group-level conditions that produce positive membership attitudes and behaviors should be seen as antecedents of social cohesion. Group-level conditions include reward structures and control over resources, which are seen to affect the "pattern, strength and valence of interpersonal relationships" (p. 421). Following Festinger (1950), social cohesion is seen as "the resultant of all forces acting on the members of a group to remain in the group" (cited in Freidkin, p. 411). Theories of social cohesion thus address the social processes that link micro- and macro-level phenomena affecting individuals' membership attitudes and behaviors.

Green and Janmaat (2011) address social cohesion at a macro level, asserting that institutional forms are integrally related to attitudinal and behavioral characteristics in different social cohesion regimes.[4] Therefore, in addition to measures such as social trust, value diversity, and civic participation, authors look at measures of state involvement in social provision, income inequality, and employment protection across nations. Taking the state as their level of analysis, Green and Janmaat (2011) describe different regimes of social cohesion across countries and regions.

A *liberal regime* (in English-speaking countries like Britain, Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand) is characterized by relatively high income inequality and low state welfare expenditure, low levels of employment protection and union coverage, high levels of value diversity, and high levels of civic participation and

[3] This framing seems consistent with the historical use of nationalism as an "anticipatory strategy adopted by dominant groups threatened with marginalization or exclusion from an emerging nationally-imagined community" (cf. Anderson 2006, p. 101).

[4] The regimes of social cohesion approach is consistent with other comparative international work which examines the link between different national policies and social as well as economic outcomes (e.g., Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

consensus around the core values of freedom and merit. This contrasts with the *social democratic regime* found in Nordic countries, characterized by greater emphasis on equality promoted through higher levels of taxation and social spending, high employment rates and low levels of income inequality, and social partner cooperation. It is also distinct from the *social market regime* (in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Belgium, and other northwestern continental European countries), which places more emphasis on shared values and active participation in national political life, and relies more on the state to generate the conditions for social cohesion.

Other writers support the claim that Canada has adopted a liberal approach to social cohesion. The term "neoliberal" has also been used to describe policies that prioritize markets as the key distributional tool controlling the allocation of resources on the basis of competition and placing responsibility for well-being on the individual (Larner 2005). Sharpe and Arsenault (2009) report that while Canada became a richer country between 1981 and 2007, income and wealth inequality increased. Family after-tax income inequality rose by 35 % between 1989 and 2004 according to Toyes (2007). In addition, welfare benefits were significantly lower in 2007 than in 1986, and employment insurance became less generous. The safety net is therefore described as "frayed" (Sharpe and Arsenault 2009, p. 100). Concerns about social cohesion arose from this recognition of increasing economic inequality in the late 1990s (Toyes 2007). In response, the social investment state, a term coined by Giddens in his book *The Third Way*, attempted to better link social and economic concerns (Saint-Martin 2007).

The preceding discussion suggests that the concept of social cohesion is problematic. In addition to challenges of integrating different levels of analysis, there are conflicting views about how social cohesion should be measured and whether measures should differ across nations. For example, Hooghe (2007) suggests that in countries like Canada, which recognize group rights through a policy of multiculturalism, thinner forms of normative consensus governed by norms of reciprocity might be more appropriate than the norm of generalized trust.[5] Therefore, whether social cohesion refers to the degree of common norms and shared values or to the level of social inclusion based on community engagement and citizen participation is contested, as indicated by Volpe's quote in our introduction (Galabuzi and Teelucksingh 2010). In addition, Holtug (2010) observes that discussions about social cohesion occur at the level of the nation state, which raises interesting questions when our focus is on migrant workers who are, by necessity, transnational beings.

Changes in Welfare, Employment, and Immigration Policies

Why concerns about social cohesion have grown in most OECD countries, including Canada, in the past quarter century is important to consider. Changes in Canada's welfare programs and employment policies in the past 25 years reflect a shift from "consumption and maintenance-oriented programs to those that invest in people and enhance their capacity to participate in the productive economy" (Saint-Martin 2007, p.

[5] It is interesting to think about how these regimes of diversity relate to the regimes of social cohesion identified by Green and Janmaat (2011). In particular, countries associated with a liberal regime of social cohesion may adopt different regimes of diversity (e.g., Canada and the USA).

285). Social policy thus becomes a tool to further economic development with the goal of improving the employability and future productivity of welfare recipients. Hartman (2005) adds that the shift in welfare rationale from entitlement to obligation reinforces an anti-dependency discourse that has long been part of Anglo-Saxon welfare systems.

The federal government has removed itself from social welfare services over time. The Canada Assistance Plan (CAP), introduced in 1966, involved provinces and the federal government cost sharing provincially administered social assistance programs. Welfare payments were based on meeting minimum standards, universality, and mobility (Murray 2004). But in 1995, the federal government replaced CAP with the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST) payment system, which provided lump sum payments to the provinces for health, post-secondary education, and welfare. This was accompanied by looser spending guidelines and a decrease in the overall level of payments to the provinces (Marquardt 2007). According to Gazso and Krahn (2008), the CHST did not obligate provinces to recognize citizens' rights to social assistance to the same extent as the former program.

A number of provinces, including Alberta and Ontario, significantly cut social assistance spending in the 1990s. In Alberta, social assistance spending declined 46 % between 1992/1993 and 1995/1996 (Canada West Foundation 1997). Changes in 1993 included a reduction in the value of benefits and tightening of eligibility requirements along with measures designed to get people into the workforce (Black and Stanford 2005). These changes required all "able-bodied recipients" to find employment or to retrain (Shedd 1997, p. 272). In the 20-year period between 1986 and 2005, the real value of the provincial component of social assistance was cut by just over 30 %. In 2004, Alberta Works, an active, means-tested program designed to increase and enforce welfare recipients' labor market self-sufficiency replaced the old welfare program, Supports for Independence (SFI) (Gazso and Krahn 2008).

Through the 1990s and 2000s, federal Employment Insurance (originally called Unemployment Insurance) also underwent a series of reforms that reduced benefits, reduced the number of workers eligible for benefits,[6]and imposed more stringent job search requirements on recipients (Jackson 2010). The most recent reforms in 2013 expanded the definition of "suitable employment" to require recipients to look at other fields and geographic areas to receive benefits (Employment and Social Development Canada 2013). It is estimated that in 2012 fewer than 40 % of unemployed Canadians were eligible to collect employment insurance benefits (Canadian Labour Congress 2012). In 2013, the federal government proposed a new job training fund, Canada Job Grant, which would require employers to pay a portion of job training costs traditionally paid by government[7] (Government of Canada 2013). The new policy reflects the government's increasing desire for "market-based" solutions to training and employment (Jackson 2010).

In addition, changes to Canadian immigration policies over time reflect the interest in creating a more skilled, flexible workforce and self-reliant workforce. Reitz (2001) suggests that Canada pursued an "aggressively expansionist immigration policy" throughout the post-war period, primarily to boost the economy. In the 1960s,

[6] One of the more restrictive reforms was to deem workers who were fired with or without cause ineligible for benefits.

[7] The Canada Job Grant begins July 2014.

immigration policy reforms eliminated preferences for European immigrants and the points system was introduced in 1967 for the selection of independent immigrants. The underlying assumption was that immigrants who were successful in employment would make the most positive contribution to the Canadian economy and society (Reitz 2001). Since 1970, there have been continuing efforts to raise the selection standard for independent immigrants. A study of changes in immigration policies between 2008 and 2012 documents fundamental changes in that brief period alone (Alboim and Cohl 2012). Authors raised concerns about "the government's growing focus on the economic class and short-term labour market needs, a lack of policy coherence and evidentiary basis for many decisions, a weakening of traditional democratic processes, and a less welcoming environment for the people Canada needs to attract" (p. 1).

The effects of policies are apparent. The proportion of immigrants from sources other than Europe and USA grew from about 5 % before 1960 to nearly 80 % in the 1990s (Reitz 2007). Also, by 2010, the economic classes (skilled workers, investors and entrepreneurs, and Canadian experience class) had increased to two thirds of all entrants, while family immigrants made up about a quarter (Alboim and Cohl 2012). Further, whereas immigrants admitted to Canada in the 1950s and 1960s had an average education level that was well below that of the native-born population, the level for those arriving after 1970 was significantly higher (Reitz 2001). Changes in Canada's immigration selection system in the 1960s therefore had a significant impact in raising immigrants' skills and enhancing immigrant employment success. However, data show that more recent cohorts of immigrants have not fared as well—the initial earnings of immigrants in the 1990s and 1980s declined sharply compared to those in the 1970s (Reitz 2007). The poor outcomes of recent immigrant cohorts were part of the rationale for recent immigration reforms, including the growth of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (Alboim and Cohl 2012).

The above discussion supports our claim that there has been a shift in policies related to welfare, employment, and immigration since the 1970s. Growing recognition of the consequences of a fraying social safety net fuelled discussion about social cohesion in the late 1990s and sparked interest in a social investment approach. The social investment state sees the role of social policy as providing the tools individuals need to improve their employability rather than offering protection against the risks of the market economy (Saint-Martin 2007). But the declining fortunes of recent immigrant cohorts have raised concern about the economic and social marginalization of immigrants (Galabuzi and Teelucksingh 2010).

Immigration, Cultural Diversity, and Social Cohesion

As noted, the social cohesion argument has been used in some contexts to justify calls for more restrictive immigration policies (Holtug 2010). However, in Canada, (Soroka et al. 2007) argue that multiculturalism policy has helped to promote the successful integration of newcomers.[8] They found that racialized newcomers were prouder to be

[8] Measures of social cohesion include pride in being Canadian, sense of belonging, generalized and strategic trust, values questions (e.g., attitudes toward gay marriage), membership in community and political groups, and voting.

Canadian and that differences in social values and social and political engagement were weak. This is consistent with the view that liberal multicultural societies like Canada are thought to be better positioned to address issues related to migration than those with lower tolerance for value diversity (Green et al. 2009).

But writers like Reitz and Banerjee (2007) are more pessimistic. Looking at a similar time frame but using a different national dataset (the 2002 Ethnic Diversity Survey), they report that on six of seven items indicating social cohesion,[9] racialized minorities appeared less integrated than other Canadians. They conclude that social integration for minority immigrants is slower than for those of European origin, partly as a result of their sense of exclusion.

While these two studies (Soroka et al. 2007; Reitz and Banerjee 2007) disagree about the integration of immigrants, as noted above, economic indicators are troubling. Recent immigrant cohorts have fared less well in the labor market despite their high levels of education and training, and racialized concentration of poverty is emerging in some cities. The entry wages of Canadian immigrants have declined with each successive cohort, and their low-income rate has been continuously rising, even as that of the Canadian-born has declined in recent decades (Phythian et al. 2009; Bonikowska and Hou 2011). The returns to foreign credentials have also declined (Aydemir and Skuterud 2005; Galarneau and Morissette 2004). Racialized newcomers are disproportionately engaged in non-standard work including self-employment (Creese 2007). In addition, the poverty rate for racial minorities in 2001 was nearly double that of other Canadians (Reitz and Banerjee 2007), raising concerns about the possible creation of "an underclass" (Hébert and Wilkinson 2003).

Different writers argue that ethnic and cultural diversity in liberal states is likely to present a major challenge to cohesion if ethnic differences become too deeply entwined with struggles over scarce jobs and social resources and economic inequality (Green and Janmaat 2011; Hooghe 2007). Barriers to economic participation may erode the core liberal values of opportunity and fairness and sense of belonging for newcomers. At the same time, established groups fear that newly arrived groups will drive them out of some parts of the labor market. From this perspective, the dramatic increase in the use of temporary migrant workers might be expected to work against social cohesion because it segregates these workers from others on the basis of their terms of employment and citizenship.

Migrant Workers in Canada

According to the OECD (2008), approximately 2.5 million temporary labor migrants entered its member states in 2006, about three times the number of permanent migrants that year. The number of migrant workers in Canada more than tripled between 2000 and 2011 (reaching 300,111 in 2011) and has exceeded the number of economic class residents entering the country since 2006 (Dauvergne and Marsden 2011). Canadian employers in certain sectors are becoming increasingly dependent upon temporary foreign workers (Foster 2012).

[9] Indicators of social cohesion included strength of individual ties to the group, satisfaction with life, and acquisition of Canadian citizenship.

The increase in the use of temporary migrant labor across developed nations has occurred partly because of growing competitive pressures in developed nations, the effect of globalization on developing nations, and increased fears of permanent and illegal immigration post 9/11 (Castles and Miller 2009). Despite this rapid growth, there has been surprisingly little policy debate about the program in Canada until recently. But the practice of allowing non-citizens to enter the country as temporary or migrant labor, as opposed to extending citizenship to immigrants, has important social, political, and economic implications (Abu-Laban 2007). After highlighting key aspects of immigration and migrant worker policy, we discuss case studies of temporary foreign workers (TFWs) in nursing and trades in Alberta to support our argument that the TFWP undermines social cohesion by promoting segregation and insecurity instead of a sense of belonging on the part of migrant workers, non-engagement over community participation, and lack of acceptance from other workers and citizens instead of recognition (cf. Galabuzi and Teelucksingh 2010; Hooghe 2007).

The growth of temporary foreign workers in Canada is linked to a decline in citizenship rights and "new forms of gradational or hierarchical citizenship" (Stasiulis and Bakan 2003, p. 2). Writers have variously described this as a change in migrant incorporation approaches from *assimilation* and *multiculturalism* to *differential exclusion* or *partial citizenship* (Castles 2000; Castles 2002; Parreñas 2001). *Differential exclusion* refers to a situation in which migrants are incorporated into certain areas of society (e.g., the labor market) but denied access to others (e.g., welfare systems, citizenship, and political participation) through legal mechanisms or informal practices (Castles 2002). Vosko (2010) similarly notes that national citizenship has been used to perpetuate the distinct role of migrant labor "defined by the institutional differentiation of its processes of reproduction and maintenance and migrant workers' specific forms of powerlessness" (p. 11). Migrant workers' limited access to civil, political, and social citizenship rights renders them *partial citizens*.

The growth in the TFWP in Canada could be seen as introducing a "two-step" migration process as migrants enter the country and attempt to move from temporary to permanent status (cf. Alboim and Cohl 2012; Hawthorne 2008). However, the differentiated rights granted to workers in different skill categories and the unlikelihood for some (e.g., unskilled workers) of securing permanent residence suggest that a more apt description is the development of tiered migration arrangements (Tannock 2011). Program regulations determine "which migrants are treated as 'fit' candidates for host-society citizenship, which enter with probationary status and can be 're-fitted' at their own expense, and which are rendered completely ineligible" (Stasiulis and Bakan 2003, p. 11).

The TFWP developed from the *Non-Immigrant Employment Authorization Program* (NIEAP) introduced in 1973, an employer-driven program that issued temporary work permits to migrant workers that specified their occupation, residence, and length and terms of employment (Fudge and MacPhail 2009). Workers had to obtain written permission from immigration officials to alter their conditions of work or to change employers. While it began as a program focused on attracting high-skilled workers, the proportion of low-skill workers doubled between 2000 and 2009 because of policy changes (Dauvergne and Marsden 2011).

The program is also racialized, with more than two thirds of TFWs in managerial, professional, and skilled categories originating from Europe and the USA in 2005, and

85 % of workers in low-skill categories coming from the Americas (not USA) (Fudge and MacPhail 2009). Highly skilled temporary workers usually have more entitlements and opportunities to become permanent residents, while many low-skilled occupations are barred from applying for permanent residency. Sharma (2006, 2007) argues that, in effect, the migrant worker program in Canada has legalized the re-subordination of many non-whites by creating a divide based on citizenship rights.

Unlike the immigration system, the TFWP is not governed by quotas. In most cases,[10] employers apply for a Labour Market Opinion (LMO), which is intended to ensure that foreign workers do not take jobs from Canadians and that employers adhere to local terms and conditions of employment. Foreign workers apply for a limited term work permit, which specifies their occupation, location, and terms of employment. They are covered by basic employment legislation but have little or no access to settlement services and cannot pursue education or training in Canada. Agencies that receive federal or provincial funding to operate generally cannot service people without citizenship status (Goldring et al. 2009a). Workers also have restricted access to permanent residency streams. At the time of our interviews, the most common route was to apply to the *Alberta Immigrant Nominee Program* (AINP)[11] or the *Canadian Experience Class* (requiring a year of domestic work experience).

European countries have a longer history with guest worker programs, which were very popular as part of post-war economic expansion between 1945 and the mid-1970s (Castles 2000, 2002, 2006). Castles indicate that while nations initiated guest worker programs to bring a flexible source of temporary labor that could be controlled by the state and employers, mass labor migration led to family reunification and permanent settlement (Castles 2002). The idea of temporary migration was a myth since many receiving countries used contract workers to meet long-term labor needs and migrants wanted to stay:

> The result is permanent settlement and the formation of ethnic minorities. Such groups tend to be disadvantaged and socially isolated because of their legal status as non-settlers without citizenship rights. … The borderlines between contract migration, individual temporary labour migration and illegal movements are often fluid. (Castles 2000, pp. 101–2)

Migration policies thus play a critical role in shaping social relations. Anderson (2010) adds

> In practice, as well as a *tap* regulating the flow of workers to a state, immigration controls might be more usefully conceived as a *mould* constructing certain types of workers through selection of legal entrants, the requiring and enforcing of certain types of employment relations, and the creation of institutionalized

[10] There are exceptions to the LMO requirement; for example, at the time of our interviews, employers of steamfitter/pipefitters did not need to apply for an LMO. In July 2012, the trades of welder, heavy duty mechanic, ironworker, carpenter, millwright, and industrial mechanic also became exempt.

[11] The AINP is open to foreign workers with a permanent, full-time job offer from an Alberta employer in a skilled occupation (in certain National Occupational Classifications) or employers wanting to retain a skilled foreign worker on a permanent, full-time basis. But the AINP can only accept a small percentage of applicants due to federal quotas.

> uncertainty. Immigration controls effectively subject workers to a high degree of regulation, giving employers mechanisms of control that they do not have over citizens. (p. 313) [emphasis added]

Further, the idea that individuals must be citizens to gain access to the standard employment relationship (SER) including training, regulatory protections, and social benefits legitimizes employers' use of migrant labor to reduce labor costs, if not directly through the provision of lower wages, then indirectly through organizational flexibility (Vosko 2010).

As noted, migrant worker programs usually restrict workers' freedom to move between employers and the duration of their contracts (Rosewarne 2010). Migrants' dependence on employers for not only their work but also their residency places them in a highly vulnerable position (Anderson 2010). They may also be unable to exercise their rights because of language barriers, lack of information, and geographical and social isolation (Goldring et al. 2009b). But by enforcing "atypical employment relations" (Anderson 2010, p. 313), migrant worker policies also create an insatiable demand for this highly desirable group of workers (Macklin 2010). The result is a structural reliance by some employers and sectors on an ongoing flow of migrant workers, leading to the creation of job ghettos (Anderson and Ruhs 2010; Ruhs 2002). For instance, migrant worker-dominated occupations "tend to be concentrated at the extremes of the job ladder, with more or less education than the average worker in the destination country" (Martin et al. 2006, p. 54). These insights suggest that the TFWP institutionalizes racial inequality and threatens social cohesion, an assertion that is supported by our empirical research.

Workers in Skilled Trades and Nursing in Alberta

Our case studies focused on trades workers and nurses in the province of Alberta because we were interested in the migration experiences of workers in intermediate skill occupations where certification is required. These occupations are also highly gendered—all 11 TFWs interviewed in trades were male, and 8 of 12 TFWs in nursing were female.[12] Canada has imported nurses from poorer developing countries since the 1960s to cut healthcare costs and to respond to nursing shortages (Stasiulis and Bakan 2003). Continuing a long Canadian tradition of importing skilled tradespeople, the Alberta government and oil companies have also turned to TFWs as a solution to labor shortages as a result of the large-scale construction projects taking place in northern Alberta's oil sands (DeGuerre 2009). Between 2006 and 2010, over 6,100 foreign workers arrived in Alberta to work in oil sands construction, most ending up in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) (Cummins 2011).

[12] One evident gender difference was that nurses were more likely to bring families than trades workers. However, this may also be related to the fact that most nurses were working in an urban center, whereas trades workers were working in remote work camps. Thus, men were more reliant on spouses in their home countries to care for their children. Other situations and experiences were quite similar for both groups (e.g., most were married with children, were sending remittances to families in countries of origin, and experienced licensure challenges, workplace discrimination, and challenges in attaining permanent residence).

Most of the trades workers interviewed formed part of the significant shadow population living in isolated work camps in Wood Buffalo. For the trades case, we interviewed 28 people in 26 interviews including foreign workers (11), employers/recruiters (5), union officials (3), government representatives (7), and non-profit agencies (2). The Edmonton regional health authority recruited the foreign nurses. This case involved formal and informal interviews with 27 representatives from Alberta Health Services (1) and hospitals (3), unions (5), immigrant-serving agencies (2), professional licensing bodies/associations (3), education providers (1), and foreign workers (12). For both occupations, most of the TFWs interviewed came from the Philippines, which displaced the USA as the top source country in 2007, providing approximately 25 % of TFWs in Alberta. The considerable gap in employment opportunities and wages between underdeveloped countries and advanced industrial ones provides significant incentives to migrate. Most migrants had a spouse and children in their countries of origin and were submitting remittances. Although a few nursing TFWs had managed to bring their families to Canada, none of the skilled trades workers tried to bring families until they attained permanent residence.

Our semi-structured interviews were conducted between spring 2010 and winter of 2011 and were 45 to 90 min in length. Foreign workers were recruited using a snowball technique. Although translation services were offered, no workers accepted despite the fact that a couple of trades participants struggled with spoken English. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and detailed notes were taken for one interview participant who requested that it not be recorded. Our interviews aimed at understanding how the TFWP works from the perspectives of different participants as well as its implications for migrant workers and others.

Structuring Inequality: Governments, Employers, and Licensing Bodies

As noted, the TFWP is an employer-driven program designed to address short-term labor needs. However, despite the economic downturn in 2008, the number of TFWs continued to expand, suggesting that they have become a permanent labor pool in some industries in Canada. This section explores the inequalities that are structured by the state, employers, and licensing bodies involved in the TFWP.

In northern Alberta, where various labor providers are vying for market share (including union and non-union contractors), importing migrant workers has altered the competitive terrain. Building trades union contractors[13] tend to address labor shortages through recruitment efforts across Canada and the USA (where unions have affiliates). In contrast, a couple of large contractors associated with the Christian Labour Association of Canada (CLAC), an employer-friendly union (McCullum 2006), were at the forefront of recruiting large numbers of TFWs from the Philippines and India.

A CLAC contractor spoke highly about the willingness and work ethic of TFWs and their positive impact on productivity:

[13] The Building Trades Unions are organized by trade and are considered the "traditional" unions representing workers in construction. Relations with employers vary, but tend to be more adversarial than employee associations and newer collaborative unions, such as CLAC.

> I think we've seen almost like a balancing of the workforce, whereas before it was such an employee-driven workforce that they felt that, well we don't have to work hard … I think [the TFWP has] really brought some competition back into the workforce, which is driving some good things.

Another contractor suggested, "because of the wage differences from India and the Philippines to Canada, [TFWs are] very appreciative and prepared to work very hard to sustain their employment."

On the other hand, building trades unions and others (Alboim and Cohl 2012) have raised concerns about the potential downward effect of the TFWP on wages and working conditions. For example, in April 2012, the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development, Diane Finley, announced changes to the TFWP allowing "wages up to 15 percent below the average wage rate" to be accepted so long as it can be clearly demonstrated the same wages are being paid to Canadian workers. The Alberta Federation of Labour responded with a technical background paper entitled "The Harper Government's Wage Rip off for Alberta's Oil-sand Construction Workers."[14] It is therefore evident that temporary foreign workers are perceived to pose a threat to the domestic workforce because of their different terms of employment (cf. Hooghe 2007).

In addition to governments and employers, the actions of licensing bodies have had the effect of excluding TFWs. For example, there were obvious differences in credential assessment outcomes for migrant nurses depending on their country of origin and training. Nurses coming from the UK (even when trained in the Philippines) were able to start work as Graduate Nurses (a step closer to the Registered Nurse positions promised by their employer), while all TFWs coming directly from the Philippines were deployed in the lower level position of Licensed Practical Nurse (Taylor et al. 2012). Filipino nurses interpreted this as exclusionary and unfair treatment. A provincial report suggests that more than three-quarters of the Internationally Educated Nurses (IENs) taking the assessment test between November 2007 and the end of August 2009 required bridging courses/programs before being eligible for temporary registration or to write the Canadian Registered Nursing Exam (CRNE) (Armitage and Suter 2010). Similar barriers to licensure for IENs have been noted in Ontario (Stasiulus and Bakan 2003).

TFWs working in mandatory trades[15] were also required to pass a Red Seal exam within 6 months of arrival to continue working in their trade (although only about half of Canadian workers in Red Seal trades actually achieve this interprovincial certification). A recruiter suggested that the failure rate on the exam was over 50 % and that the percentage of TFWs who were sent home after 6 months because they could not pass the exam was "easily 30 percent." Like nurses, the recruiter added that trades TFWs who failed were frequently employed in less skilled jobs. Workers tended to cite the reasons for their low success rates on this exam as test-related (unfamiliar language and terminology) and employer-related (inadequate training support).

The failure of many TFWs in licensed occupations like nursing and trades to achieve certification points to a problem with the employer-driven nature of the TFWP.

[14] See Alberta Federation of Labour website: http://www.afl.org/index.php/Press-Release/alberta-workers-protest-jason-kenneys-paycheque-rip-off.html.

[15] Mandatory trades are those for which trades certification is required to work. In general, Red Seal certification is perceived to be slightly higher in status than provincial certification.

Recruitment often occurs without adequate input from licensing bodies, with detrimental effects on workers. In addition, the large sums of money paid by many TFWs to the international recruiters to facilitate entry to Canada increases their incentive to work "underground" after failing certification exams. Alboim and Cohl (2012) suggest workers often overstay. Some observers suggest there may be as many as 100,000 undocumented workers in Alberta alone (Bouzek 2012). Undocumented workers, of course, are even more vulnerable to exploitation, to distrust others, and to lack a sense of belonging.

While workplace inequalities in Canadian society are not new, the devolution to employers of migrant selection through the TFWP produces an emphasis on short-term economic needs rather than long-term nation building (Alboim and Cohl 2012). The activities of governments, employers, and licensing bodies thus threaten social cohesion by promoting segregation of newcomers, encouraging resistance from domestic workers, and generally undermining faith in core liberal values (e.g., freedom, merit, and opportunity).

The Effects of the TFWP on Foreign Workers

Their structured inequality makes all TFWs (despite their education and skills) vulnerable to exploitation by employers. A study by Stasiulis and Bakan (2003) echoes our findings that migrant nurses tend to be given more difficult work and undesirable shifts, are first to be laid off in times of cutbacks, and often experience discrimination. Most nurses in our study expressed disappointment that their foreign credentials meant little in Canada, that their employers did little to help them gain permanent residence, and that they were seen as "disposable" when the recession hit and cutbacks occurred.

Seven of ten trades workers interviewed in our study also reported experiencing discrimination at work. TFWs were often segregated in the workplace, and interviewees noted that desirable overtime and shifts went to "white guys." One worker said that he was paid less than the wage rate specified in his contract, while another noted that his employer threatened to deport him if he did not work overtime and often "forgot" to pay him for this work. TFWs are therefore vulnerable to exploitation from employers and rejection by co-workers and employers when economic conditions worsen. Structured inequality clearly makes it very difficult to promote cohesive groups based on positive personal ties and relational bonds (Freidkin 2004).

Workers' dependency on employers also meant that, despite the existence of a TFW Advocacy Office in Alberta, workers were unlikely to complain about exploitation. For example, the worker who was being paid less than the wage stated on his LMO, comments:

> Some people are telling me, 'well you can go to the government to file a case to them.' But why I have to do that for? I'm not working with [name of employer] anymore, now I'm free. So just forget everything.

Another interview participant explains workers' passivity as powerlessness:

> Once you get your permanent [residence], now you can talk. If you don't have it, just a foreign worker, you have no choice, keep your mouth shut. Accept what comes to you.

Similarly, the predominant response of nursing TFWs was one of individualized self-advocacy rather than solidarity (Taylor et al. 2012). The system encourages such responses since conflict resolution processes available to workers are complaint-driven and the outcomes for workers and repercussions for employers are uncertain. For example, although the federal government toughened TFWP rules so that employers who have not honored wages or working conditions for TFWs are ineligible to participate in the program for 2 years, no names of employers had appeared on the government website 1 year after this announcement (Alboim and Cohl 2012). Such weak monitoring is unlikely to encourage trust in TFWs that they will be treated fairly and equitably. Accepting the argument that norms of reciprocity are the primary basis for social cohesion in diverse societies (Hooghe 2007), this treatment of TFWs is highly problematic.

TFWs (especially trades workers in isolated work camps) are also unable to access settlement services that may enhance their integration and sense of belonging. For example, the Alberta government introduced pilot programs to provide limited settlement services to TFWs in certain parts of the province, but most workers lacked access to these services. Like Anderson, our interviews with both trades and nursing TFWs suggest that insecure residency results in a "lack of social attachment and a preparedness to forego social pleasures" (Anderson 2010, p. 305). Migrants are required to focus only on the moment, be prepared to change plans quickly, and engage in activities that ensure their capacity to be continuously productive. They thus "embody capitalism" by exploiting their own bodies and social relations to remain active and employable (Papadopoulis et al. 2008, p. 223). In addition, the financial costs of coming to Canada (e.g., many TFWs paid significant recruiter fees), the difficulties of bringing family members, and the practice of sending remittances to family at home motivate TFWs to work as much as possible and to adopt a Spartan lifestyle, further restricting their engagement.

Our interviews with workers suggested that when they developed social networks, it was usually with other migrants to support each other in finding employment and housing, and navigating the complicated processes of renewing work permits and applying for permanent residence. Migrants thus develop strategies to subvert or escape aspects of the restrictive and contradictory social order that governs their lives (Papadopoulis et al. 2008). However, their segregation within as well as outside the workplace makes it difficult for them to develop strong interpersonal ties with a range of other members, which is part of the basis for group cohesion (Freidkin 2004).

The requirement that migrant workers adopt a transnational identity also impacts individual and family life course and strategies, patterns of consumption, and approaches to child rearing in countries of origin (Vertovec 2009; Parreñas 2005; Kobayashi and Preston 2007). For example, while constructed as a "win-win," the negative impacts of remittances for sending countries are said to include displaced local jobs and incomes; inflated prices for land, housing, and food; increasing disparity; and a culture of economic dependency (Vertovec 2009). The construction of migrants as the epitome of "economic man" obscures the fact that experiences of precarious work expand beyond the individual worker to produce precarious lives in both sending and receiving countries. The economic focus on provincial nominee programs and recent immigration policy changes that make family reunification more difficult add to the challenge for TFWs who want to integrate into Canadian society (Alboim and Cohl

2012). Thus, we suggest that social cohesion both in Canada and in sending countries is adversely affected by the TFWP.

The Effects of the TFWP on Domestic Workers and Canadian Society

TFW nurses arrived in Alberta during the global recession beginning in 2008; at the same time, regional health authorities in the province were being amalgamated into a "super board", and a new CEO was appointed to find efficiencies in the public healthcare system. Trades workers were also affected by the cancelation of oil sands projects due to recession and low oil prices. For example, a contractor acknowledges that his company and another contractor collectively laid off 500 TFWs in January 2009 a week after they arrived because of an owner's decision to defer a project. The impact on both groups of workers was a loss of work, increased obstacles to attaining permanent residence, and hostility from local workers.

The policy focus on short-term labor market needs combined with economic downturn adversely impacted workplace relations, as this trades worker comments:

> [W]hen we came in, those workers [co-workers] don't like Philippinos. You're not supposed to be here, that's what they're telling us. I'm telling them, if you've got some problem, address your grievances to your government. We came because of invitation of your government to work because you don't have enough manpower to develop a plant.

Similarly, nursing TFWs who arrived before the recession and restructuring experienced a change in the attitudes of employers and co-workers over time:

> [W]e were just a band-aid rescue thing for the shortage of nurses… right now you already have lots of graduates, so we're *treated as disposables* that can just be thrown back to where we came from. … When we first came, they were so happy … Then after a year there were already lots of cutbacks and [new CEO] came. There were no more overtimes and they blamed it on us because we were the *expensive imports*. So they said, 'we're cutting out budget because of these foreign workers.' … Then later 2009 they're already asking, 'I heard you guys are going back, so when are you going back? Is it definite?' (Licensed Practical Nurse) [emphasis added]

As noted, social cohesion is threatened when racial diversity is entwined with struggles over scarce jobs (cf. Green and Janmaat 2011). Further, atypical employment relations create a group of workers that is more desirable as employees (Anderson 2010), pitting migrants against domestic workers and other marginalized groups. For example, the oil sands region has one of the highest proportions of indigenous peoples (First Nations and Métis) in the province, who are unemployed at approximately double the rate of non-Aboriginal Albertans. Not surprisingly, the solution of importing migrant workers generates a negative response from these communities also.

In sum, our empirical analysis highlights the effects on processes of social cohesion of government policies that partly devolve selection of immigrants to employers. The

TFWP encourages low trust and sense of belonging among migrant workers and resistance from domestic workers because it promotes inequality and exclusion. The dynamics observed at a workplace level can be expected to impact communities and Canadian society overall as patterns of diversity are destabilized, values of fairness and equal opportunity are challenged, and norms of reciprocity are weakened. As noted, impacts on sending countries have also been documented.

Conclusion

This paper argues that the TFWP works against the social and political goals of social cohesion. Our case studies of migrant workers in nursing and trades suggest the program structures inequality for TFWs by institutionalizing atypical (inequitable) employment relations. The inability of most migrant workers to access settlement services, to bring families, to change employers, or to enroll in further education and training overtly discourages their integration into the local community. This is a serious problem given that our interviews with migrant workers suggest that most want to stay in Canada as permanent residents and are taking steps toward becoming citizens. Most employers interviewed also want TFWs to become permanent. The idea that workers are temporary is therefore a flawed assumption. As noted, guest worker programs in Europe have historically led to permanent settlement and the formation of ethnic minorities (Castles 2000). Because of these European lessons, Alboim and Cohl (2012) caution against Canada's adoption of a two-step immigration process.

In addition to the problems associated with the employer-driven nature of the TFWP (focus on meeting short-term labor market needs over longer term adaptability of workers, potential for worker exploitation, lack of adequate attention to training for certification), the unpredictability and complexity of immigration policy and rapid pace of policy change create an unwelcoming environment (Alboim and Cohl 2012). Our case studies indicate that migrant workers in nursing and trades came to Canada at great personal cost and encountered significant challenges related to renewing work permits, changing employment, applying for permanent residence, and attaining the certification required to work, not to mention racial discrimination.

By creating a new class of workers and non-citizens, the TFWP also changes the rules of the game for domestic workers and citizens. As noted above, changes in welfare and employment policies since the 1970s have increased insecurity for Canadian workers by shifting from "passive" to "active" welfare policies and requiring individuals to take more responsibility for their employability. These changes were described as a shift from welfare to social investment state (Saint-Martin 2007). However, there has been little inclination to invest in migrant workers because of their supposed temporary status. Instead, employers benefit from increased organizational flexibility and reduced costs associated with medical care and disability. The host economy also avoids the costs of building additional infrastructure and service organizations that would otherwise be required by citizens (Vosko 2010).

This approach affects not only TFWs but also domestic workers and communities. As noted, concerns have been voiced about the potential of the TFWP to remove employer incentives to invest in the local workforce and depress wages and working conditions (Alboim and Cohl 2012). Our analysis suggests that employers were highly

enthusiastic about the positive impact of TFWs on the workforce overall because of their work ethic and productivity. However, domestic workers perceived them as a threat, particularly when economic conditions worsened. The TFWP thus exacerbates tensions in the labor market, which affects broader societal relations.

Although we did not directly explore the impact on local communities of the TFWP, our interviews with TFWs in trades suggest that they experience an even higher level of isolation and segregation than domestic workers because they lack proximity to families and are reliant mostly on other migrant workers for support. Consistent with concerns raised by Alboim and Cohl (2012) about whether the TFWP addresses long-term national interests, we also found that trades workers had a long history of mobile work (e.g., in work camps in the Middle East) and therefore tend not to develop strong attachments to community. As noted, the TFWP discourages such connections for all TFWs by restricting freedoms and access to the services taken for granted by citizens. Such inequality of treatment challenges values of inclusiveness and equality, necessary for high levels of social cohesion in diverse societies.

Our analysis also has implications for thinking about social cohesion. While our case studies focus on how the TFWP works for migrant workers in nursing and trades in Alberta, the program arguably reflects the liberal regime of social cohesion identified by Green and Janmaat (2011). Canada's approach to diversity, however, has differed historically from other countries associated with a liberal regime (e.g., the USA); we agree that social inclusion and equal participation are therefore more appropriate indicators of social cohesion than generalized trust (Hooghe 2007). The focus on social cohesion as a social and political goal contributes to the growing debate about the TFWP.

However, the concept of social cohesion is not without problems. In addition to a lack of conceptual clarity, the national definition of community means that only full citizens are seen as entitled to fair treatment and equal opportunity—"the matter of borders and limits is always present" (Jenson 1998, p. 35). Non-citizen migrant workers are therefore invisible as subjects. The domestic focus of thinking about social cohesion distracts attention from the implications of Canada's policies for TFWs and their countries of origin. This limited focus is reproduced in conventions about migrant workers developed by the United Nations and International Labour Organization (Fudge 2011). Thus, the use of social cohesion as an analytical frame, particularly in understanding the impact of migration policies, must be broadened to include recognition about effects across national boundaries.

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