Temporarily “Essential”: Canadian News Media Coverage of Migrant Agricultural Workers during the COVID-19 Era

by

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Abstract

This thesis analyzes news media representations of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) to consider how the program and its workers are framed among stakeholder groups with particular attention to the COVID-19 pandemic. Representations of the SAWP and its workers in the media generally acknowledge many inequalities with the program that maintain their susceptibility to exploitation and abuse, such as dilapidated living conditions, pressure to meet unrealistic and dangerous labour demands, an unequal tie to the employer, and being continually denied a formal path to permanent residency. In some cases, the media also perpetuates exclusionary language in the framing of migrant workers, especially during the pandemic. This thesis contends that the greater news media focus on the SAWP during the pandemic and its role in highlighting these structural inequalities could lead to positive theoretical and material effects on migrant workers through increased public awareness and policy reform to the program.

List of Abbreviations Used

SAWP	Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program
TFWP	Temporary Foreign Worker Program
TFW	Temporary Foreign Worker

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I began my Master's in the midst of the pandemic and spent the entire first year of the program without even stepping foot on campus. The majority of this degree was completed from my little apartment on Church Street (thanks to the mice for keeping me company!). Despite these obstacles, I will look back on my experience as a positive one that allowed me to grow more than I thought possible, both academically and personally. I have met wonderful friends and colleagues at Dalhousie, but I am especially grateful for Bryce Anderson who helped me with the methods section of my project.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Migrant agricultural workers are a uniquely essential yet disadvantaged group in Canada. Brought to Canada to address short-term and specific needs in the labour market, "temporary" migrant workers are, in reality, not all that temporary. In fact, temporary labour migration has replaced permanent immigration as the primary means by which people enter Canada (Choudry & Smith, 2016). In the larger context, there is a perpetual need for workers to sustain the viability of the agricultural industry, which is a key economic sector. Despite the permanence of their essential contributions to Canada's functional growth and prosperity, migrant agricultural workers are continually denied the opportunity to obtain permanent residency. Evidently, their precarious status contributes to the often abusive and exploitative conditions of labour they experience. These conditions are complexly intertwined with issues of race. Canada's historic and contemporary use of racialized labour to fill job shortages in sectors that are typically undesirable to Canadians is a manifestation of systemic oppression and discrimination that functions under the guise of guestworker programs. Among these vulnerabilities, this group has also disproportionately suffered from the pandemic, making the topic of this research particularly relevant and timely.

This thesis examines how the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and its workers are represented in mainstream Canadian newspapers. Through the process of content analysis and coding, I examine newspaper articles that discuss the SAWP to consider both how the program and its workers are framed. I also identify which themes found in the literature are most prominently discussed in the articles and consider whether these representations have changed during the pandemic. By comparing pre and during-pandemic representations, I see if, and to what extent, the pandemic has impacted how the media frames migrant workers and the

program. In doing so, I consider the framing of "essential" work, migrant workers' perceived value to Canadian society, and attention drawn to their race and ethnicity. The aim of this thesis is two-fold as I also consider perspectives of different stakeholder groups in the articles, including the perspective of the government, advocates, migrant workers, farm owners/operators, and the article itself. By accounting for differences in group perspectives within the articles, this project reveals which voices are being amplified, which themes are most prominently discussed, what topics are being left out, and by whom.

My findings indicate that representations of the SAWP and its workers in the media offer a portrayal that generally acknowledges many inequities with the program. However, the framing of migrant workers in the media are sometimes conflated with mechanisms that perpetuate racism and discrimination. This is often facilitated through the linguistic choices within the articles that emphasize "us" versus "them" narratives, migrant othering, or exclusionary discourses. There are also notable differences in the approach each stakeholder group takes when discussing certain topics related to the SAWP based on their priorities, such as whether they are motivated by a desire to protect the health of the workers or to improve the economy, for example. The findings from this thesis are generally supported by existing literature on the topic, in that both the literature and the news media articles recognize inequalities with the program, but my approach offers a distinct angle that acknowledges the importance of considering how the framing of the SAWP and its workers in the media changes based on the perspective of the stakeholder group it is coming from. This project also found that news media interest in the SAWP and its workers increased substantially during the pandemic.

My findings from coding indicate an overall increase in the acknowledgment of issues with the SAWP after COVID-19 started, but also show an increase in codes such as racism

which points to a continuation of discrimination in the news articles between both timelines. The codes that were used the most throughout my analysis, however, are ones that indicate issues with the program or reference maltreatment of the workers.

1.1 Defining the TFWP and SAWP

The Temporary Foreign Worker Program is a managed migration program that brings workers to Canada on a temporary basis. There are multiple streams of the TFWP; the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program is the main agricultural stream of the TFWP (Cohen, 2019). The terms TFWP and SAWP are often conflated in the media. Media reports often use TFWP as an umbrella term when they are actually referring to the SAWP. Throughout this thesis, I use both terms; I use TFWP when discussing the program more broadly, and SAWP when referring specifically to the agricultural stream and its workers. The SAWP was established in 1966 as a government-to-government contract labour program intended to provide employers with access to a large and flexible pool of workers to remain competitive in increasingly global markets (Sharma, 2001; Swanson, 2001). The program has become a fixture in the agricultural sector in Canada, although its inception was considered a short-term response to pressing labour shortages (Fairey et al., 2008). There are currently more than 60,000 people, mostly from Mexico and the Caribbean, employed in Canada through this program (CFA, 2022; Binford, 2019; Narushima et al., 2016). In Canada, the SAWP allows for the organized entry and employment of migrant workers to meet the temporary seasonal needs of farm owners during peak planting, cultivating, and harvesting periods (Bridi, 2013). The program allows Canadian farm employers to bring temporary workers for periods of anywhere from six weeks to eight months (Brem, 2006; Ferguson, 2007). If invited back by satisfied employers, it is estimated that workers stay in the program an average of seven years, but some participants are involved for over twenty years

(Verduzco Igartua, 2004). Though referred to as temporary, they often fill long-term positions and provide crucial support to the Canadian agriculture industry (Landry et al., 2021).

Despite the seemingly "essential" nature of seasonal agricultural workers in Canada, they face many inequalities, which often include unequal access to services and protections, facing threats of deportation, abuse, exploitative living and working conditions, working long hours often without adequate compensation, and being racially "othered", all while being continually denied a path to permanent residency (Hennebry, 2011; Binford, 2013; Holmes, 2013; Basok & Bélanger, 2016; Weiler, Mclaughlin, & Cole, 2017). The marginalization of temporary foreign workers maps on to the racial and ethnic discrimination that they experience; racism and oppression become naturalized through structural and symbolic violence, translating into abusive workplace hierarchies, residential segregation, and unhealthy living conditions (Holmes, 2013). While Holmes research is based on H-2A (the temporary agricultural worker program in the United States), the structural and symbolic violence he discusses can be applied to Canada's SAWP. Indeed, like in the United States, in Canada we see both overt and covert discrimination against migrant workers as a result of these structural inequalities.

Migrant agricultural workers often experience crowded and unhygienic living and working conditions which is reflected by the high rates of infection and death among this group (Landry et al., 2021). Their dependency on employers for work authorization, residency status and housing make it difficult for workers to leave unsatisfactory working and living conditions (Weiler & McLaughlin, 2019). Furthermore, while most agricultural workers have access to provincial health insurance, employers often mediate their access to care (Hennebry et al., 2016) and the fear of losing employment may influence workers to overlook their health issues and conceal work-related injuries from the employers (Akbar, 2021). As a result, workers experience

a wide range of exploitations often due to the absence of effective monitoring and enforcement policy (Ellerman & Gorokhovskaia, 2020). In many ways, the structure of the SAWP uses these coercive tactics to ensure maximum value production with minimal resistance (Bridi, 2013).

1.2 The Significance of News Media

The structure of the SAWP, in which workers both live and work on the farm, leads to little direct contact with the general population. As a result, public perception of migrant workers and guest worker programs are largely formed based on what we see and hear around us, such as in media coverage. This leaves room for news media sources to shape and influence understandings of what a migrant worker is like – their identities, origins, and characteristics (Herda, 2015). News media coverage contributes greatly to the construction of socially shared understandings and dominant representations of migrants, which have further consequences on attitudes, sentiments, and even behaviors towards migrant workers (Nerghes & Lee, 2019). The salience of migration-related issues in the news media ultimately shapes the public's agenda (McCombs & Shaw, 1972).

TFWPs specifically are increasingly subject to public debate across media platforms (Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017). As nations become more reliant on temporary foreign workers, the program and the migrant workers themselves face more scrutiny (Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017). Earlier content analysis has shown that the media often offers the public a depiction of migrant workers that disproportionately emphasizes racialization and criminalization biases (Walia, 2013; Cohen, 2019; Horgan and Liinamaa, 2017). These representations tend to stigmatize, victimize, or silence migrant workers (Smets et al., 2020), often promoting an explicit or implicit pattern of exclusion of "the migrant other" (King & Wood, 2013). Furthermore, greater attention is given to media stories as major events happen related to TFWPs, and these media reports often

lead to widely publicised promises by the federal government to review and reform the TFWP. As a result of the extensive media coverage, policy changes to the SAWP maintain the status quo for seasonal agricultural workers, one of Canada's most insecure and racialized categories of temporary foreign workers (Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017). This demonstrates the power of the media in informing public opinion and guestworker program policy.

Mainstream media and newspapers carry immense weight in setting the parameters for and in influencing government policy (Nerghes and Lee, 2019). Specifically, the media's choice of words and images shapes the way that people perceive and evaluate policies, particularly with respect to racialized issues (Farris & Mohamed, 2018). The portrayal of racialized migrants can influence Canadian attitudes about migration and migrant workers, with stories or images about them resulting in support for more restrictive policy measures (Brader et al., 2008; Abrajano & Singh, 2009; Valentino et al., 2013; Pérez, 2016; Abrajano et al., 2017; as cited in Farris & Mohamed, 2018). Both the quantity and quality of press coverage can influence the extent to which individuals both interpret and prioritize a given policy issue (Dunaway et al., 2010), and this can sometimes be strategic to fit certain agendas. Ultimately, the news media shapes public perceptions about the program and temporary foreign farmworkers, and in turn potentially impacts policy measures or supports for these individuals. The role of news media in both popular knowledge production and the making of policy makes it a useful source for analysis about social issues.

The press plays an important role in developing frames, or story lines, that help people to interpret the world (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Conroy, 2015; as cited in Farris & Mohamed, 2018). Previous studies have shown that the mainstream mass media use competing frames among groups to create narratives that normalize dominant perspectives on migrants and migrant

workers (Quinsaat, 2014). Competing narrative frames in the news media are emphasized in this research through my coding framework that takes into consideration the different perspectives that each theme comes from in the articles. Experimental research on framing effects demonstrates their power to shape what and how an individual thinks about issues (Nelson et al., 1997; Klar et al., 2013; as cited in Farris & Mohamed, 2018). Using mainstream news media as tool for analysis helps to conceptualize the ways in which different groups contribute to narrative construction towards guest worker programs and migrant workers.

The findings from this thesis reinforce these arguments. I demonstrate the power of the media in highlighting certain issues with the SAWP, but also in constructing potentially negative depictions of migrant workers that are influenced by racism and discrimination, such as through narratives that TFWs are "bringing" COVID into Canada. I also indicate greater media focus on the program in the midst of the pandemic, demonstrating the pandemic's role in exacerbating certain issues with the program, such as living and working conditions. The increased media focus of the TFWP during the pandemic also leads to discussions by the government regarding the need for improvement and funding announcements, often with little to no avail. The pandemic's role in highlighting inequalities with the SAWP, however, could lead to positive theoretical and material effects on migrant workers through policy reform to the program.

1.3 The Impact of COVID-19

As shown by my analysis, both news media coverage and public interest in SAWP workers has certainly increased during the pandemic, in part due to the pandemic's role in aggravating previously existing disparities with the program. It also lays bare many of the existing vulnerabilities in our food system by increasing attention on food production and distribution in general. Temporary foreign workers are an essential but marginalized part of the

Canadian workforce and these inequalities have been both exposed and exacerbated throughout the pandemic. The narrative of "essential" workers was highlighted by the Canadian government and media during a certain point in the pandemic, however, the essential quality of migrant labour is related to their precarity as their vulnerable position ensures they are constantly available to fill this "essential" role. The pandemic not only revealed the disproportionate employment of racialized people in this sector, but also amplified the effects of structural racism by requiring people to work in unsafe environments without adequate protections such as spacing and personal protective equipment, leading to high levels of morbidity and mortality among SAWP workers (Samaniego & Mantz, 2020; Rogaly & Schling, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic has made it patently evident that workers who are the most essential are also often those who are the most vulnerable. The mainstream news media has brought to the forefront the significance of "essential" work and has highlighted the role of guest worker programs and the treatment of migrant workers as the pandemic progresses. Each time a news story emerges, there is a temporary media and public focus, and because of the pandemic especially, such issues have gained more attention.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic which brought to light many social inequities and a corresponding increase in political attention to the TFWP, this time period is especially relevant for understanding the role of the news media in informing representations of migrant workers. In today's complex media environment, formal news organizations, such as mainstream newspapers, remain powerful entities, constructing narratives on major events as public issues and/or crises (Nerghes & Lee, 2019). Additionally, in times of uncertainty, individuals orient themselves towards various types of media (Perse, 2001). It is also during times of crisis when the news media is most prone to sensationalism. In the COVID-19 context, the role of the news

media in shaping and informing perceptions and in highlighting certain perspectives of the SAWP becomes especially pertinent.

1.4 Thesis Contributions and Direction

This thesis explores how these issues are taken up by different stakeholder groups in the news media and in doing so, fills a gap in the existing research on SAWP. While existing literature acknowledges the prevalence of these issues in the SAWP, I consider the representation of these issues in mainstream newspapers with particular attention to whether they are framed differently by the government, advocacy groups, migrant workers, farm owners/operators, or the article itself. Does the mainstream news media as a whole, as well as groups such as the government and advocates, acknowledge the issues in the program that are outlined by scholars in the field? My project will acknowledge what is being said by these groups, and perhaps more importantly, what is not being said. Furthermore, my project fills a gap in the literature by comparing pre-COVID and during-COVID representations to consider the impact the pandemic has had on the framing of the SAWP and its workers in mainstream newspapers. Considering that the COVID-19 pandemic is relatively new, there is likely a gap in the literature in that area.

I begin this thesis by exploring relevant academic literature, followed by a discussion on the methodological approaches implemented to conduct this research. Next, I provide an overview of the findings from the study and its subsequent analysis, organized thematically by chapter. I conclude with an overview and discussion on my findings, discerning its meaning and relevancy to the wider social context.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter situates my project in relation to pre-existing scholarship on the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) and presents my theoretical approach which employs the concept of "unfree" labour and highlights the impact of the SAWP as a circular migration system. I explore the research on the various aspects of the program that bind the worker to their employer and the ways this further places them in a system of precarity and deportability. In particular, I explore how the deportability of migrant workers in the SAWP works as a tactic of control and governance. Following a discussion of these structural and theoretical ramifications of the program, I provide background on the overall living and working conditions on farms for SAWP workers and how this potentially exacerbates their vulnerability. The role of race will be considered when analyzing the conditions of labour for workers in the program, and I will explore potential solutions to improving the SAWP as outlined by scholars across the literature. This chapter will conclude with a short discussion on the overall significance of the literature and consider where my research fills a gap in existing knowledge.

The methodological and analytical value of the literature reviewed in this chapter is particularly substantial in the context of my thesis. The literature played a considerable role in informing my keywords, themes, codes, and analysis by providing the topics that are largely discussed by scholars in the field. I constructed my codes for my method partially from prior knowledge, but predominantly from the prevalent themes found in the literature for the purpose of seeing how the same issues considered in the literature are taken up by the media. The literature is fairly critical of the program, but is the media? This is relevant because the general public forms a great deal of their opinions and knowledge from the news media as it is an accessible source; public perceptions of the SAWP are likely partially based off of these

representations. The literature helps to advance my argument by confirming that my findings are supported by scholarship in the field. To safeguard against reading the bias of the literature in my coding, I remained neutral in my assessment of the media articles and offered some codes that went against the literature as well, such as "TWFP does not need reform".

2.1 Employer/Employee Hierarchy

Scholars have long argued that migrant workers in the SAWP are susceptible to precarity and exploitation due in part to the unequal power dynamic that ties workers to their employer. This unequal employer-employee power dynamic creates an "intricate structuring of labour on the farm that constructs a complicated hierarchy" (Holmes, p. 50, 2013). Workers in the SAWP are bound to a single employer (Valenzula, 2011; Fudge and Strauss, 2014; Strauss & McGrath, 2017) who can impose restrictions to almost all facets of their lives, both in their personal lives and in their work-related lives. With the exception of British Columbia, workers are required to live in employer-supplied housing (MacIntosh, 2022). This means they are not circulating or accessing the broader community, leaving them further isolated (MacIntosh, 2022) and increasing their reliance on their employer. These living arrangements enable employers to demand that work is performed outside regular hours, rarely with overtime compensation (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). Employers can also impose mobility controls around migrants' freedom to leave the workplace (Reid-Musson, 2017) and can create stipulated conditions related to food, habitation, remuneration, and breach of contract (Andre, 1990). Employers can decide when workers have time off, what they do in their time off, and what kind of social relationships they can establish (Paz Ramirez, 2008). On some farms, workers may be required to abide by curfews and inform employers of their whereabouts when off the farm (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). The worker-employer dynamic also effectively places access to health and medical

care in the hands of the employer who often controls access to their health cards and transportation (MacIntosh, 2022). These tactics are powerful forms of control and governance. It is through these tactics that migrant workers are forced to rely almost solely on their employers, further situating them within a system of precarity.

The control the employer can impose over the worker is a result of the larger structure of the SAWP. The SAWP restricts the amount of time workers can spend in the destination country, specifies where they must live geographically, and seeks to actively prevent forms of collective organization like unionization (Fudge & Strauss, 2014). Furthermore, if a migrant farm worker quits their job, they are required to leave the country. Any violation of their work permit rules makes them subject to deportation (Satzewich, 2015). Workers' lack of mobility within the labour market is part of the structure of how Canada manages its migrant labour regimes and creates vulnerabilities, for example, with increased health risks and widespread labour and human rights violations (Hennebry & McLaughlin, 2012). Due to their inability to negotiate or transfer their work contracts to other places of employment (Valenzuela, 2011), migrant workers are more likely to endure potential abuses committed by their employers. In fact, failure to comply with any of the stipulations in their contract (both written and unwritten) can result in dismissal and/or deportation.

2.2 Deportability

Migrant workers are also tied to their employer because of their deportability. Migrant workers are easily deported back to their sending country for a multitude of reasons, including if they fall sick or become injured, if they exhibit behaviour deemed undesirable, if they are deemed to lack a disposition to work, or if they are simply no longer needed (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). As a result, many workers experience a constant sense of disposability,

displacement anxiety, and uncertainty on the farms (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). The concept of deportability is described by Nicholas De Genova (2005):

> It is deportability and not deportation as such, that has historically rendered Mexican labour to be a distinctly disposable commodity. "Illegality" is thus lived through a palpable sense of deportability whereby some are deported in order that most may remain…as workers. (p. 8)

Here, De Genova discusses deportability as it relates to his study of undocumented Mexican migrants in the United States, but, as Binford mentions, his concept can be applied to temporary foreign workers under contract in Canada and elsewhere (Vosko, 2016; Basok et al., 2014).

Many employers use disciplinary tactics that help ensure migrants are meeting certain levels of productivity on the farm. Under the threat of deportation, migrants are coerced to maintain high levels of productivity and accept their working and living conditions (Basok & Bélanger, 2016; Binford, 2013; Binford, 2019). If migrant workers are unable to meet these requirements and instead demonstrate "poor" work performance or behaviour, they risk dismissal and deportation, and are therefore under constant pressure to meet unrealistic labour demands. Moreover, they are unlikely to refuse employer requests to work extra time or on the weekends, or to complain of illness or injury for fear that requesting time off from work to visit a doctor could result in a negative evaluation and suspension or dismissal from the SAWP (McLaughlin & Hennebry, 2013). The reservoir of unemployed or underemployed labour forces the worker to accept any form of employment, even under the most onerous conditions (Andre, 1990).

An incentive to join the program and perform in an acceptably productive manner is that wages – and in some cases, working conditions – are superior to those found in their home

countries, even despite the long hours of farm work, pay that is low relative to other sectors in the Canadian labour market, and an inability to exercise many basic labour rights in the SAWP (Thomas, 2016). Meanwhile, the consequences they face if these demands are not met are harsher than any a Canadian citizen would have to face because their status in the country is tied to their employment, consequently making foreign labour a disposable commodity. Deportation is a harsh consequence as it implies not only the immediate termination of the contract by the employer and the subsequent repatriation, but also to the denial of future employment (Basok & Bélanger, 2016; Thomas, 2016), while vaguely-worded employment contracts enable employers to dismiss workers arbitrarily and without the right of appeal (Preibisch & Hennebry, 2012). When a worker is fired, the contract becomes voided and the right to remain in Canada immediately suspended (Binford, 2013). Within the structure of deportability, the legal worker is transformed from a legal temporary worker into an "illegal" who must be "deported" (Binford, 2013).

Additionally, the program is structured so that farmers may request specific workers to hire in subsequent growing seasons if their work is considered satisfactory (Thomas, 2016; MacIntosh, 2022). If a worker is not rehired by an employer, the home country is unlikely to keep them in the pool of potential workers (MacIntosh, 2022). As a result, labour migration programs can act as "fear regimes" that compel workers to endure workplace abuses and violations to guarantee their spot in the program the following season (Choudry & Smith, 2016). Because their ability to reside in Canada is tied to their work, the structure of the program effectively silences workers who may face abuse due to the severe consequence of job loss or deportation.

2.3 Unfree Labour

The term "unfree labour" is widely used in the literature on guest worker programs. As a frame for analysis, "unfree labour" is linked to the desire of nation states and employers to maintain a flexible and compliant workforce (Cohen, 2019). Sharma (2006) clearly describes what it means to be "unfree" as a temporary worker in the Canadian labour market:

> Temporary foreign workers are told that they must follow the terms of their employment authorization while in Canada, and if they do not, they will be deported. In other words, if a worker employed on a temporary employment authorization leaves the stipulated employer, changes occupations, or takes on additional work without the approval of an immigration official, they are subject to deportation. The worker is therefore bound to work at a specific job for a specific period of time for a specific employer. Hence, workers entering under the TFWP are denied mobility rights both in the labour market and, by virtue of being tied to their employer, geographically as well. They are not free. (p. 104-105)

Both the tie to employer and the time-restricted nature of the program effectively curtails the bargaining power of workers and heightens labour control (Strauss & McGrath, 2017), effectively creating an unfree migrant worker.

The availability of unfree workers is a permanent feature of the labour market in Canada, and scholars argue that the program operates as a "revolving door of exploitation" (Ramirez, 1982; as cited in Sharma, 2006). It is often through the regimes of unfree and precarious employment that high levels of profitability are ensured by relying on migrant workers who, through such regimes, are made vulnerable to greater exploitation (Strauss & McGrath, 2017; Goldring et al., 2009). Migrant workers may experience unfree labour relations because of what

Potter and Hamilton (2014) refer to as "routes to precarity", where conditions of precarious employment overlap with dimensions of unfreedom along a continuum of exploitation. Research has demonstrated not only the linkages between precariousness, migration and legal status (Lenard & Straehle, 2012), but also how the unfreedom of temporary migrant workers is actively produced by the state both as a dimension of exclusionary Canadian citizenship and as a strategy of capital accumulation (Sharma, 2006).

The literature articulates that the unfreedom of migrant labourers is not necessarily a result of the individual employer but rather a product of the systemic injustices of the program in its entirety. This is true; however, it should be noted that individual employers can then reinforce and reproduce the system in their actions on the farm. Strauss and McGrath (2017) argue that "Canada's TFWP directly illustrates how unfreedom in the 'private economy' is not simply a matter of bad employers tricking and coercing unlucky workers; unfree labour relations are systematically institutionalized by state immigration policies" (Cohen, p. 132, 2019). Migration regimes with these features involve forms of unfree labour relations that are not illicit, but rather "facilitated and enforced by the state and [play] a fundamental role in the economy" (Frantz, 2013; as cited in Sharma, 2006). As a whole, the SAWP is often criticized by scholars for normalizing unfree labour migration (Preibisch & Otero, 2014; Weiler et al., 2016) which becomes justified based on an apparent shortage of local and family labour (Weiler, Mclaughlin, & Cole, 2017).

2.4 Circular Migration

A formal path to permanent residency does not exist for temporary foreign workers in the SAWP. TFWs in other sectors can transition to permanent residency status, but due to the seasonal nature of the agricultural sector, SAWP workers cannot due to the absence of full-time,

permanent, consistent work. This makes the program unique in the conditions and exploitation these particular workers experience. As a result, many scholars refer to the SAWP as a "circular migration system" (Hennebry, 2011; Cohen, 2019; Preibisch, 2010). The literature describes that Canada's SAWP "has resulted in a high degree of circularity" (Preibisch, 2010, p. 409) and "aims to fill ongoing labour shortages in low-skilled sectors such as agriculture but ensures intensive state oversight and regulation of migrants' legal rights and entitlements" (Cohen, 2019, p. 136-37). The structure of the program posits that seasonal agricultural workers can only work in Canada for up to eight months a year, after which they must return home (Preibisch & Hennebry, 2012). The system is referred to as "circular" because the migrant worker experiences a continuous pattern of temporary movement between the sending and receiving country in which there is no definitive "end" (such as permanent residency).

Literature by Hahamovitch (2003) describes that the TFWP produces the "perfect immigrant":

> Temporary labour schemes were thus state-brokered compromises designed to maintain high levels of migration while placating anti-immigrant movements. They offered employers foreign workers who could still be bound like indentured servants but who could also be disciplined by the threat of deportation. They placated trade unionists who feared foreign competition by promising to restrict guestworkers to the most onerous work and to expel them during economic downturns. And they assuaged nativists by isolating guestworkers from the general population. Finally, states got development aid from poor countries in the form of ready workers, without the responsibility of having to integrate those workers or provide for their welfare. The perfect immigrant was born. (p. 72-73)

The “perfect immigrant” is one that can be drawn in and sent away according to the needs of domestic capitalists; one in which neither employers nor the state assumes responsibility for the workers’ prior formation or social reproduction; and can neither aspire to citizenship nor enjoy most of the rights that accrued to citizens (Binford, 2013). Other scholars present similar theories, arguing that temporary migration, tied to specific contracts, represents an ideal type: not only does it permit receiving states to import labour at times of need and discard it when the demand disappears, but it also makes it possible for sending states to ensure that migrants’ earnings are channeled into the sending countries’ economies via remittances (Basok & Bélanger, 2016). In “inviting” guest workers, nation states sought to import labourers, producers of surplus value, without importing real people with families and needs and expectations that extended beyond the field (Binford, 2013). The employment of migrant workers is appealing to the employer because migrant labour is flexible and compliant, available on demand, and deportable when no longer required (Basok & Bélanger, 2016). The literature points to the state’s role in constructing a “disposable” migrant worker through their temporary status that allows the government to use migrant labour to their advantage when needed and without granting them the rights associated with permanent residency.

Many scholars and activists argue that the TFWP has created a large and vulnerable temporary labour force with unequal access to basic freedoms and protections (Cohen, 2019). Specifically, workers in the SAWP do not enjoy the same political citizenship rights and social benefit programs afforded to Canadian citizens or permanent residents such as provincial employment standards legislation and unemployment insurance (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). The invention of the SAWP has created a new category of workers permanently disadvantaged with respect to the mainstream labour force (Otero, 2019). Given that seasonal

agricultural workers often do not have the opportunity to obtain permanent residency in Canada, their employment is by definition precarious and short term (Strauss & McGrath, 2017). The lack of permanent residency opportunity for SAWP workers is a consistent argument throughout the literature and points to the ways in which the program permanently situates migrant workers in their temporary status. In addition to being prohibited from settling permanently in Canada, the workers' families are not permitted entry at all, thereby preventing any alternative economic security for the workers within Canada (Thomas, 2016). Migrant precarity is thus partially maintained through the denial of permanent residency.

Some scholars argue that Canada uses the TFWP as a means of managing migration flows more generally (Preibisch, 2010). Systems of labour migration rely on economic forces that invite and even require the cheap labour of migrants while political forces ban migrants from entering the country (Holmes, 2013). It is because of this system which encourages the entry of migrants, but only for the purpose of using their labour, that temporary labour migration has replaced permanent immigration as the primary means by which people enter Canada (Choudry & Smith, 2016; Preibisch, 2010; Hennebry, 2011), and on a yearly basis they now far outnumber the economic immigrants who are admitted as permanent residents (Satzewich, 2015) which emphasises the scope of the TFWP. Guestworker programs thus work to keep foreign workers vulnerable and isolated (Hahamovitch, 2011) while producing the maximal extraction of labour (Holmes, 2013).

2.5 Living and Working Conditions

There is consensus across the academic literature that points to insufficient living and working conditions experienced by workers in the SAWP. Some of the reported issues regarding living conditions include crowding, lack of access to drinkable water, lack of access to adequate

food storage facilities such as refrigeration, proximity to agrochemicals, inadequate sanitation facilities, and the presence of animals and pest infestations (Unheeded Warnings, 2020). Some workers live in crowded dormitories, wooden shacks with leaky roofs, cracked walls and rotten floors, or rundown pest and insect-infested trailers (Hahamovitch, 2011; Binford, 2013). With little to no separation between their workplace and living quarters, common substandard housing conditions such as overcrowding and inadequate washroom and cooking facilities are often accepted as a necessary component of employment (Caxaj & Cohen, 2019). Migrant workers who are predominantly from Mexico and the Caribbean may have difficulty obtaining culturally appropriate food, or may face food insecurity in the household, as well as inadequate food and food preparation which can generate and exacerbate other health issues, such as obesity and diabetes and negative mental health outcomes (Kiehne and Mendoza, 2015; Kilanowski, 2012; Weigel et al., 2007; as cited in Weiler et al., 2017). This can be especially problematic when considering that migrant workers' access to health care lies in the hands of the employer, so they may have difficulty with or reluctance toward accessing medical services (Hennebry, 2011; Narushima et al., 2016).

The work itself is often no better than the living conditions. Many employers demand long hours of fast-paced work in the grueling sun, low wages, lack of overtime pay, few days off with minimal access to transportation, and exceptions from many basic labour standards (Hahamovitch, 2011; Binford, 2013; Weiler et al., 2017; Hennebry, 2011). Griffith says most of the low-wage jobs that temporary foreign workers occupy are generally unpleasant and plagued by high turnover: "There isn't much romance in jobs like these. They don't pay well. Often they're dirty, they're hard, they stink, they cause injury and illness, and they earn the people who work them no prestige" (2006, p. 9). Furthermore, the temporary status of the workers makes

them ineligible for many employment benefits, social assistance programs, and severe disability benefits, even though they do contribute to Employment Insurance and the Canada Pension Plan (Valenzuela, 2011). So on the ground, this means TFWs can experience exploitive working conditions, working when ill or injured, and working in overcrowded dilapidated housing with inadequate sanitation (MacIntosh, 2022). Being subjected to the exhausting, alienating, and highly coercive conditions of contract work, SAWP workers experience long days and weeks of intense work; limited rest time (especially during the peak harvest season) during which they must cook, wash clothes, and clean their living quarters; distance from family and home community; social and linguistic isolation; and the economic burden of supporting their household back home (Binford, 2013). Despite the decades of reports of these conditions, little has been done to improve these conditions.

2.6 Race

For this particular section, it is important to differentiate the terms race, racialization, and racism. Mensah (2002) defines race as "a human population distinguished on the basis of socially perceived physical traits such as skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features and the like" (p. 13) while racialization is the social process of grouping people based on race (Thomas, 2020). Moreover, racism is "a philosophy of racial antipathy that asserts the superiority of one human group over another based on real or perceived genetically transmitted differences" (Mensah, 2002, p. 14). Thus, people from the global South are targeted and exploited in precarious work regimes like the SAWP because within the global economy, they are the most politically, socially and economically disenfranchised groups (Bonacich et al., 2008). The trajectory of the SAWP is an example of the use of imported racialized bodies to address labour shortages in Canada's agricultural industry (Thomas, 2020).

Labour discipline is racialized in many ways and is the result of historic processes of colonialism and its ongoing legacies. In the SAWP, racialization defines a particular form of "strategic alterity" through which capitalist employers both devalue groups – thus justifying low wages – and mask that devaluation on the basis of ascribed social, physical, and cultural attributes (Binford, 2013). Satzewich says that racialization involves "those instances where social relations between people have been structured by the signification of human biological characteristics in such a way as to define and construct differentiated social collectivities" (1998, p. 32). Historically, colonialism has constructed the value of particular groups based on their racialization. This plays out in many ways, one of which is that being visibly racialized makes workers particularly deportable and vilifiable. These factors are a result of historical (and contemporary) factors of colonialism that attribute value to groups of people based on race. For many growers, racialization is also about labour productivity (Binford, 2013). To this end, the productivity of racialized workers can be extracted to a greater extent due to colonial forces that justify their treatment. Some scholars posit that there is a connection between historical slavery and the contemporary conditions of agricultural work: "When farm workers are found in poor housing, indebted to recruiters, or working under exploitative conditions, it may seem that agriculture has not broken links with a past that included slavery, selfdom, and other institutions that exploited farm workers' (Martin, 2021, p. 214). The SAWP's continued reliance on racialization and unfree labour can thus be traced back to historical features of colonialism and capitalism. The coercion of labour, transnational movements of people, and racialization that are all associated with agricultural work are intrinsic to the uneven accumulation of industrial capital across the world (Rogaly, 2021; Manjapara, 2018).

Scholars across the literature largely interpret the SAWP as a reflection of structural racism (Satzewich, 2015). The SAWP is a reproduction of a racialized global economy that functions as a result of histories of colonial world order. Although the SAWP does not explicitly contain race-based exclusions and restrictions, it enacts racialized forms of governing and disciplining of migrant labour through seemingly "raceless" mechanisms such as the denial of political and economic rights, the denial of citizenship, spatial segregation, restrictions on territorial movement and movement within the labour market, family separation, and prohibition of intimate sexual relations (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016, p. 97). The conflation of migrant workers' race with foreignness and non-belonging is also apparent in racist farm policies, hostile encounters in communities, and racist depictions of workers in local media (Caxaj & Cohen, 2021). Racialized forms of governance are what lead to the "unfreedom" of the temporary foreign worker. Systemic discrimination, especially racism, plays a central role in the creation, reproduction, and regulation of unfree labour (Bakan, 2016). Arat-Koç states: "Unfree labour is not an anomaly, but rather a contemporary feature of capitalism. Migration and racialization continue to function as central mechanisms for the creation and reproduction of unfree labour" (2016). Furthermore, it is through these forms of political, cultural, and spatial exclusion that temporary foreign worker programs exercise racialized forms of labour discipline and control that seek to transform displaced groups of migrant workers into disposable populations of cheap, pliable labour (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016).

One of the contemporary forms that racialization assumes is the manner in which employers explain hiring decisions in racial terms (Binford, 2013). For example, cheapening the cost of labour power – i.e., extracting more value per labour dollar – remains one of the only strategies available to Canadian farmers struggling for profit in a globalized marketplace, so the

acquisition of cheap labour is seemingly the solution (Binford, 2013). TFWs are able to provide that cheap labour because, in the global context, they can make more money working in the global North than the global South and so they are willing to work in Canada under conditions that are deemed acceptable in comparison to those in their home country.

Migrant workers in the program, who come from Mexico and the Caribbean and who are denied a formal path to permanent residency, are seen as good enough to work in Canada but not good enough to stay, which arises from the perceived undesirability of Mexican and Caribbean immigrants, and hence from racism (Preibisch & Binford, 2007; Satzewich, 1991). This connects back to Hahamovitch's (2003) point about the "perfect immigrant" as someone who doesn't in fact immigrate – just their labour. While there are racist employers who prefer Mexican workers over Jamaican workers (see Binford & Preibisch, 2013), the bottom line is that Canada's immigration policy prefers newcomers with money, education, or "skill" – resources that farmworkers from the global South do not often have. While the policy as written is not outwardly about race, because of the history of colonialism and racialization, it affects racialized workers in complex ways.

Employers using the program can and often do request workers by country (Binford, 2013), which emphasises and reinforces cultural stereotypes based on nationality. The assumption is that different groups of workers possess natural physical attributes or social-cultural dispositions that affect labour productivity (ibid.). Holmes describes how migrant labourers are blamed for their own suffering, often understood as deserving of their location in the social hierarchy because of what are perceived to be their natural, ethnic, bodily characteristics (2013). Again, although Holmes research is based on the temporary agricultural worker program in the United States, the programs are similar enough that his concepts can be

applied to aspects of Canada's SAWP. He describes that "their phenotype, body size, marriage customs, language, nationality, and even work discipline and exploitability become the pernicious symbolic markers of a racialized ethnicity that assigns them to a toxic occupational location in the global labour force" (Holmes, 2013, p. xiii). This is demonstrated in the fact that the composition of the population of migrant workers in the SAWP has changed over time – for example, there has been significant growth in the numbers of Mexican workers and a notable decline in Caribbean workers in the SAWP, and some scholars argue that this trend can partially be attributed to racial stereotyping (Hennebry, 2011). Different groups of workers have also become discursively (and practically) associated with different "types of agriculture" based on natural – or cultural in some instances – advantages attributed to them by growers, such as Mexicans being favoured for jobs entailing stoop labour and Caribbeans being preferred where work involves reaching upwards (Binford, 2013). Furthermore, Binford (2013) argues that preferences for Mexican workers are supported by the belief that "Brown" people from former Spanish colonies are closer physically and culturally to Canada's imagined white community. In an interview done by Preibisch (2002) with a consular officer, they (the officer) speculated that employers may face community pressure to hire "Brown" (Mexican) workers as opposed to "Black" (Caribbean) ones:

> 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. (Binford, 2013, p. 110)

Similarly, Beckford (2016) argues that this shift in workers is an attempt to have a workforce that is the least-resistant to make them more easily exploitable:

> …the shift was motivated by racial stereotyping of Mexican and Caribbean workers—the former as docile and malleable and the latter as resistant. Under this theory, English speaking Caribbean workers with some experience in employee rights because of the region's history would likely be more assertive in holding employers accountable and resisting exploitation, while Mexicans with the language barrier and limited experience in labour negotiations would provide less resistance. (Sawchuk & Kempf, 2008)

The categorization of workers by race and the differential treatment of workers from various countries creates a racial hierarchy within the program and perhaps beyond. This also points to the potential "hidden agenda" of TFWPs that are linked to issues of race, ethnicity, and religion, and are entrenched with racism and Eurocentrism (Satzewich, 2015). TFWPs now operate through more covert and subtle expressions of racism under a system of labour apartheid (Paz Ramirez & Jihye Chun, 2016). In research by Binford, many contract workers explained that they resent the lack of social acceptance on the part of Canadian society, which some represented explicitly as racism during interviews (2013).

Some scholars argue that the use of TFWPs is meant to curb non-white immigration (Sharma, 2006; Satzewich, 2015), another potential "hidden agenda" of the program.

> [The TFWP] legalized the re-subordination of many non-Whites entering Canada by recategorizing them as temporary and foreign workers…the racialized criteria of admittance in Canadian immigration policy was shifted from the pre-1967 categories of 'preferred races and nationalities' on the new category of non-immigrant (or migrant) worker. (Satzewich, 2015, p. 33)

The prejudicial and racist denial of a path to permanent residency for migrant agricultural workers in Canada is not a new phenomenon (Preibisch, 2004) and the establishment of the

category of "migrant worker" in itself is an implicitly racial one and is closely linked to the ongoing construction of "Canadianness" (read whiteness) (Sharma, 2001). The combined effects of neoliberal immigration policies, employment laws and free trade agreements can be understood as a form of racialized structural violence (Farmer, 2001) against migrants from the global South, and as a result, these structures establish unequal access to goods and services and place migrant farm workers at a high risk of bodily harm (Holmes, 2013). As a result, racism and oppression becomes naturalized through the structural and symbolic violence that exists within the SAWP, translating into workplace hierarchies, abuse, and poor living conditions, among others.

2.7 Solutions in the Literature

There is a debate across academic literature between those who argue for reforming the SAWP (see Otero , 2019; Preibisch & Otero, 2014; Otero & Preibisch, 2015; Weiler et al., 2016, Silverman & Hari, 2016) versus those who argue for its abolition (see Butovsky & Smith, 2007; Binford, 2019). Binford endorses abolition as a way to strengthen migrant worker rights, including workers' access to social protections such as employment insurance, their ability to join a union without fear of reprisal, and liberation from unfree employment relationships (Binford, 2019). Similarly, Butovsky and Smith describe that the intent of getting rid of the SAWP is not to deny migrant workers access to agricultural jobs in Canada, but to oppose the state's use of discriminatory guest worker programs that split the labour market (2007). Instead, full citizenship rights should be given to all workers enrolled (Butovsky & Smith, 2007). "[Abolishing the SAWP] could unite Canadian and migrant workers in a common struggle against the split labour market and for significant improvements in wages and working conditions in the agricultural sector" (Butovsky & Smith, 2007, p. 43).

The call for ending the program can, in some cases, devalue migrants' agency; many workers see themselves as willingly applying and consenting to registering in circular labour migration programs, including the restrictions in personal rights they entail (Ruhs, 2006; Wells et al., 2014). Dismantling the SAWP would not resolve the larger problem of structural injustice, such as the sending countries' economic reliance on remittances rather than offering employment opportunities and robust social safety nets at home (Silverman & Hari, 2016). Furthermore, farm operators have claimed that without the SAWP, the Canadian agri-food industry would collapse, and consumers would rely on imports grown by farmworkers labouring under even worse conditions abroad (Weiler et al., 2017). Perhaps another outcome is that employers would turn to a different group of racialized workers with extremely weak bargaining power, a pattern that has been repeated in different historical moments (Weiler & McLaughlin, 2019). Moreover, abolition would reinforce the power of the nation-state to harden its borders against racialized migrants seeking a better life (Weiler & McLauglin, 2019).

The thrust of academic analysis on the topic largely argues for continued migration on freer and more dignified terms (Otero, 2019), thereby focusing on possible improvements to TFWPs rather than on their elimination (Binford, 2019). Some scholars argue that a radical reformation of the SAWP, in which workers could circulate freely in the labour market, migrate with their families, and have better bargaining power, including the right to unionize (Otero, 2019), would transform the program to better fit the needs of the workers. Other solutions discussed include better enforcement of regulations on safety and health, ongoing and rigorous inspections of work sites and housing, meaningful sanctions against employers for violations, increasing wages, and removing EI deductions (Beckford, 2016; Carvajal Gutiérrez & Johnson, 2016). The program would also be improved by facilitating stronger social networking

opportunities for migrant workers, involving workers in SAWP discussions and reform, reviewing the recruitment and appointment of liaison officers, making it easier to transfer from one farm to another, and better orientation and training for the job (Beckford, 2016). Workers would be better able to advocate for their rights if they could join unions and bargain collectively as well (Satzewich, 2015). Other interrelated areas for policy intervention to improve the SAWP include promoting household food security for farm workers in Canada, supporting more dignified livelihood alternatives and immigration pathways, and strengthening food sovereignty in Canada and workers' sending countries (Weiler et al., 2017). A broad-based solidarity of migrant and non-migrant workers within Canada and across borders is urgently needed (Choudry, 2016), with migrant worker struggles situated at the centre, and not at the margins (Arat-Koç, 2016). Importantly, all recommendations should be carefully vetted with migrant farmworkers themselves (Weiler et al., 2017) to ensure the impact is meaningful and solutions come from the ground up.

Another common solution discussed across academic literature and by advocates is to provide a formal path to permanent residency for workers in the SAWP. Migrant rights advocates and labour associations working with temporary migrants have long proposed permanent residency upon arrival for temporary foreign workers in the SAWP to mitigate current structural vulnerabilities they face (Cajax & Cohen, 2021). Otero states: "the only way for new workers in Canada to play on a level field with the rest of the workforce, without enabling employers to undermine the latter, is by getting permanent residency on arrival" (2019, p. 378). Other scholars also emphasize the importance of a path to residency for migrant workers, stating that while the future of TFWPs in Canada continues to require significant discussion, a place to start is to allow those currently inscribed in the SAWP to continue to work in Canada on the

same terms as citizen workers, which ultimately requires access to permanent residency (Binford, 2019; Weiler et al., 2017). Giving migrant workers the opportunity to apply for permanent resident status in Canada after a period of loyal service in the SAWP would be a value-added reform (Beckford, 2016). The logic of granting migrant workers permanent residency on arrival is that it would give them access to the same rights and freedom as Canadian immigrants (Weiler & McLaughlin, 2019). Although not all workers wish to remain permanently in Canada, many migrant agricultural workers have expressed an interest in settling in Canada with their families (Hennebry et al., 2010), and permanent status on arrival would support either option while enabling greater job mobility and access to rights (Weiler & McLaughlin, 2019).

One argument to consider, however, is that providing permanent residency to SAWP workers could mean that some workers chose not to work in agriculture, which still leaves the issue of filling the labour market need in that sector. Perhaps rather than only offering permanent residency, the solution lies in providing a choice for an open work permit that would allow migrants to circulate between countries and employers in the SAWP. Providing immediate access to open work permits for migrant agricultural workers who are potentially experiencing abuse will allow them to more easily transfer to different farms and refuse unsafe conditions (Cajax & Cohen, 2021). Open work permits would allow for a greater measure of mobility and could avoid premature cessation of employment to avert unnecessary repatriation (Vosko, 2018). In instances where SAWP employers were successful in securing alternative employment, it would also minimize costs to the original sponsoring employer (Vosko, 2018). Providing SAWP workers with open work permits could be the solution to increasing their agency, mobility, and improving their treatment on the farm, while still ensuring the demand for workers in the agricultural sector is met.

2.9 Conclusion

Based on an analysis of the scholarship on the SAWP, it is clear that the structure of the program reproduces migrant precarity and exploitation. The culmination of being tied to a single employer in almost all facets of their lives, the ease with which workers can be deported, and the often inhumane living and working conditions on farms creates a structure which fosters precarity, health and safety risks, and perpetual fear of employer discretion (MacIntosh, 2022). Furthermore, what many authors describe as "unfree labour" can be used as an overarching theoretical framework to give meaning to the system of labour that perpetuates these inequalities. Workers consequently become trapped in a circular migration scheme through which they are continually denied permanent residency and are therefore in a constant state of temporariness. Overall, the scholarship points to the normalization of these discourses through the structural and systemic injustices of the program that continually position migrants as precarious workers through their isolation, exploitation, replaceability, deportability, and unequal hierarchical relationship between employer and worker. While highlighting areas for improvement, the literature argues for an overall reform of the SAWP that allows migrants to be treated fairly in the labour market and immigration policy and practice (Otero, 2019).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Employing a qualitative content analysis approach, I examine mainstream newspaper coverage of migrant workers in the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program as a potential source of public perception about foreign nationals and guest worker programs. Through the process of coding, I analyzed newspaper articles from six mainstream Canadian newspapers to consider the representation of temporary foreign workers in the SAWP in the news media while considering if, and if so, how, these representations changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Content analysis as a method was implemented to understand what the dominant narratives are regarding migrant workers and the program, and to explore how the topic is taken up by different stakeholder groups in the news media. I begin with an overview of content analysis and coding as a method. I then outline my method of gathering the data, coding processes, and explain the timeline and sampling choices. This chapter explores the significance of news media as a discursive space and its importance to this research and concludes with a reflection on the methods and an evaluation of their limitations.

3.1 Content Analysis and Coding

Qualitative content analysis is a research method for the subjective interpretation of data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). In content analysis, researchers examine artifacts of social communication, typically written documents (Berg, 2007) through the systemic classification process of coding to identify themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Content analysis is "any technique for making inference by systematically and objectively identifying special characteristics of messages" (Berg, 2007). In content analysis, analysis of the data should consider the use of the words in the text, including the ways in which the words are used (Krippendorf, 2004). This offers an opportunity for the investigator to learn about how subjects

or the authors of textual materials view their social words (Krippendorf, 2004). Qualitative content analysis goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). These categories can point to either explicit meaning or inferred meaning.

Content analysis typically involves coding, which Gibbs (2018) refers to as a way of indexing or categorizing the text to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it. Coding has been described by Charmaz (1983) as simply the process of categorizing and sorting data, while "codes" are described as serving to summarize, synthesize, and sort many observations made out of the data (as cited in Bryman & Burgess, 1994). It involves identifying one or more passages of text that exemplify some thematic idea and linking them with a code which is a shorthand reference to the thematic idea (Gibbs, 2018). Coding is how you define what the data you are analyzing is about and forms a focus for thinking about the text and its interpretation (Gibbs, 2018). I like to consider my codes as "themes"; a theme, in its simplest form, is a sentence or a string of words with a subject and a predicate (Berg, 2007). Content analysis and coding were propitious methods for answering my research questions. Because my research seeks to explore how the SAWP and its workers are represented in mainstream Canadian newspapers, a comprehensive analysis of such articles was required.

I used a comprehensive inductive and deductive approach in determining my codes. A deductive approach involves tagging a dataset with codes that are derived from previous knowledge or theory (Bernard et al., 2017), while in an inductive approach the coding scheme arises directly from the analysis of the raw data (Thomas, 2003). I began deductively by composing a list of codes I anticipated I would find in the articles derived from my previous

understanding of common themes and reflective of my analytical thinking about migrant workers, derived from the literature reviewed in chapter two, in the media. As I went through the articles, new codes emerged and were then added to my coding scheme. Allowing new themes to emerge while analyzing the data using the inductive coding approach ensured my data was comprehensive and inclusive of any possible codes that were relevant to this research. In those cases, I would go back and re-code previously coded articles with my new codes in mind to ensure all codes were used consistently across the data. This process of coding and re-coding established a thorough and comprehensive list of codes and representation of the dominant discourses throughout the news articles. I ensured my codes were as analytical and theoretical as possible to avoid being simply descriptive, but rather to provide a systematic way of explaining the data. To do this, I considered the analytic and interpretive meaning behind the prevailing themes from my assessment of the literature.

Furthermore, my coding procedure incorporates both manifest and latent content analysis. Manifest content analysis considers the elements that are physically present and countable, while latent content analysis is extended to an interpretive reading of the symbolism underlying the physically presented data (Berg, 2007). In other words, manifest content is comparable to the surface structure presented in the message, while latent content is the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message (Berg, 2007). With manifest content analysis, I was able to consider the frequency that each code distinctively appeared in the text, while latent content analysis allowed me to interpret the possible hidden meaning behind a statement and the ways it could perhaps point to or give meaning to a seemingly meaningless remark. Because my coding includes both manifest and latent content analysis, I was able to consider both the explicit or blatant meanings and the hidden or inferred meanings behind the statement made by various

stakeholder groups in the articles. This is especially important in articles that discuss social issues and marginalized groups, such as migrant workers, as discrimination or exclusion based on race or class is often concealed in statements by government officials in news media reports, for example, to appear politically neutral. Latent content analysis allows for a critical analysis into the symbolism of what is said and by whom in the articles.

3.2 Sampling and Methodological Process

The articles used for this study appeared in six prominent Canadian newspapers: The National Post, The Globe and Mail, The Toronto Star, The Chronicle Herald, The Telegraph-Journal, and The Guardian. I chose these newspapers because of their geographical relevance and large readership in their area. The National Post, The Globe and Mail, and The Toronto Star were chosen because of their national popularity, while The Chronicle Herald, The Telegraph-Journal, and The Guardian were chosen because of their proximity to me as a researcher based in Nova Scotia. I wanted to include data local to my area. Furthermore, including mainstream newspapers from both larger Canadian cities and smaller provinces in the Maritimes ensured that my data was inclusive of both rural and urban locations in Canada. These newspapers also have diverse political orientations. Accessing a range of sources that are both progressive and conservative will generate a more comprehensive account of the representation. Focusing on mainstream news media specifically allows me to seek out sources where presumably different perspectives are being integrated into the representation. I chose a sample size of six newspapers because this provides data that is saturated and will ensure that the patterns found in my sample can likely be generalized to the newspaper articles that fall outside my sample. I accessed all newspapers online. When referencing newspaper articles throughout this thesis, I include the

name of the news outlet within the citation to provide the reader with a distinction between which references are academic sources and which are news media sources.

My analysis considers how temporary foreign workers in the SAWP are represented in mainstream Canadian newspapers, and if these representations have changed as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering this, I searched for articles according to two timelines: before COVID started, and after COVID started. My pre-pandemic timeline was from January 2018 – December 2019, and my timeline for during the pandemic was from January 2020 – August 2021. This timeline was chosen to ensure I had enough data on either end of the timelines to draw tentative conclusions on migrant worker representations from each period, but without having too much data so the analysis would be unmanageable.

All articles published in the selected newspapers were digitally available with a paid subscription to their online database. Articles were selected based on search results in the online databases using the key phrase "Temporary Foreign Worker Program" and with set parameters to yield articles in the allotted timelines. This search brought up every article that was published in that specific time frame that had the phrase "Temporary Foreign Worker Program" in it in some capacity. I sorted the search results by date and collected them in order from oldest to newest to ensure no article was accidently overlooked. Although each of the six newspapers' websites differed slightly, the search function was consistent across each of them which allowed this method to work. After gathering a list of the articles that came up from my primary search, I then refined the list by removing any articles that were irrelevant. For example, my search results sometimes yielded articles pertaining to other streams of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, such as the Live-In Caregiver Program. These articles were excluded from my data because further analysis indicated that they did not discuss the SAWP stream specifically. With

that being said, “Temporary Foreign Worker Program” was chosen as my search phrase rather than “Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program” specifically because my pre-emptive exploration of the newspaper databases found that some articles opted to use TFWP as an umbrella term to cover all streams, including the SAWP. This approach ensured my search results were as inclusive as possible of all relevant articles. Additionally, I omitted any articles where the main topic wasn’t the SAWP but rather mentioned it offhandedly. I wanted to ensure every article included in my analysis was predominately about the SAWP because my analysis considers the approach of the article as a whole, so its scope needs to be narrowed down enough to draw tentative conclusions and to make it worth analyzing. The article’s focus also needed to be predominately about the SAWP to generate accurate quantitative data about how frequently the program is discussed in the media. Cumulatively, 203 articles fell inside these parameters and were subsequently coded, 61 of which were published in the pre-COVID timeline, and 142 in the during-COVID timeline. This will be explored in further detail in the findings section of this project.

3.3 Conceptual Framework

I used qualitative data analysis software NVivo to help with the organization and analysis of my data. With the number of articles I had, using data analysis software aided in the efficient and thorough coding of my articles. NVivo also contributed to the ease of displaying my findings; I was able to use the software to create different charts and tables to present my findings and compare specific codes or timelines to better understand and visualize my results. In addition to coding, I periodically made annotations within the articles if I had any additional comments to make that were not explained by the code.

As I previously mentioned, developing my list of codes happened in two parts: 1) Making codes I anticipated I would use before I began the analysis and 2) Adding codes I realized were relevant along the way, and then going back and re-coding the articles. The process of creating a complete and comprehensive list of codes involved a lot of trial and error. For example, I knew I would encounter examples of racism in the articles, so I began by making "Racism" a code. Along the way, I realized there were instances in which a person or group was *acknowledging* an act of racism rather than *being* racist in the articles, and coding these both under "Racism" wouldn't properly differentiate them. This resulted in creating the codes "Racism" and "Racism Acknowledged".

Furthermore, I realized it was important to differentiate the perspective from which these themes were coming from if I wanted to understand which voices were being highlighted in the articles; I believe it is important for this research to acknowledge not only what is being said in the articles, but by whom. There were five main perspectives that I thought were important to code for: that of advocates (or others); government; farm owner/operator; farmworkers; and that of the author/s of the articles. This approach allows me to directly compare, for example, what government officials said to what advocacy groups and workers themselves say. I did not have much trouble discerning which perspective a statement was coming from as it was almost always clearly stated by the author of the article. To clarify, codes under "Perspective of Article" occurred when a statement was made coming from the position of the author of the article, and not from an outside group like a government official or advocate. The "others" included in the "advocates (or others)" stakeholder group refers to those individuals who may not belong to a specific or designated migrant advocacy group, but who's beliefs clearly align with them, such as academics writing op-eds for the newspapers.

NVivo came in handy particularly when coding codes under each of the five stakeholder groups. In the software, I was able to create Child Nodes (Codes in NVivo are called "Nodes") under a Parent Node. For example, the Parent Node is "Perspective of Farm Owner/Operator", and the Child Node is "Essential Work Acknowledged". Every Child Node is coded under a Parent Node, which means that every code is coded with a mind to the stakeholder group that it is coming from. This allows me not only to view the frequency of the individual codes, but also the frequency of each of the perspectives. This lets me see who is saying what and how often.

NVivo was also helpful in organizing my data as I was able to put my articles into categories (or what NVivo refers to as "Cases"). I organized the articles by newspaper outlet and by timeline – so whether they fell under the Pre-COVID or During-COVID timeframe. When reviewing my findings, I was able to compare data between these categories. Below is my coding framework.

Table 1: List of Codes

Abuse acknowledged	Migrants stealing jobs
Blaming narrative when worker gets sick	Othering
Concerns over health of workers	Permanent residency as a solution
Deserving of more rights	Poor living conditions acknowledged
Discrimination	Precarity acknowledged
Discrimination acknowledged	Race acknowledged
Easily deported acknowledged	Racism
Essential work acknowledged	Racism acknowledged
Farm opposes worker complains	Skilled labour acknowledged
Fear of deportation	TFWP does not need reform
Fear of job or income loss	TFWP needs reform
Government is doing enough	Treatment of workers good
Government is not doing enough	Unskilled labour
Health and safety of workers	Work is hard, hard on body, and/or dangerous
Labour shortages	Worker demonstrating agency
Lack of concern over health of workers	Worker exploitation acknowledged
Lack of permanent residency opportunity acknowledged	Worker tied to employer
Living conditions good	

3.4 Limitations of Study

A limitation of my methodology is its lack of intercoder reliability. Intercoder reliability is a measure of the agreement between different coders regarding how the same data should be coded (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Because I am the sole researcher of this project, I cannot be sure that another researcher would create the same codes, or code the same themes as I did. Therefore my coding cannot be generalized and my findings are ultimately a representation of my individual perspective and assessment of the data. Furthermore, there is the possibility that my project is limited in its *intra*coder reliability. Intracoder reliability refers to consistency in how the same person codes data at multiple time points; if the same person returns to the data at another time, will they code it consistently? (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). Because the coding process occurred over the span of many weeks, it is possible that my conception of each code changed over time. Reflecting back on my process, I should have made definitions or a list of examples for each code to refer back to during the coding process to ensure optimal consistency.

A considerable limitation of this study is its failure to discuss the wider context of the articles. Throughout this thesis, I pull out statements from articles that are representative of the theme I am discussing which provides a textual example of the specific code. However, I fail to discuss the wider context of each article in terms of its overall representation. For example, the article could be presenting unsympathetic views of farmers, but with the objective of presenting a sympathetic account for the workers. Incorporating a discussion on the article as a whole rather than specific parts could have enhanced this thesis by demonstrating the overarching aim of the article, rather than individual representations within it, which would situate the representations within their larger context. Furthermore, some news outlets are more likely than others to present the views of certain stakeholder groups. Incorporating an analysis of the wider context of the

articles would have given an idea as to the propensity of each news outlet to highlight these perspectives. My study is limited in that it fails to acknowledge the overarching objective of each article and the subsequent likelihood of specific news outlets to focus on certain voices and how this impacts the overall data. I opted instead to acknowledge how frequently certain stakeholder groups assert their perspective throughout the entire culmination of the articles.

Additionally, some of the larger news outlets in this study have specific immigration reporters which contributes to the amount of articles about the SAWP derived from that outlet. Typically, immigration reporters were more progressive and advocated strongly for worker rights, making them more likely to incorporate and highlight the voices of advocacy groups and migrant workers themselves. For example, Sara Mojtehedzadeh is a work, labour and wealth reporter for the Toronto Star who reports largely on precarious work, labour issues, and workers' compensation, making immigration, migrant rights, and guestworker programs a large component of her journalism. Also employed by the Toronto Star is Nicholas Keung who reports on immigration, refugee, and diversity issues. The approach of these journalists is oriented towards social justice and human rights. This is an important consideration because the approach of the reporter impacts which stakeholder groups they choose to highlight and the questions they ask, consequently impacting the wider context of each article and impacting its political direction. The Globe and Mail also has migration-specific reporters, but the other news outlets did not. Having topic-specific journalists could play a role in the amount of articles that are published about the SAWP from the news outlet. The approach of the reporter in terms of their political viewpoints is relevant when considering the overall representation of the SAWP in the wider context of each article, but also in the news outlet as a whole.

Another limitation of my method pertains to the coding under stakeholder groups. It is possible that when journalists report on certain topics, they strategically direct their questions towards specific stakeholder groups to reach the goal of the article. For example, it is possible that reporters contact farmers when they are reporting on labour shortages, and contact advocacy groups when they are reporting on legal rights. This means there is likely a bias here in the results of the data regarding the likelihood of each stakeholder group in discussing certain issues. In other words, my hypothesis that some stakeholder groups are ignorant in acknowledging certain issues with the SAWP could be biased because it is possible the reporter is just not asking them the right questions, thus yielding different results.

An additional drawback is the dates I chose for my pre-COVID and during-COVID timeline. I set the parameters for my during-COVID timeline to begin in January 2020. Reflecting back on my methodological process, it would have made more sense for my pandemic timeline to start in March 2020, because that is when the effects of the pandemic truly began and created the amplification of news media articles on the topic. Because my during-COVID timeline began in January 2020, it is possible that some articles in this study are categorized as belonging to the during-COVID timeline when, in reality, they were published in the period from January to early March 2020, which is before the true global impacts of the pandemic began.

These limitations are examples of the ways in which the news media may offer skewed representations of reality. The political framework of journalists or news outlets impact how the media frames the SAWP based on their priorities or objective of the article and journalist at large. This provides insight into the narratives the news media generally choses to uphold. Understanding the specific technicalities that play into how news media articles are politically, socially, and culturally shaped based on external factors such as the aim of the news outlet or the

background of the journalist discerns the priorities of the wider context of mainstream news media. While the representations may not provide a totally accurate portrayal of the SAWP, it shows how the program and workers are perceived by stakeholder groups and wider society. An additional layer is the ways in which these perceptions consequently impact theoretical and material policy changes to the program.

Chapter 4: Findings from Coding and Stakeholder Group Perspectives

This chapter will provide a general overview of the findings from coding and stakeholder groups. I begin by exploring the number of articles gathered from each newspaper and discussing the significance of the increase in articles in the during-COVID timeline, including the general role of the pandemic in increasing the capacity for news media discourse on these issues. This chapter then provides the results that were gathered from coding, such as how many times each code appeared and from each perspective with a comparison between both timelines. I will then discuss the impact of incorporating perspectives from different stakeholder groups, and explore notable findings from the perspective of advocacy groups, government officials, and farm owners.

4.1 Newspapers and Articles

My search results yielded a total of 203 articles. Below is a breakdown of the number of articles gathered from each newspaper and between the two timelines.

Table 2: Breakdown of Articles from Newspapers

	Pre-COVID	During-COVID	% Increase between timelines
Chronicle Herald	0	16	1600%
Globe and Mail	16	54	237.5%
Guardian	3	11	266.7%
National Post	19	26	36.8%
Telegraph-Journal	1	7	600%
Toronto Star	22	28	27.3%
Total:	61	142	132.8%

4.1.1 Increase in Articles

The findings demonstrate a significant increase in articles that were published in the during-COVID timeline. Specifically, the number of relevant articles published during COVID increased by 132.8%, which is 142 of the 203 articles. The increase in articles that were published about the SAWP during this timeframe points to a few things. First, the increase shows us that the pandemic played a role in highlighting the SAWP and its corresponding issues in the news media. Migrant workers and the program were brought to the forefront of news media coverage during the pandemic partially because of COVID's role in exacerbating existing vulnerabilities. Between outbreaks on farms, quarantine concerns, overcrowded housing, lack of personal protective equipment, labour shortages and travel restrictions, among other things, migrant workers in the SAWP faced the brunt of the obstacles COVID-19 created, introducing ample opportunity for media coverage to proliferate. The pandemic has shown us the media's ability to quickly sensationalize certain topics in moments of crises, as well as the tendency for coverage to be brief, but intense. The SAWP and its workers became a hot topic during the pandemic and the media responded by increasing their coverage of the program. COVID-19 certainly was, and is, a major event that impacted foreign workers greatly. These media reports often lead to widely publicised promises by the federal government to review and reform the SAWP. The discussion on reviewing and reforming the SAWP, from the perspective of both government officials and advocates, makes up a large number of the articles I gathered in my during-COVID timeline. The increased media coverage of the SAWP during the pandemic also means a potential increase in public debate and discussion, which can be beneficial when it comes to enacting change to a program that desperately needs it.

My findings also indicate that the greatest increase in articles were from newspapers published in the Maritimes. Referring back to Table 2 above, which indicates the percentage increase of articles between newspapers from pre-COVID and during-COVID, the three newspapers with the greatest increase in articles are all newspapers from small, Maritime provinces: The Chronicle Herald (Nova Scotia), the Telegraph-Journal (New Brunswick), and the Guardian (Prince Edward Island). Interestingly, this may point to a lack of pre-COVID coverage on the TFWP and migrant workers from these newspapers, despite the fact that foreign workers do come to work in the Maritimes (albeit a smaller amount compared to larger Canadian provinces) as well as the significance of agriculture in rural locations. This could be attributed to a generalized lack of awareness that the SAWP is used in the Maritimes and has been for a long time. During the pandemic, advocacy groups such as No One Is Illegal in Nova Scotia became increasingly active and visible on social media which potentially played a role in the increase of news media articles about the SAWP during COVID. Conversely, perhaps the increase of articles on the SAWP was greater among newspapers in smaller provinces because newspapers that originate from larger cities with more TFWs were already talking about the program to a greater extent to begin with.

4.2 Codes

My findings from coding indicate an overall increase in the acknowledgment of issues with the SAWP after COVID-19 started, but also show an increase in codes such as racism which points to a continuation of discrimination in the news articles between both timelines. The codes that were used the most throughout my analysis, however, are ones that indicate issues with the program or reference maltreatment of the workers. While these codes also appeared in

my pre-COVID timeline, they were referenced more frequently in my during-COVID timeline, which points again to the role of the pandemic in highlighting issues with the program.

My findings can be further analyzed by breaking them down into themes. Below is a table presenting the number of times each code was used in both timelines. The table is sorted from the most frequently coded theme to least frequently coded theme. A thematic analysis of the findings from coding will be elaborated upon in more detail in the subsequent chapters.

Table 3: Code Frequency Comparison Pre and During-COVID

Code	Pre-COVID	During COVID	Total
Concerns over health of workers	12	216	228
Worker exploitation acknowledged	126	80	206
Abuse acknowledged	117	88	205
Poor living conditions acknowledged	25	179	204
Government is not doing enough	51	145	196
Precarity acknowledged	42	118	160
Discrimination acknowledged	33	104	137
Essential work acknowledged	3	129	132
Labour shortages	38	87	125
Poor working conditions acknowledged	30	95	125
Worker tied to employer	48	71	119
Permanent residency as a solution	20	86	106
Fear of job or income loss	27	72	99
Fear of deportation	25	55	80
TFWP needs reform	17	52	69
Deserving of more rights	18	34	52
Easily deported acknowledged	17	35	52
Lack of permanent residency opportunity	19	31	50
Health and safety of workers	4	39	43
Farm opposes worker complaints	8	33	41
Migrants stealing jobs	29	5	34
Blaming narrative when worker gets sick	0	30	30
Government is doing enough	8	21	29
Work is hard, hard on body, and or dangerous	12	15	27
Racism acknowledged	3	19	22
Worker demonstrating agency	8	14	22
Race acknowledged	6	14	20
Living conditions good	1	16	17
Treatment good	3	14	17
Discrimination	3	13	16
Racism	2	12	14
Skilled labour acknowledged	4	9	13
Othering	2	10	12
Unskilled labour	2	5	7
TFWP does not need reform	2	2	4
Lack of concern over health of workers	0	3	3

4.3 Perspectives

Equally important as the code is the stakeholder group perspective from which it is coming from. As previously mentioned, I chose to acknowledge the perspectives of different stakeholder groups to understand which voices are being amplified, which themes are more likely to be coded by certain groups, and the pandemic's impact on the frequency of codes from each perspective. It also provides an idea about which stakeholder groups are more likely to speak up about the SAWP in the news media in general. The following table and figure provide a comparison of the number of times each perspective was coded between pre-COVID and during-COVID articles.

Table 4: Perspective Frequency Comparison Pre and During-COVID

Perspective	# of Times Coded Pre-COVID	# of Times Coded During COVID	Total
Advocates or Other Group	254	888	1142
Article	251	386	637
Farmworker	148	318	466
Government	96	234	330
Farm Owner/Operator	16	125	141
Total:	765	1951	

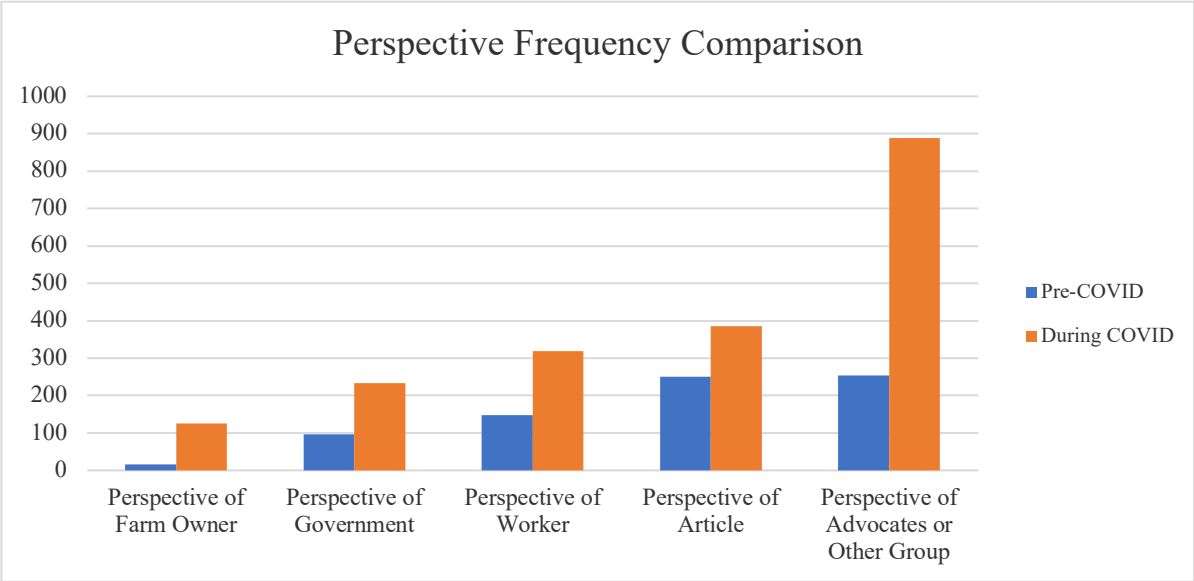

Figure 1: Perspective Frequency Comparison Pre and During-COVID

4.3.1 Advocacy Groups and Government Officials

Unsurprisingly, advocacy groups were the most frequently coded perspective, both before COVID and during COVID. What stood out in my analysis was that this group was the most likely to make explicit statements regarding the issues with the SAWP and the injustices migrant workers face. Their statements were often clear, straightforward, and to-the-point.

In contrast, statements coded from the perspective of government officials were often ambiguous and inconclusive. They often failed to proclaim anything that pointed to one specific argument. However, they did explicitly acknowledge issues in *some* areas of the SAWP, such as living conditions. This could be because it was unavoidable to acknowledge these topics with so much attention directed towards it during the pandemic. Additionally, the government was quick to say they generally support efforts of improving the program or providing the opportunity for permanent residency for workers, however, their solutions rarely came to fruition (at least within the time period and scope of articles analyzed for this project). When the government offered

potential solutions to issues with the program, advocacy groups were the most likely to point out any loopholes in which SAWP workers were not adequately supported.

4.3.2 Farm Owners

Codes from the perspective of farm owners appeared the most infrequently throughout the articles. This could be attributed to the unlikelihood of farm owners to raise concerns about the SAWP and migrant workers in the news media, either by choice, or because their opinions are not a priority of journalists. Farmers were also overloaded with work during this period and potentially did not speak out because they feared repercussions due to the controversial nature of the program. The data shows that farm owners did not acknowledge many of the issues that were widely recognized by other perspectives, such as concerns over the health of workers, poor living conditions, and discrimination in the program. They were even less likely than government officials to acknowledge some issues. Does this point to a lack of awareness that these issues exist, or rather a reluctance to acknowledge that, as employers, they potentially play a large role in how these matters transpire? Or, conversely, perhaps the reporters/authors of the articles simply fail to ask farm owners the questions that would prompt these discussions.

When farm owners did raise awareness about an issue, it was typically regarding labour shortages. Labour shortages was the theme that was coded the most often from this group, followed by “Essential Work Acknowledged” and “Farm Opposes Worker Complaints”. Labour shortages were coded only once pre-COVID, and 43 times during-COVID by farm owners, which points directly to their priorities during the pandemic. The general concern over labour shortages is understandable because of its many consequences. One farm owner said he “shudders to think what will happen in terms of food shortages, to the economy and to individual farm operations if fields go unplanted” (Starratt, 2020, The Chronicle Herald). Although their

concern is valid, more alarming is their lack of concern in other areas, such as the health of workers and living conditions. For example, one farm owner gave a newspaper interview lamenting the loss of 450 acres of asparagus, even as seven of his employees lay in hospital beds – two in intensive care – with COVID-19 (Dunsworth, 2020, The Globe and Mail). In this sense, employers who gain their revenue on the backs of migrant labourers demonstrate more concern for the financial costs of death and illness than with providing safer conditions for workers (Dunsworth, 2020, The Globe and Mail). To be fair, however, the goal of the journalist should also be considered. Perhaps the article was framed by the author in a certain way that skewed the reality of the farmers' priorities.

The code "Farm Opposes Worker Complaints" refers to when a farm owner directly disputes or disagrees with a particular comment a migrant worker makes about their experience on the farm. This code was created because I noticed that farm owners often denied allegations brought forward by the workers in the articles, and there was a clear discrepancy between how the conditions of labour were described by workers and employers. Farm owners often spoke out about their accommodations being "well above standards" (Baum & Grant, 2020, p. 8, The Globe and Mail), and that they "meet and greatly exceed federal government regulations" with amenities such as free Wi-Fi, telephone, satellite TV in each bedroom, extremely high-quality furnishings, kitchen and sanitary amenities, fire alarm system, and in floor heating and air conditioning (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 4, Toronto Star). Other farm owners said they "equipped workers with masks and gloves" (Baum & Grant, 2020, p. 8, The Globe and Mail), have "comprehensive harassment policies" (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, p. 2, Toronto Star), and "care deeply for our employees and take all steps to protect their health and safety (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 4, Toronto Star). While this may be true on some farms, the migrant workers

interviewed generally tell a different story, one in which they suffer from abuse, poor living and working conditions, and employer's lack of preparedness for COVID-19. In one article, a migrant worker alleged he experienced "physical, psychological and financial abuse" for years, saying that the farm sent workers to work without proper clothing and retained its employees' passports, which is not permitted under the TFWP rules (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, p. 2, Toronto Star). In response, the farm's spokesperson said workers were "always appropriately dressed for extreme weather", and only retained documents at the "request of workers and their governments to help keep their passports in a safe environment" (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, p. 2, Toronto Star). This is an example of the stark contrast between worker and employer comments and the employer's direct contradiction to worker complaints. One farm owner even said that two of the formal COVID-19 related complaints submitted to the Ministry of Labour are "baseless and were brought on by one rogue employee" (Baum & Grant, 2020, p. 4, The Globe and Mail). Evidently, there are clear trends in the articles of farm owners directly denying or disputing allegations brought forward by workers.

Another notable finding that frequently arose in the articles regarding farm owners is the "bad apple" trope. This refers to the assumption that most employers follow the rules, and those who do not are simply among a few "bad apples". In one example, an employer said "We're farmers. We're not the devil. But just like anything else, I'm sure there are some bad apples" (Baum & Grant, 2020, p. 12, The Globe and Mail). Another farm owner was cited saying "I have no problem with the concept of audits but I think they should be trying to target the bad apples. The level of scrutiny could be a little more relaxed" (Hrvatin, 2018, p. 6, National Post). Otero argues that the issue lies in the program's institutional structure, not the employers themselves; it is not an issue of "bad apples." (2019). Thus, the bad apple trope functions as a tactic to excuse

the bad behaviours of individuals to protect the group as a whole. By attributing the exploitation of migrant workers to a few “bad apples” and ignoring the systemic way the program operates, the tope functions to protect the system as a whole.

> Examining [the issues] as simply [a result of] “bad apples” comforts us by suggesting that these practices are aberrant; that we just need to remove the “bad apples." But this goes far beyond a few bad apples. The practices are a core business model that some recruiters adopt even while operating within legal migration channels. (Faraday, 2019, p. 2, The Globe and Mail)

The pattern of farm owners using the bad apple trope in the articles points to a reluctance to acknowledge the reality of the inequities embedded in the institutional structure of the SAWP. This coincides with the overall disregard of issues with the program that were coded by other perspectives, as well as the contradictions farm owners frequently made to worker complaints.

4.4 Conclusion

The findings from this research point to an assortment of outcomes that can be intricately analyzed from various stakeholder group perspectives. Examining my findings with consideration of the stakeholder group perspective allows for a thorough and comprehensive analysis, one that considers more than just the meaning behind each code, but how that meaning changes based on the group it is coming from. Also notable are differences in my findings between COVID timelines; the pandemic greatly increased the number of articles that discussed the SAWP which demonstrates its role in exacerbating and highlighting issues with the program and the disproportionate impact the pandemic had on this group.

The following chapters will provide a thematic analysis and discussion of the main findings from my project, taking into considering COVID timelines and perspectives. I discuss

the specific impact that COVID-19 played on migrant workers in the SAWP and their representation in the news media. Subsequently, I examine the relationship between the SAWP and race, exploring systems of racialized labour inherent to the program and the acknowledgment of race by stakeholder groups in the articles. Chapter seven explores findings from the research related to living and working conditions, including a discussion on the inadequacy of housing inspections, conceptions of skilled and unskilled labour, as well as the unequal relationship between worker and employee and how this maintains systems of control. Finally, I discuss the continual fear of deportation experienced by many migrant workers in the SAWP and the representation of discourses in the news media that point to a need for government reform of the program, potentially through offering permanent residency to migrant workers.

Chapter 5: Concerns Over Health, Blaming Narratives, and the "Essential" Worker in the COVID-19 Context

The COVID-19 pandemic has played an undeniable role in informing and influencing perceptions of the SAWP and migrant workers. It has exacerbated many previously existing health disparities for TFWs and further increased their risk of susceptibility to labour rights violations and vulnerability to exploitation (Landry et al., 2021). Migrant farm workers continue to be disproportionally affected by the pandemic as they are employed in a sector that is essential, where physical distancing can be difficult and access to protective equipment limited, resulting in increased potential exposure to COVID-19 (Istiko et al., 2022). Furthermore, the pandemic shone a light on the vital role of migrant farm workers in supporting the Canadian food system, labeled by the government as "essential" while denying them essential rights. The significant impact of COVID-19 on migrant workers in the SAWP is supported by my findings from this research and will be examined in this chapter.

I begin by exploring the code "concerns over health of workers" and the ways its meaning changes when coming from the perspective of advocacy groups versus government officials. I then discuss the blaming narrative that was present in some articles when reporting cases of COVID-19 among TFWs. Findings from this research in relation to the label of migrant workers as "essential" will be subsequently explored, while incorporating comparisons between the pre-COVID and during-COVID timelines to discern the impact the pandemic has had on news media representations of migrant workers in the SAWP as a whole.

5.1 Concerns over Health of Workers

The code used the most frequently throughout my analysis of the articles was "concerns over health of workers". In total, it was referenced 228 times – 12 times in the pre-COVID

timeline, and 216 times in the during-COVID timeline. The large increase in the frequency of this code is attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, as greater attention was suddenly directed toward health concerns. Below is a breakdown of the use of the code from each of the five stakeholder groups considered in this study.

Table 5: "Concerns over Health of Workers" Code

	Advocates or Other Group	Article	Farm Owner	Government	Worker	Total
Pre-COVID	3	5	0	1	3	12
During-COVID	118	31	0	28	39	216
Total:	121	36	0	29	42	228

The data shows that, unsurprisingly, advocates vocalized their concern for the health of workers most frequently throughout the articles.

The limited number of times the “concerns over health of workers” code was used by all perspectives in the pre-COVID timeline points to the lack of concern about the health of migrant workers before the pandemic – or, at least, the lack of concern that was publicized in the media. This is an example of the extent to which COVID has increased awareness of potential issues with the SAWP. Importantly, while the pandemic has evidently created new health concerns for migrant workers in the program, the issue of migrant worker health is far from new. A Star investigation in 2019 uncovered thousands of complaints made by migrant workers to the Mexican authorities over the past decade about working in Canada. Housing issues – including pest infestations, overcrowding and broken amenities – were the single most common problem identified by workers (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, Toronto Star). Pre-existing health concerns experienced by some workers in the program were exacerbated as a result of the pandemic,

especially when the importance of social distancing came to light which focused greater attention towards living conditions. Some 66 per cent of migrant workers in Canada live with between five and 20 other people, with the majority sleeping in bunk beds and sharing amenities with up to a dozen other workers (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, Toronto Star). In housing arrangements such as these, social distancing becomes nearly impossible, and pandemic or not, these conditions are unhealthy and contribute to the spread of disease and illness. One article published by the Toronto Star in June 2021 describes that migrant workers' housing conditions lays bare the "indecent, inhumane and unlivable" standards that risk worker safety amid the pandemic and beyond (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, p. 1). While the importance of addressing these health concerns were intensified during the COVID-19 pandemic, the dire need for increased health and safety protocols existed previously.

Notably, when the "concerns over health of workers" code was coded from the perspective of the government, the tone of the statement differed from that of advocacy groups. When coming from the perspective of the government, the concern was driven by economic reasons; workers getting sick affects the availability of the workforce and creates labour shortages. Rather than a genuine concern of the physical health and well-being of migrant workers, the concern was motivated by other factors. For example, one article states:

> "Temporary foreign workers play a very important role in helping address the labour shortage in Prince Edward Island," said Economic Minister Matthew MacKay. "It's our responsibility as government and Islanders to ensure temporary foreign workers are safe and have a positive work experience as they contribute to the success of our province." (2021, The Guardian).

Here, the government official is emphasizing the importance of protecting the health and safety of workers for the purpose of addressing the labour shortage. Rather than emphasising the safety of the workers for their own well-being, this statement highlights instead the importance of their contribution to province-wide economic successes. This points to a potential hidden agenda of the government in which it can be assumed that their "concern" for the health of the workers in the article comes from the need to follow an economic or political agenda rather than coming from a human level. Statements like these seemingly demonstrate a concern for the health of workers, but can be interpreted as an attempt to "check off the box" and fail to adequately improve the long-term lived experiences of migrant workers.

Another common use of the "concerns over health of workers" code from the perspective of the government was in relation to government funding announcements to "make farms safer amid the COVID-19 pandemic" (Alhmidi, 2020, p. 1, The Globe and Mail). Here is an example:

> On Friday, the federal government announced a $58.6-million investment into the temporary foreign worker program to safeguard the health and safety of temporary foreign workers from COVID-19 (Ziafati, 2020, The Chronicle Herald).

Despite these frequent funding announcements from the government, there was no news media coverage on the impact that the money actually had on the ground for the lives of migrant workers in the SAWP. Encalada Grez argues that, paradoxically, Canadian farm employers became the principal beneficiaries as an "essential industry" and reaped millions of dollars of government funding, while migrant workers' lives were reinforced as sacrificial, expendable, and disposable (2022). While the funding was necessary to help cover costs associated with mitigating the effects of COVID-19, migrant farm workers were still disproportionally affected

by the pandemic, which evidently reinforces the understanding that much more could have been done to protect these workers.

5.2 Blaming Narrative

One theme that was present throughout many of the articles was a sense of blame perpetrated against migrant workers if they contracted the virus. Many of these narratives promoted the idea that TFWs were *bringing* COVID into Canada from outside the country. The code "blaming narrative when worker gets sick" was not used at all in the pre-COVID timeline but was used 30 times in the during-COVID timeline across all perspectives, which makes sense as it is a COVID-specific code. In the 30 times it was referenced in the during-COVID timeline, nine of the references came from the perspective of the article, and 21 came from the perspective of the government.

This code refers to the ways in which some newspaper articles go about reporting cases of COVID-19 among migrant workers on farms. Often, their linguistic choices gave the impression of an accusation that the worker is "bringing" COVID to Canada, and that Canadian's need to be "protected" from foreign nationals entering the country. For example, one article states "The number of COVID-19 cases among migrant farm workers has jumped in Ontario, where one public-health unit reported 96 new positive results at a single agri-food operation – the overwhelming majority of them among foreign nationals" (Baum & Grant, 2020, p. 1, The Globe and Mail). Statements such as these have the potential to be xenophobic, as there is an obvious emphasis that the worker is a *foreign national* who *entered* Canada, which implies that they are coming from afar and are likely racialized. Migrant workers in the SAWP come predominately from Mexico and the Caribbean and are therefore predominately Brown and Black. One article that highlights the voices of advocates supports this argument, stating that "the

province speculating the worker got the virus from outside of Canada could inflame xenophobic sentiment" (Ziafati, 2020, The Chronicle Herald). Would these same narratives be happening if it were predominately white workers entering Canada from predominately white countries? The literature suggest that it would not, as racialization discourses point to a labour market that is rooted in colonial sentiments that are, by nature, racially based.

Another statement from an article coded under the blaming narrative code states "Before more temporary foreign workers arrive at Dorval airport in Montreal, can steps be taken so that these people are quarantined at customs before they are released to go elsewhere in the country in the interests of all Canadians?" (Wright, 2020, p. 3, National Post). The linguistic choices here point to migrant othering by using terminology that refers to migrant workers as "these people", suggesting an "us" and "them" mentality. Othering is based on the conscious or unconscious assumption that a certain identified group poses a threat to the dominant group (Powell, 2017). In this case, the narratives suggest that migrant workers post a threat to Canadians by bringing COVID to Canada. It also emphasizes the health of Canadians, ultimately prioritizing it over the health of migrant workers. One article states:

> In cases where employers access the temporary foreign worker program, which is administered by the federal government, there are numerous measures put in place to ensure the health and safety of Canadians. But Higgs confirmed on Monday a reluctance to let in temporary foreign workers into the province, citing the success of shielding New Brunswick from COVID-19. (Huras, 2020, The Telegraph-Journal).

The terminology used here implies, again, that Canadian's should be "shielded" from the "threat" of migrant workers as a protective mechanism against COVID. While it can be reassuring to know that in the midst of the pandemic states are doing all they can to safeguard

residents from the virus, including limiting travel, the connotation in statements such as these equate TFWs as a danger or risk, which, pre-pandemic, was already a common anti-immigrant stereotype.

Some statements also encouraged farm owners to hire locally: “Mr. Higgs has said the ban [on foreign workers entering the province] was made out of public-health considerations, and that he hopes the move will spur employers to fill vacancies by hiring locally” (Grant, 2020, p. 3, The Globe and Mail). Encouraging farm owners to hire locally perpetuates the idea that local workers are the safer or better choice. It is also ignorant to the reality that local workers typically do not want to do the difficult, dangerous, low-wage, low-security, and seasonal jobs that TFWs do, which is why the SAWP was created in the first place.

Chris Ramsaroop, from migrant advocacy group Justicia for Migrant Workers, argues that Canada is reinforcing the myth that migrant workers are carriers of the virus and that the virus is being spread from the global South to the North (Keung, 2021, p. 2, Toronto Star). He further states that “It is not that workers are bringing the virus here, but they are risking their health and well-being so that a multibillion [dollar] industry continues to prosper off the sacrifices of Black and Brown workers from the global South” (Keung, 2021, p. 2, Toronto Star). This is further sustained in a report by advocacy group Migrant Workers Alliance for Change, who describe that “Workers also reported increased racism from employers, local shops, and some community members who treat them as if they are “disease carriers” – even in cases where workers arrived before COVID-19 hit (Unheeded warnings, 2020). In fact, health officials have stressed that most workers who did end up testing positive for COVID-19 came to Canada healthy and contracted the virus locally (Baum & Grant, 2020, The Globe and Mail). Their experiences suggest that they are being treated as a mass contagion risk, rather than as the

essential individuals that the government designated them to be (Shihipar & Ramsaroop, 2020, The Globe and Mail).

5.3 The "Essential" Worker

Representation of TFWs in the news media differed at various points in the pandemic. As discussed above, the onset of COVID-19 brought about fears that the virus would transcend borders and infiltrate Canada alongside foreign workers. As time progressed, the same workers that Canadian's thought they needed to be "protected" from were suddenly celebrated for being "essential" heroes of the pandemic. The narrative of TFWs shifted alongside their representation in the news media, and ultimately, the idea of the "essential" migrant worker became a popular buzz word for advocates, government officials, and farm owners alike.

The findings from this research confirm that migrant farm workers were typically not referred to as essential workers before the COVID-19 pandemic began, despite being the backbone of the Canadian food system since the onset of the SAWP in 1966. Temporary labour migration programs that countries from the global North relied upon for workers typically defined as "low-skilled" became realigned around notions of essential work and essential workers during the pandemic (Encalada Grez, 2022). Concerns over food security affirmed the importance of migrant farmworker programs among the government, media, general public, and agricultural industry alike after decades of obscurity and indifference within mainstream Canadian society (Hastie, 2020). Triandafyllidou and Nalbandian state that "the pandemic has inverted previous hierarchies of more and less desired (and disposable or not) migrant workers (2020, p. 1). Low-skilled or unskilled migrant workers became prioritized over the formerly coveted high-skilled workers in a time of widespread border closures (Encalada Grez, 2022). It is through this "inverted hierarchy" that the importance of essential jobs performed by seemingly

low-skilled workers became recognized and celebrated. Ironically, the newfound label of migrant workers as essential still did not provide resources for their adequate protection.

In my pre-COVID timeline, the code “essential work acknowledged” was used a total of three times across all perspectives, while in the during-COVID timeline it was coded 129 times. It should be noted that I coded phrases under “essential work acknowledged” both when the word “essential” was explicitly said, and when it was not explicitly said but could be inferred that that is what the speaker was referring to. This approach allowed me to see the overall trends of the narrative of essential work throughout the articles. Table 6 shows a breakdown of the use of the code across timelines and perspectives.

Table 6: "Essential Work Acknowledged" Code

	Advocates or Other Group	Article	Farm Owner	Government	Worker	Total
Pre-COVID	0	1	1	1	0	3
During-COVID	27	41	16	42	3	129
Total:	27	42	17	43	3	132

Here, the data shows a major increase in the acknowledgement of migrant workers as essential in the during-COVID timeline, with the vast majority of codes coming from the perspective of the government and from the article directly.

Despite the fact that the coding results demonstrate that government representatives referred to migrant workers as essential most frequently, an analysis of the coded statements reflect differences in the word choice between stakeholder groups. Linguistic choices in terms of either explicitly referring to migrant workers as essential or being more vague about acknowledging their essentialness is worth noting. While the government was clear in deeming

migrant farm workers as essential fairly early on in the pandemic, there was an obvious disconnect in the terminology used between government officials and advocacy groups in the articles. I found that advocacy groups were more likely to explicitly say the word “essential” when referring to migrant workers, while government officials acknowledged essential work more ambiguously. For example, government officials were more inclined to make statements such as “we rely on foreign labour”, while advocacy groups were likely to directly say “migrant farm workers are essential”. Below are some examples of the ways the narrative of essential work changed based on the perspective it was coming from:

Table 7: Examples of "Essential Work Acknowledged" Code from Perspective of Advocacy Groups

“These are essential workers,” she said. “We would not eat without them.” (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 5, Toronto Star).
“Migrants are essential — essential members of our communities and essential workers. We need to do better by them.” (Ziaafati, 2020, The Chronicle Herald)
The pandemic has shown how heavily Canada relies on migrant and undocumented workers to perform essential jobs, said Chit Arma, who chairs the Migrant Workers Centre’s board of directors in Vancouver (The Canadian Press, 2020, p. 1, Toronto Star).
But as the 2021 agricultural season quickly approaches, Canada still has no plan to ensure these essential workers receive priority, free and safe access to the COVID-19 vaccine. Without a plan to give these workers priority access to the COVID-19 vaccines, we stand on the verge of another season where essential workers will risk their lives to feed Canadians (Faraday, 2021, p. 1, The Globe and Mail).

Table 8: Examples of "Essential Work Acknowledged" Code from Perspective of Government

"[TFWs] are key partners in Canada sustainable economy recovery." (Alhmidi, 2020, p. 2, The Globe and Mail).
It is critical for Canada's food supply chain to be maintained and temporary foreign workers play an integral role in that food supply, said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Wright, 2020, p. 4, National Post).
The federal government has exempted migrant workers from COVID-19 travel restrictions because of their importance to the economy (The Canadian Press, 2020, p. 2, National Post).
"Temporary foreign workers play a very important role in helping address the labour shortage in Prince Edward Island," (The Guardian, 2021).

Based on these examples, both groups are acknowledging that migrant workers are essential, however, I argue that the contrast in their choice of words in doing so is worth noting, particularly the specific use of the word "essential". The ambiguous nature of government statements versus the explicitness of advocacy groups becomes a pattern throughout the findings of this research. In terms of the perspective of farm owners when acknowledging essential work, they fell somewhat in the middle – sometimes they explicitly referred to the workers as essential, and sometimes they were vague about it. There are also clear trends in the data when the idea of the "essential migrant worker" came to fruition at a certain point in COVID, as well as when these discourses died down, which demonstrates how media trends wax and wane over time as people lose interest and new media stories take their place.

5.4 Conclusion

Undeniably, the COVID-19 pandemic created new health issues for migrant workers while exacerbating existing ones, generating widespread concern for the well-being of TFWs.

Sentiments behind news media representation showing concern for the health of SAWP workers differed between stakeholder groups, with advocacy groups demonstrating concern for the well-being of workers, and government officials highlighting the importance of keeping workers healthy for economic reasons to avoid labour shortages. This points to the priorities of these stakeholder groups. Simultaneously, some news media coverage perpetrated a sense of blame towards migrant workers who contracted the virus and who are seemingly "bringing" COVID into Canada while emphasising that residents should be protected from these foreign nationals. Narratives such as these suggest an "us" and "them" mentality while heightening fear of the migrant "other". As discussed in the literature explored in chapter two, this demonstrates how the labour market has deep roots in colonialism and structural racism. Testament to how quickly news media fluctuates is the shifting representation of migrant workers from *threats* to "essential" workers who should be celebrated.

Vosko and Spring argue that there are risks associated with casting migrant workers as essential and critique interventions put forth by the federal government in response to the COVID-19 pandemic (2021). The label of essential perpetuates longstanding tendencies requiring migrant farmworkers to shoulder a disproportionate burden of economic, social, and health risks, while COVID-19 policy responses provided only partial temporary solutions to problems that are by no means temporary (ibid). SAWP workers represent a highly skilled, fully trained workforce that are essential to providing a reliable source of produce and food products (Oulton, 2020, The Chronicle Herald). These workers deemed "essential" in the pandemic, however, are the same workers who are unable to access pathways to Canadian citizenship and to equitable workplace health and safety (Bragg, 2020, The Globe and Mail). The label of "essential" justifies the expropriation of migrant labour in the midst of a global pandemic, while

emphasizing the long-standing systemic problems with the SAWP, which evidently captured public attention. At the same time, though, characterizing migrant workers as essential helps to highlight their importance to Canadian agriculture and the economy and could perhaps call attention to the discrepancies with the program that desperately need addressed.

Chapter 6: Acknowledging Race and Racism in the SAWP

Workers in the SAWP tend to be racialized and come predominantly from Mexico, Guatemala and the Caribbean. As a result, the vast majority of TFWs are Brown and Black, making the acknowledgment of race in the program paramount. The trajectory of the SAWP is an example of the use of imported racialized workers to address labour shortages in Canada's agricultural industry (Thomas, 2020) and is a reflection of the normalization of the use of racialized bodies to perform typically undesirable jobs. Acknowledging race in the SAWP is critical to understanding the ways in which low wages, poor treatment, abuse, and exploitation are justified and maintained through the program. This chapter explores the findings from this research that address race with particular attention to the systems of racialized labour that situate the SAWP in relation to larger structures of systemic racism. I compare the extent to which racism and discrimination were acknowledged throughout the media articles and by whom, as well as considering various forms of pandemic-related racism. Importantly, I also consider the ways in which racism can be easily concealed in newspaper articles by rationalizing racist ideas. Consequently, migrant othering can become naturalized and normalized through online discourse.

6.1 Systems of Racialized Labour

Racialization is the process by which people and their bodies are marked and differentiated according to notions about racial groups and categories. It causes groups of people to be cornered off for exclusionary treatment, typically based on perceived physical appearance (Bonachich et al., 2008). Racialization leads to the social construction of dominate racialized groups (European/white people) and subordinate racialized groups (people of colour). Historically, European/white people constructed people of colour as "uncivilized" and "heathen",

which acted as an ideological weapon to justify their conquest, genocide, colonization, exploitation, and other forms of oppression (Churchill, 1997; as cited in Bonachich et al., 2008). As a result, systems of racialized labour work to more effectively exploit the labour of "subordinate" racialized groups.

European conquest and colonization was based on notions of racial hierarchy and superiority, and as the world economy expanded, this entailed the often forced migration of racialized labour. Capitalism's historic and contemporary use of racialized labour is an important consideration when recognizing the SAWP as a part of this complex system that began centuries ago. Wolf (2010) states that "racial designations are the outcome of the subjugation of populations in the course of European mercantile expansion and function for the historic fact that these populations were made to labour in servitude to support a new class of overlords" (p. 380). Wolf further describes that:

> Racial and ethnic distinctions serve to allocate different categories of workers to rungs on the scale of labor markets, relegating the stigmatized populations to the lower levels and insulating the higher echelons from competition from below. Capitalism did not create all the distinctions of ethnicity and race that function to set off categories of workers from one another. It is, nevertheless, the process of labour mobilization under capitalism that imparts to these distinctions their effective values. (2010, p. 380)

The function of racial categories within industrial capitalism is, by nature, exclusionary. It stigmatizes groups in order to exclude them from more highly paid jobs and from access to the information needed for their execution (Wolf, 2010). The historic processes of colonialism, the slave trade, and the capitalist world market thus work together to entail labour migrations, forced or otherwise, of racialized people. The SAWP is an example of the historic and geographically

specific instances of the general tendency of the capitalist mode to create a “disposable mass” of labourers out of diverse populations to meet the changing needs of capital (Wolf, 2010). This system re-creates the basic relation between capitalism and labour power.

Similarly, Andre (1990) argues that the culmination of the agreement between the Canadian government and sending countries, the contract of employment signed by the worker, and Canadian immigration laws, combine to create a regulatory scheme which legitimizes the exploitative nature of the program. As such, the program approximates much of the control (although not the brutality) inherent in slave labour, but avoids the universal criticism attached to that system of labour (Andre, 1990). There is a historical connection that is deeply embedded in slavery and colonialism which constructs how racialized groups are subjugated to this day (Thomas, 2020). In many ways, the SAWP is an example of the ways in which systems of racialized labour work to exploit and extract labour from vulnerable groups. Higher levels of surplus can be extracted from these workers because they have limited recourse for defending themselves (Bonacich et al., 2008). Furthermore, the conditions they come from, which is an outcome of colonialism and capital encroachment, make survival dependent on these exploitative labour markets.

Systems of racialized labour have long existed in Canadian society through the selective entry of workers based on Canada’s economic needs. Drawing on the work of Bonacich et al. (2008), who argue that race is a fundamental organizing principle of global capitalism, groups of workers are located within a hierarchically organized labour system that differentially exploits workers based on their racialization. Labour market disadvantages in Canada are racialized (Strauss, 2018). Thus, people from the developing world are targeted and exploited in precarious work regimes like the SAWP because within the economy of globalism, they are the most

politically, socially and economically disenfranchised groups (Bonacich et al., 2008). Through these systems, racialized labour groups often face the denial of basic citizenship rights, higher degrees of exploitation and inferior working conditions (ibid.). The jobs done by these workers are often insecure, temporary, and low paying. The fact that these workers are from the global South and are people of colour justifies their low wages, poor treatment, and separation from their families (ibid.). It is undeniable that workers in the SAWP fall within this category.

The racialization of labour is also linked to forms of unfree labour (Almaguer, 1994; Glen, 2002) through the denial of full citizenship and related rights to subordinate racialized groups and enables employers to engage in unchecked coercive practices (Bonachich et al., 2008). Furthermore, the government likes to present the SAWP as temporary, but there is nothing temporary about it; the job shortage in Canada is chronic and the SAWP provides permanent access for corporations to "unfree" labour (Sook Lee, 2018, National Post). These programs normalize the racism of citizenship as a form of supremacist nation building:

> The contemporary versions in practice today are extensions of historic labour schemes developed by the Canadian state to designate the "preferred citizen" according to race. It is imperative to remember how deeply entrenched labour and immigration programs were, and continue to be, in developing a white nation. (Sook Lee, 2018, p. 5, National Post)

Systems of racialized labour that have existed historically and continue to exist to this day are important considerations when analysing the current makeup of the SAWP and the meaning behind the use of racialized labour in contemporary Canadian society. Evidently, it is derived from colonial and capital control over racialized groups.

6.2 Acknowledgement of Racism and Discrimination in the SAWP

An important consideration during the trajectory of my research was whether the existence of racism and discrimination in the SAWP was acknowledged within the articles. This is a critical aspect to consider because despite how entrenched historical and contemporary processes of racialization and systems of racialized labour are in the SAWP, the news media may not recognize this relationship. Failing to acknowledge the existence of racism in a system that functions from the labour extraction of primarily Brown and Black people is ignorant to the permanence of racial hierarchies that function as a result of colonialism and capital expansion. The news media's position on these issues is relevant because the media informs public perception on migrant workers and impacts policy measures and material conditions on the farm. The following tables show a breakdown of the number of times "Racism Acknowledged" and "Discrimination Acknowledged" were coded from each perspective.

Table 9: Comparison of "Racism Acknowledged" and "Discrimination Acknowledged" Codes in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Racism acknowledged	0	6	0	0	0	6
Discrimination acknowledged	14	11	0	1	7	33

Table 10: Comparison of "Racism Acknowledged" and "Discrimination Acknowledged" Codes in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Racism acknowledged	10	4	0	0	5	19
Discrimination acknowledged	61	24	0	1	18	104

My findings demonstrate that it was more likely for stakeholder groups to acknowledge the existence of discrimination rather than racism in both timelines. Discrimination can be defined as "an action or decision that treats a person or group badly for reasons such as their race, age, or disability" (Canadian Human Rights Commission, 2021). I acknowledge that the definition of discrimination includes race, however, I differentiate the two codes in my research by whether the group *explicitly* acknowledges that a migrant worker is being discriminated against because of race, or if they are acknowledging discrimination more broadly. The fact that "Discrimination Acknowledged" was coded more frequently than "Racism Acknowledged" potentially points to a reluctance of the articles to specifically acknowledge race-based exclusions. Many of the articles failed to acknowledge race in general, but when it was acknowledged it came primarily from the perspective of advocates.

The majority of articles acknowledging the existence of racism in the SAWP were also published in the during-COVID timeline, emphasizing that the pandemic highlighted issues with the program. In fact, racism was only acknowledged six times in the pre-COVID timeline, in comparison to the 19 times it was acknowledged in the during-COVID timeline. This brings into consideration that the pandemic didn't just highlight existing racial biases in the program, but

that it created new opportunity for racial biases to proliferate as well. One article argues that the restrictions of movement on workers during the pandemic are unprecedented and "feed into systemic racism that positions them as a threat" (Grant & Baum, 2020, p. 2, The Globe and Mail). Narratives of migrant workers as a "threat" are seen through the idea of the foreign "other" and the assumption that they pose a risk to the health of Canadians by "bringing" COVID into the country.

Racism was also acknowledged by some of the workers themselves, especially in relation to the effects of the pandemic. In an article titled "Migrant workers on farms across Canada are being told they can't leave, raising rights concerns", one worker stated that "her employer is 'more aggressive' this year, using racial slurs and threatening to send workers back home if they speak up about conditions on the farm or pandemic-related rules" (Grant & Baum, 2020, p. 3, The Globe and Mail). In another article, workers spoke of racism, lack of personal protective equipment, and recounted threats of termination or deportation if they didn't meet stringent productivity quotas (Baum & Grant, 2020, The Globe and Mail). These examples highlight the additional obstacles migrant workers faced during the pandemic and are especially enlightening coming directly from the workers themselves because it provides a personal account of worker experiences on some farms.

Furthermore, there is potential racism within the SAWP regarding the fate of migrant workers who may be left with permanent impairments after battling illness due to their precarious employment status. This was explored in one article that highlights the story of a worker who was injured and told that he could find equivalent employment in a field deemed "suitable and available" to him, such as a "shoe shiner" (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 2, Toronto

Star). The worker's legal representative said this is an example of unconscious bias and racism at play:

> McKinney called the board's proposed alternative occupations demeaning – and an example of "unconscious bias." "We've got these low-status, low-paid, low-skilled jobs that are vestiges from a much more explicitly racist past," he said. "I just told a Black Jamaican man who is used to being the breadwinner for his family and now has a buggered-up right arm that he can go be a shoe shine boy? This is how systemic racism works." (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star).

In this case, migrant workers are, in practice, receiving a "different and lesser" service than other injured workers as a result of racial biases. Racial biases could potentially impact what type of jobs are deemed "suitable and available" to the worker, another example of systemic racism. On another note, this policy is contradictory because seasonal agricultural workers' ability to be in Canada is tied to a single employer; they are not able to seek work with another employer (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, Toronto Star).

Racism was also acknowledged in the articles when discussing living and working conditions that workers face on the farm. One article explains: "There is also the undeniable racism behind employers providing conditions for migrant workers that locals wouldn't accept" (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 4, Toronto Star). Again, this reiterates the limited recourse migrant workers have for defending themselves within a system that maintains their precarious immigration status and fear of reprisal, making it difficult to voice concern about conditions. These examples provide a portrayal of the existence of racism in the SAWP and demonstrate that some articles do acknowledge racial biases in the program, despite the fact that it is mostly advocates who do so.

Important to note is that from the perspective of the government, Racism Acknowledged was not coded at all, and Discrimination Acknowledged only twice. This points to a potential reluctance of government officials to acknowledge the consequences of certain aspects of the SAWP on workers, especially in contrast to other groups. In instances that it was acknowledged by the government, it was done in vaguely worded and ambiguous statements. The government was more likely to acknowledge potential issues with the program by recognizing poor living conditions or expressing a general need for improvement to the program, but a specific acknowledgment of racism or discrimination by the government rarely occurred in the articles.

6.3 Is Race Acknowledged Enough?

Generally, my findings demonstrate a lack of acknowledgment about race as a whole. Out of the 203 articles that were analyzed in this project, "Race Acknowledged" was only coded 20 times. As previously mentioned, the vast majority of workers in the SAWP are Black and Brown, and ignorance towards the race of migrant workers is remiss. The lack of recognition of race in the SAWP points to a disregard and insensitivity towards the existence institutional racism. The table below provides a breakdown of the amount of times race was explicitly acknowledged throughout the articles.

Table 11: Comparison of "Race Acknowledged" Code in Pre-COVID and During-COVID Timelines

	Pre-COVID	During-COVID	Total
Perspective of Advocates or Other Group	0	10	10
Perspective of Article	6	4	10
Perspective of Farm Owner	0	0	0
Perspective of Government	0	0	0
Perspective of Worker	0	0	0
	6	14	20

Consistent with previous codes, there is a clear increase in the acknowledgment of race in the during-COVID timeline and a lack of acknowledgment from stakeholder groups such as the government or farm owners. Acknowledging that the workers are predominantly Brown and Black is critical to understanding how systemic racism impacts the experiences of migrant workers on the farm (and beyond), but the above data demonstrates that, unfortunately, this is not widely recognized in the news media. What *isn't* being said is sometimes equally as important as what *is* being said.

When race was acknowledged in the articles, though, it was often done clearly and explicitly, articulating that many workers in the SAWP are racialized. One article that acknowledges the race of migrant workers states: "The hands that pluck the fruits and vegetables — typically Brown or Black hands, which matters in the racialized calculus of food pricing where folks with darker skins often have to work harder for less — receive only a small fraction of the retail price" (Wells & McLaughlin, 2018, p. 5, National Post). The importance of having an awareness of who is harvesting our food on Canadian farms is clearly articulated here and provides an example of the existence acknowledgment of race in the articles, albeit infrequent.

6.4 Borderline Discourse and Migrant "Othering"

Racism and discrimination can be easily concealed within newspaper articles. Krzyżanowski and Ledin (2017) present the notion of "borderline discourse" to encompass the ways in which racist ideas can become legitimised online by being packaged as civil and acceptable. Here, racist actors take a "self-proclaimed role as interlocutors of the accepted sites of debating political views" (Krzyżanowski & Ledin, 2017, p. 5).

> Borderline discourses normalise otherwise uncivil ideas and bring them from fringe positions into mainstream media and parliamentary politics. This is linked to populist rhetoric revolving around the discursive construction of "us" versus "them" and "the people" versus the "foreign Other". (Krzyżanowski & Ledin, 2017, p. 6).

I argue that borderline discourse is present in some articles through topics such as "protecting" Canadians from migrant workers during the pandemic. The language of protection became normalized during the height of COVID-19, but in reality, it is very exclusionary and perpetuates racist ideologies of the foreign "other". In fact, the majority of data coded under "Othering" was related to a fear of migrant workers "bringing" the virus into Canada. Most of these statements perpetuate an "us" versus "them" mentality that follows an exclusionary agenda. For example, a statement I coded under "Othering" in an article titled "New COVID-19 cases in Manitoba are cluster linked to temporary foreign workers" states: "We want to ensure we're advising Manitobans that these are imported cases – that we're not seeing, say, community-based transmission with this" (Lambert, 2020, p. 3). There is a clear distinction here between the dominant group – Manitobans – and the subordinate group – migrant workers, which further maintains the "us" versus "them" ideology. In this light, the article is legitimizing the racist ideal of fear of the "other" through seemingly protecting Canadians from the virus but at the cost of

othering and ostracising migrant workers, and simultaneously ignoring the risks undergone by TFWs when performing essential work during the pandemic.

Many forms of travel were initially restricted during the pandemic, not just that of TFWs. However, some of the discourse surrounding the restriction of migrant workers to Canada specifically during certain points of the pandemic potentially perpetuates a xenophobic agenda. Government officials framed banning the entry of migrant workers as protective, fearing for the safety of Canadian residents, however, these measures present some issues. First, temporary foreign workers are uncritically positioned as a threat to national populations (Bejan & Allain, 2021, National Post). Second, arguments against the travel ban are framed solely from a business perspective, prioritizing the concerns of farmers over the health and well-being of the workers (Bejan & Allain, 2021, The National Post). These discussions are largely centered around public risk rather than protecting the health of migrant workers. The narrative about the largely Black and Brown people who work to put food on our tables paints them as a risk, and ignores the steep price they've paid to work in Canada during the pandemic (Bejan & Allain, 2021, National Post). In this way, racism is easily circulated across news media reports because it is concealed as a protective measure for Canadian residents, i.e., the dominant group.

6.5 Conclusion

Dimensions of race are inherent in the structure of the SAWP and can be traced back to histories of colonialism, capitalism, and racial hierarchy through the expansion of the global economy. To meet the increasing demand for labour, Canada has built up its work force in the agriculture industry by importing racialized groups of people from the global South who provide a reservoir of cheap labour. Historically, this concept is not new; capitalism has generally found labourers when and where it needed them, and migratory movements have carried labour power

to market all across the globe (Wolf, 2010). Effectively, the SAWP is a representation of the migration of racialized labour that functions as a result of capital exchange. In the news media, these factors are important when considering whether stakeholder groups acknowledge these historical and contemporary structures, rooted in race, that are maintained today through the SAWP. This is represented, for example, in the news media's ability to conceal a more overtly racist agenda; in the COVID context, racism has become overwritten by concerns about public (Canadian) health. The news media, in some cases, creates a fiction that race and structural racism are non-existent factors in the trajectory of the TFWP. In other cases, it acknowledges that race plays a fundamental role in the structure of the program and it's workers, but also sometimes portrays migrant workers alongside racial biases and stereotypes. The consequences of these representations in the news media, both positive and negative ones, are extensive. Ideologically, these representations play an important role in informing public perceptions and how people think about migrant workers. Practically, these representations inform government policy and material conditions on farms.

Chapter 7: Conditions of Labour and Migrant Worker Precarity

Migrant workers in the SAWP often experience substandard living and working conditions inherent to the structure of the program that contribute to the perpetuation of inequalities and precariousness. The COVID-19 pandemic has both exacerbated many of these conditions and further increased the risk of labour rights violations and susceptibility to exploitation for these workers. This chapter will explore findings from this research related to conditions of labour and the precarious position of migrant workers. I discuss living conditions and housing inspections on the farms and how these topics are taken up by various stakeholder groups in the articles. Working conditions, conceptions of skilled and unskilled labour, and the meaning of TFW productivity are concepts that are uniquely intertwined within the structure of the program. This chapter will explore the news media representations of these themes. Potential abuse, exploitation, and precarity experienced by workers in the program as well as the factors that uphold and maintain these systems of control, such as unequal ties to employer, are important considerations when examining how these topics are taken up in the news media. Despite the negative implications of these conditions for migrant workers, the impact of these representations could be positive by drawing attention to the issues that SAWP workers experience on the farm. More awareness should be directed toward the systemic makeup of the program that maintains these conditions, and the news media, at the very least, draws attention to these factors.

7.1 Living Conditions

In the SAWP, employers are required to provide housing for migrant workers. Housing on farms is typically crowded, with shared kitchens, bedrooms, and bathrooms (Hunter, 2020, The Globe and Mail). Many workers live in trailers, bunkhouses, or other small, tightly packed

accommodations (Saba et al., 2020, Toronto Star). Living conditions for migrant farm workers have long been substandard with minimal space to move around and many issues around sanitation, pests, and safety (Shihipar & Ramsaroop, 2020, The Globe and Mail). Common complaints made by workers include "overcrowding and lack of privacy, an inadequate number of washrooms and kitchen facilities per worker, lack of adequate heating/cooling" and deficiencies like leaks, mould and poor plumbing (Snobelen, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star).

Despite repeated calls by migrant worker organizations, the federal government has refused to establish national housing standards for migrant farm work, which means that a vastly uneven patchwork of regulations exists across municipalities and regions (Unheeded Warnings, 2020). The control employers have over housing is another way the program keeps migrant workers vulnerable and tied to their employer. The living conditions in employer-provided housing also creates a barrier to workers' enjoyment of their minimal free time, and as a result, employers exert almost as much control over workers' time off as they do their work time (Horgan & Liinamaa, 2016). Substandard, overcrowded housing for migrant farm workers is an issue that workers have raised for decades with no avail. It is these living conditions that make migrant workers especially vulnerable to COVID-19, as they do not permit the kind of social distancing that is necessary to limit the spread of the virus. The often derelict housing conditions migrant workers are forced to endure leads to an increased risk of health concerns amid the pandemic and beyond.

"Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged" was the second most frequently coded theme across all articles, coded 204 times in total. The data from this research confirms that the COVID-19 pandemic played a significant role in highlighting discussions of inadequate living conditions for migrant workers in the SAWP. The increased coverage of poor conditions may

have a positive impact and could lead to important progress in improving the conditions on farms. The following table demonstrates that while poor living conditions on some farms was acknowledged pre-pandemic, it significantly increased once COVID-19 came to fruition.

Table 12: Comparison of "Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged" Code in Pre-COVID and During-COVID Timelines

	Pre-COVID	During-COVID	Total
Perspective of Advocates or Other Group	2	86	88
Perspective of Article	8	35	43
Perspective of Farm Owner	0	0	0
Perspective of Government	3	17	20
Perspective of Worker	12	41	53
Total	25	179	204

This increased attention on housing arrangements for migrant workers during the pandemic has shed light on common deficiencies that increase the risk of transmitting the virus. The dramatic growth of this code in the during-COVID timeline can thus be partially attributed to the development of social distancing and the concerns related to over-crowded living accommodations for workers, which put both TFWs themselves and possibly the wider community at risk. The majority of statements coded under “Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged” in the during-COVID timeline were related to the pandemic in one way or another, and was coded many times from all perspectives with the exception of Farm Owners.

My analysis shows that living conditions are one of the topics that migrant workers were most likely to speak up about. Here are some examples of statements coded under “Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged” form the perspective of workers themselves:

Table 13: Examples of "Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged" Code from Perspective of Workers

One Mexican worker here on a two-year permit said he shares a house with 10 other workers; he is picked up by a bus full of other workers to get to his job at a mushroom farm's packing plant, where there are some 200 other employees. "We cannot social distance because we have to work very close," he told the Star. (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 3, Toronto Star)
At Greenhill Produce, site of 51 of the region's 89 COVID-19 cases, one migrant worker said he shared a room with six others before the outbreak. In total, 24 workers lived in his bunkhouse. "I feel like I want to cry," the worker said. (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p.3, Toronto Star)
For the past two months, the [worker] hasn't gone grocery shopping, attended church or visited family in Toronto. He said he is confined to the crops by day and a bunkhouse without air conditioning by night. "We don't deserve this," he said, adding that he believes he is being overcharged for food. (Grant & Baum, 2020, The Globe and Mail)
"The house has big insects like cockroaches that are around the kitchen. We found them in the kitchen (cupboards) where we keep our food," the application said. (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 3, Toronto Star)

The above statements were all coded in the during-COVID timeline, however, my research shows that poor living conditions were acknowledged prior to the pandemic as well. One article published by the Toronto Star in October 2019 examines the dozens of complaints regarding poor conditions on Nova Scotia farms made by migrant workers:

> "We were put in a hotel for 15 days...after that we were put in an abandoned church where there were 36 of us. It did not have bathrooms," read one complaint from 2012.

> Separate accounts from 2016 and 2018 complained of bunkhouses with no running water. Workers said in one case their employer told them to get water from a river after work. In another case, workers said water was made available, but it was "very dirty.". A 2018 complaint read, "The rooms have no windows and the beds are just metal frames with mattresses that are in a bad state. There are five rooms and two stoves for 14 people." (Grant, 2019, p. 1, Toronto Star).

The above complaints from 2012 onward show that the conditions on the farms ten years ago are comparable to today and have made no improvement. It also shows that the ways in which the poor living conditions were spoken about by the workers/reported in the news articles is done in a similar fashion in both timelines. So, it is not that the poor living conditions for migrant workers was not being recognized at all prior to the pandemic, but that the salience of the issue has now increased dramatically and gained significant traction in the news media. And perhaps, given the pandemic, the typically crowded and unsanitary living conditions faced by TFWs has finally been recognized as important factors contributing to health disparities specifically (Landry et al., 2021). The question that remains is how much of this is because of genuine concern over the health of workers, or rather state concern over losing a labour force in an industry that is desperately in need of reliable workers. The collaboration between state, media, and capital is an important distinction to make when considering the opportunity for positive outcomes from these discourses. There can be positive discursive – and in turn, material – consequences for the SAWP and migration by virtue of these reports that recognise the factors that lead to health disparities for workers.

My data shows that government officials sometimes did acknowledge that there are poor living conditions on farms. However, this was often done in broad statements saying they

generally support initiatives to improve living conditions or funding announcements. Below are examples of statements from the articles that were coded from the perspective of government officials related to poor living conditions for migrant workers.

Table 14: Examples of "Poor Living Conditions Acknowledged" Code from Perspective of Government

On Friday, the government said it would "work to develop mandatory requirements to improve employer-provided accommodations, focusing on ensuring better living conditions for workers." (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star).
We are strengthening the employer-inspections regime and developing improved employer-provided living accommodation requirements for migrant workers," she said. "We care deeply about the well-being of migrant workers." (Alhmidi, 2020, p. 2, The Globe and Mail)
Federal political parties say they back stronger protections for migrant farm workers, following a Star investigation that exposed thousands of complaints made by Mexican labourers about abusive living and working conditions in Canada (Mojtehedzadeh, 2019, p. 1, Toronto Star)
The added funding is aimed at increasing inspections and improving employee housing. The government also said it will consult with provinces, employers, workers and foreign partner countries in the coming months to develop a "coordinated national approach" – mandatory requirements on employer-provided accommodations to ensure better living conditions for workers. (Grant & Baum, 2020, p. 1, The Globe and Mail)

The comments made by government officials regarding living conditions are often related to funding announcements or increased inspections. In response to one of the announcements, Syed Hussan from advocacy group Migrant Workers Alliance for Change said: "Today's

announcement fails to fix this fundamental power imbalance and as a result will not solve the crisis migrants are facing. We expect Prime Minister Trudeau to do the urgent and necessary thing, and create a regularization program for all migrant and undocumented people immediately." (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 1, Toronto Star). Hussan's argument contends that while funding is helpful, what is desperately needed to improve conditions is a restructuring of the program, possibly one that provides a path to permanent residency for migrant workers.

7.2 Housing Regulations and Inspections on Farms

The issue of inadequate enforcement of rules and regulations on farms was a topic that materialized frequently within the articles. This topic was discussed frequently by advocacy groups and migrant workers themselves when discussing living conditions and was mentioned by government officials when discussing potential improvements to the program. While there are general housing standards and inspection requirements, they are often done haphazardly. Employers' eligibility to hire workers through the TFWP is contingent on submitting housing inspection reports to the federal government (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, Toronto Star). However, a study conducted by the National Home Inspector Certification Council in 2018 found no uniformity in housing standards and confusion over who enforces them, stating that "complex jurisdictional roles and responsibilities can make it unclear what housing standards applies," and whether housing makes the grade (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, Toronto Star). The lack of clarity in terms of housing standards points to the priorities of the groups who enforce them; extracting the maximum amount of labour takes precedence over creating a housing standard that could protect workers from harm.

Furthermore, my findings also indicate a lack of clarity in government statements on the issue. For example, a study commissioned by the federal government "identified some

opportunities to improve housing for foreign workers", finding "gaps in the housing inspection process" and an "extremely wide variation of what is deemed an acceptable housing standard" (as cited in Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 1, Toronto Star). The linguistic choices are notable here; the statements made by the government do not explicitly say that housing for migrant workers on farms is poor, nor do they provide any examples of the specific housing discrepancies. Rather, they give broad accounts of a general need for improvement that can be interpreted in various ways. In this light, the statements made by the government contribute to the overall lack of clarity on the issues that need to be addressed. Moreover, a government spokesperson also said that "because of the urgencies related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the work [of creating a national housing standard] has been delayed" (as cited in Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star). This ignores that, on the ground, these two issues intersect; the urgencies related to the COVID-19 pandemic also encompass the urgencies of housing issues for migrant workers. In other words, the poor living conditions migrant workers often endure are deeply intertwined with health and safety concerns that have become intensified because of COVID-19.

Relatedly, at one point during the pandemic, the federal government largely conducted its housing inspections on farms remotely, rather than physically entering the properties to make sure they met the requirements. This makes it unlikely that inspections were done thoroughly and accurately and increases the probability of lax oversight. Lack of adequate inspections makes it easier for employers to take advantage of migrant workers. Without proper inspections being done, there is minimal incentive for employers to provide sufficient living arrangements and the worker is unlikely to speak out because their ability to stay in Canada is tied to their work. The disregard towards the improperly conducted housing inspections during the pandemic – a time when they were needed more than ever – points to the structural inequalities with the SAWP and,

consequentially, the poor treatment of its workers. With that being said, the increase in news media representations that highlight discrepancies in housing standards and inspections could lead to improvement and better enforcement of rules and regulations.

7.3 Working Conditions

Working conditions for migrant workers in the SAWP are known to be substandard (Hahamovitch, 2011; Binford, 2013; Landry et al., 2021). In fact, seasonal agricultural work, seen as difficult, dirty, and dangerous, is not typically attractive to Canadians who can find year-round work with higher wages, more benefits, and opportunity for upward mobility (Ferguson, 2007). The working conditions often create health and safety risks such as being routinely exposed to gases, pesticides, and other chemicals without adequate protective clothing and training (Fairey et al., 2008). It is not uncommon for employees to work 12-15 hour days, often performing physically demanding work in the heat. The UFCWE (2008) describes farm work in Canada as "…labour intensive, dangerous and low paid" (p. 5; as cited in Beckford, 2016). It suggests that migrant farm workers are generally excluded from the provincial guidelines governing labour relations like the length of the workday, overtime, and holiday pay. McLaughlin cites a variety of factors that may be the source for increased health and safety risks for TFWs, such as long hours of strenuous work without adequate rest, exposure to agrochemicals, airborne dust and animal-borne diseases, lack of adequate protective equipment, safety training or sanitation facilities, and fear of reporting accidents and injuries to authorities (2009). Lack of overtime pay compensation is a consistent issue reported by workers as well. It has also been reported that workers routinely face threats and intimidation, and are afraid to complain, fearing that they will be sent home or that they will not be invited back (Ferguson, 2007; Fairey et al., 2008; Beckford, 2016).

The pandemic exacerbated these already difficult working conditions. Lack of personal protective equipment and not being able to properly sanitize their hands throughout the workday was not possible for all workers on the farms, and as a result, COVID-19 spread quickly among migrant workers (Grez, 2022). There are also reports of "excessive increase in workload" during the pandemic in which some migrant workers said they worked upwards of 15 hours a day, seven days a week, to make up for workers who would be unable to travel (Unheeded warnings, 2020). TFWs and farm owners faced great pressure to ensure that there would be no disruption in the food supply chain, despite the farm labour shortage, resulting in an increase in work demands for migrant workers who had arrived early in the season and led to multiple reports of abuse (Han, 2020). There were also reported threats from employers to withhold wages if specific production targets were not attained (Unheeded warnings, 2020). In addition to inappropriately heavy workloads, deficiencies in working and living conditions can combine to create a very specific set of health vulnerabilities affecting TFWs (Landry et al., 2021). Migrant agricultural workers are in a unique situation where if they complain about these working conditions, they risk losing their jobs, being repatriated back to their country of origin, or being barred from future participation in the program.

My findings indicate that there is a general acknowledgement of the poor working conditions in the SAWP. Similar to the poor living conditions code discussed above, the data illustrates that poor working conditions were acknowledged prior to the pandemic, but increased significantly after it began. The following table shows a breakdown of the use of the code from each perspective and between both timelines:

Table 15: Comparison of "Poor Working Conditions Acknowledged" Code in Pre-COVID and During-COVID Timelines

	Pre-COVID	During-COVID	Total
Perspective of Advocates or Other Group	4	44	48
Perspective of Article	14	19	33
Perspective of Farm Owner	0	0	0
Perspective of Government	3	6	9
Perspective of Worker	9	26	35
	30	95	125

The data shows that poor working conditions on the farms were acknowledged most frequently by advocates and workers. In addition to the frequency, the ways in which the poor conditions are acknowledged is also relevant. Advocates are more likely to list the specific practices that lead to unsafe working conditions, whereas government representatives are more likely to broadly say conditions are unsafe in general. Poor working conditions were not acknowledged at all from the perspective of farm owners. This could be because farm owners are reluctant to acknowledge that the conditions on their farms are sometimes poor, or are reluctant to contribute to that narrative in the media, because they play a personal role in the circumstances.

A similar code in my research, “Work is hard, hard on body, and/or dangerous”, seeks to examine the physically arduous nature of farm work. There was a slight increase in the frequency of the code in the during-COVID timeline, but it was relatively consistent before the pandemic and afterwards. Below is a breakdown of the code from each perspective and between timelines:

Table 16: Comparison of "Work is Hard, Hard on Body, and/or Dangerous" Code in Pre-COVID and During-COVID Timelines

	Pre-COVID	During-COVID	Total
Perspective of Advocates or Other Group	3	3	6
Perspective of Article	9	7	16
Perspective of Farm Owner	0	2	2
Perspective of Government	0	1	1
Perspective of Worker	0	2	2
	12	15	27

The findings from this code indicate that there is a general acknowledgment of the difficulty of agricultural work.

7.4 Skilled or Unskilled Labour

Migrant workers in the SAWP are highly specialized and skilled workers. They represent a fully trained workforce that is essential for farms to be able to provide a safe, secure, and reliable source of produce and food products to consumers (Oulton, 2020, The Chronicle Herald). Since most TFWs return to the same farm year after year, their practical knowledge and skills become integral to operations (Starratt, 2020, The Chronicle Herald). There is a public perception that agricultural jobs are “low-skilled”, but they require unique skill sets that are not always readily available or of interest to Canadians (Wright, 2019, National Post). Many TFWs also come to Canada with a previous knowledge of agriculture that they acquired in their home countries, whether it’s from their own plot of farmland or growing up with family members who were farmers. Agriculture work is skilled work that many SAWP workers are trained in, however, farm work and migrant workers themselves are largely undervalued in Canadian

society. The following table shows the findings from the codes "Skilled Labour Acknowledged", which is used when migrant workers were described in the articles as skilled and highly trained workers, and "Unskilled Labour", which refers to when migrant workers were described as unskilled or low-skilled workers.

Table 17: Comparison of "Skilled Labour Acknowledged" and "Unskilled Labour" Codes in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Skilled labour acknowledged	0	0	1	3	0	4
Unskilled labour	0	1	0	1	0	2

Table 18: Comparison of "Skilled Labour Acknowledged" and "Unskilled Labour" Codes in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Skilled labour acknowledged	2	4	3	0	0	9
Unskilled labour	1	3	0	1	0	5

My findings from these codes were surprising because I anticipated that skilled labour would be discussed more thoroughly considering the pandemic's impact on influencing perceptions of the importance of essential work. The pandemic highlighted how integral TFWs are to maintaining our food supply chain, yet the articles largely failed to acknowledge the skill sets that are required.

A common topic, however, was Canada's call for "skilled labour" immigrants. Many articles discuss the decline of immigrants in Canada and the need to improve efforts to attract more foreign nationals to bolster the economy. Conversely, there is an annual influx of migrant agricultural workers who are skilled workers yet are repeatedly denied the opportunity for permanent residency, despite their significant contributions to a key economic sector. The unfortunate reality is that migrant farmworkers are largely considered to be low-skill and thus unwanted as citizens due to Canada's restrictive racist and classist citizenship regime (Grez, 2022). Certainly, the government favours a certain type of immigrant, and by keeping migrant farmworkers out of that category and in a precarious position, they can use and exploit these workers for their labour and discard them when the demand disappears.

Furthermore, migrant workers were repeatedly cited as being more productive than local workers. Statements in the articles by employers such as "a skilled foreign worker is about twice as efficient as an unskilled local labourer" (Beswick, 2020, The Chronicle Herald) and "[for] every one temporary foreign worker, [their productivity equates] four Canadian workers, and without the foreign worker, growers could run into a situation where the picking is not efficient" (Emmanuel, 2019, p. 2, The Globe and Mail) point to the notion of foreign workers being more "valuable" than local workers. This introduces a few points worth mentioning. First, the clear reliance on foreign workers does not align with how they are treated on the farms, such as their poor living conditions. Second, there is oversight in the lack of acknowledgment as to *why* migrant workers are generally more productive. One reason could simply be that they are skilled workers who come from experienced farming backgrounds in their home country. However, another reason could be their continual fear of deportation, job or income loss, abuse, or reprisal, if they fail to meet the demands of the job or are not productive enough. Their constant state of

precarity forces them to meet unrealistic productivity quotas and they face more pressure to work hard because they have more to lose. In the articles, farm owners rarely recognize this possibility. They are the first to say how hard working migrant workers are, but rarely investigate or elaborate the possible reasons as to why.

7.5 Abuse, Exploitation, and Precarity

The precarious social location of migrant workers in the SAWP makes them increasingly susceptible to abuse and exploitation. Although migrant workers are theoretically protected by the same labour legislation as their Canadian counterparts, the precariousness of their immigration status makes exercising their rights largely inaccessible (Han, 2020).

> "Migrant workers on paper have the same rights as anyone else, but, in practice, that's not the case. Complaints-based mechanisms (like Labour Standards complaints or refusing unsafe work) don't work well for migrant workers because if they access these rights, they risk being fired, returned to their home country, and not being called back again." (Gomez, 2022; as cited in MacKenzie, 2022, The Chronicle Herald)

The core issue lies in the structure of the SAWP in itself, not only because of its transient nature, but because of the exclusivity of work permits that tie workers to a single employer (Landry et al., 2021). Because the program is seasonal, their employment is temporary. This, combined with their reliance on their employer, constructs an environment that positions migrant workers in extremely precarious situations. Furthermore, the closed-permit system allows employers to functionally act as immigration officials, using threats of dismissal and consequently the loss of the right to remain in the country, to exploit their workers (Han, 2020). This constructs an employer-employee power imbalance that can lead to abuse. Many of the articles in this study mention that migrant agricultural workers have the same rights as local people working on farms

and are therefore protected. This may be true theoretically, but I argue that to achieve equitability, migrant workers likely need *more* protections to help safeguard them from exploitation and abuse. Based on the narrative provided by the media, the likelihood of this happening is minimal due to the reluctance of stakeholder groups, such as the government, to acknowledge that SAWP workers face an increased susceptibility to vulnerabilities and abuse. Over time, however, this narrative could change with increasing media representation of the conditions.

The following tables shows the data from four codes: Abuse Acknowledged, Precarity Acknowledged, Worker Exploitation Acknowledged, and Worker Tied to Employer.

Table 19: Comparison of "Abuse Acknowledged", "Precarity Acknowledged", "Worker Exploitation Acknowledged", and "Worker Tied to Employer" Codes in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Abuse acknowledged	40	31	0	9	37	117
Precarity acknowledged	16	19	0	4	3	42
Worker exploitation acknowledged	42	48	0	7	39	126
Worker tied to employer	14	22	0	2	10	48

Table 20: Comparison of "Abuse Acknowledged", "Precarity Acknowledged", "Worker Exploitation Acknowledged", and "Worker Tied to Employer" Codes in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Abuse acknowledged	43	12	0	4	29	88
Precarity acknowledged	77	30	0	2	9	118
Worker exploitation acknowledged	47	15	0	1	17	80
Worker tied to employer	35	16	0	3	17	71

The data points to an overall acknowledgment of abuse, precarity, and exploitation of migrant workers throughout the articles. Notably, “abuse acknowledged” and “worker exploitation acknowledged” was coded less in the during-COVID timeline. This is likely attributed to the focus shifting to health risks and living conditions amid the pandemic.

Scholars largely argue that the exploitation experienced by some migrant workers stems from the employee tie to a single employer. This argument is fairly consistent throughout the articles and is supported by the literature. Landry et al. contend that the system makes it difficult for temporary foreign workers to formulate complaints or to escape situations of abuse since they are completely dependent on their employer for food, housing and the right to stay in Canada (2021). Furthermore, in cases where the worker would choose to report employment abuse, recourses may be slow, costly, and difficult to pursue outside of Canada, as legal counsel, expert evidence, and translation services may often be required (Han, 2020). Other factors such as

language barriers, social isolation, and lack of access to support services all increase TFWs vulnerability to exploitation (Landry et al., 2021).

7.6 Conclusion

Conditions of the SAWP create precarious employment and immigration status for migrant workers, many of whom say it is impossible to express their discontent against abuses, poor living conditions, unsafe working conditions, lack of access to health care, harassment, and threats of deportation (Calugay et al., 2016). The pandemic further aggravated the already destitute living and working conditions on farms for migrant workers. Bunkhouses that were previously cramped and crowded created even more hardships in light of new social distancing protocols that were nearly impossible to achieve. At the same time, already lax housing inspections were intensified through online inspections that proved to do more harm than good. These injustices were heightened because of COVID and became a topic widely discussed among stakeholder groups in the news media. Advocates raising concern about living and working conditions for SAWP workers brought about increased media attention and subsequent government responses, creating a domino effect that highlighted discussion on the topic. While the poor conditions faced by workers is an unfortunate reality, the increased news media representation has the potential for positive impact by raising awareness of the conditions of labour that create the opportunity for exploitation and abuse to proliferate. Increased awareness can lead to policy changes and subsequent improvement to material conditions for workers.

While consensus across the news media contends that conditions are often poor for migrant workers in the program, there is a lack of acknowledgment in the representation that they are skilled and trained workers. SAWP workers represent a highly trained labour force, however, they fill the lowest-paid jobs and have little hope of upward mobility (Calugay et al.,

2016). The reliance on migrant workers in the SAWP and the corresponding arguments that they are more productive than local workers creates a complex discourse that simultaneously refers to them as low-skilled and highly productive, a seemingly contradictory description. On one hand, the news media representations during COVID demonstrated that local workers were favoured in a labour market competition with TFWs to protect Canadian's against transmission of the virus. Conversely, farmers were repeatedly cited emphasizing the greater value of migrant workers in comparison to local workers, arguing that they are more productive workers with higher production value. The linguistic choices of stakeholder groups such as farm owners, in this sense, presents the image of TFWs as commodities. This discourse also suggests that news media representations shift based on variables such as the social climate and what is happening globally, simultaneously impacting the level of value placed on migrant workers.

Chapter 8: Permanent Residency and Fear of Deportation

Despite being employed legally under temporary work contracts, migrant workers in the SAWP experience a constant threat of deportation. As a concept conceived as "the possibility of being removed from the nation-state", deportability is powerful because it seeks to capture a social condition that includes formal protocols on repatriation (De Genova, 2002, p. 438). Used as a disciplinary technique by the state and employers, the threat of deportation largely prevents workers from challenging their working and living conditions and is used as a fear tactic to encourage high productivity and low wages (Vosko, 2019). Deportation depicts the situation of workers whose labour power is rendered as disposable and ultimately temporary (i.e., deportable) (Vosko, 2019). The temporary nature of the program maintains SAWP worker's inability to obtain permanent residency status, despite their significant contributions to the Canadian economy and agriculture industry, ultimately sustaining their precarity.

The concept of migrant worker deportation, studied across the academic literature, proved to be a dominant theme in the news media articles. This chapter explores the frequency to which stakeholder groups acknowledged how easily workers can be deported, the extent to which they experience a fear of job or income loss, and their general sense of fear that they will be deported or removed from the program. These themes went largely unaddressed by government groups and farm owners in the articles, pointing to a reluctance in acknowledging deportability by these groups, while advocacy groups and migrant workers spoke openly about deportation as a feature of SAWP worker experiences. I also explore the pandemic's role in highlighting discussions on the SAWP's dire need for reform, potentially by providing the opportunity for workers to obtain permanent residency. The increased news media representation of these issues could lead to positive effects, such as increasing public awareness and reforming

the structure of the program that maintains deportability as a fear tactic. Ultimately, news media representation, particularly in the articles for which advocacy groups were interviewed or cited, emphasizes that offering permanent residency status for migrant workers in the SAWP is a necessary step to improving the structure of the program and the subsequent experiences of workers.

8.1 Fear of Deportation, Job or Income loss

Workers in the SAWP are in a closed labour contract, which means that they are assigned to a single employer for at least six weeks and up to eight months at a time (Otero, 2019). They can return to the same farm only if requested by the employer, and will return to Canada at all only if employers give them a good review (ibid). As a result, employers hold significant power over workers as they can arrange the worker's repatriation at any time and for any "sufficient reason" (ESDC, 2015, p. 5; as cited in Weiler, 2017). As previously discussed earlier in the thesis, deportability is built into the program's institutional structure (Otero, 2019). Because of this, workers are often reluctant to complain about unsafe conditions, poor treatment, or injury, because if they do, they risk losing their jobs and their ability to stay in Canada. This is especially detrimental because many workers' families rely on the remittances sent back to them in their home countries. Not surprisingly, many workers experience a constant sense of fear of job loss, income loss, and deportation because of this system. This is supported by the findings from this research and is recognized predominantly by the workers themselves or by advocates in the articles. The following table shows how many times the codes "Easily deported acknowledged", "Fear of deportation", and "Fear of job or income loss" were coded from each perspective between the pre-COVID and during-COVID timelines.

Table 21: Comparison of "Easily Deported Acknowledged", "Fear of Deportation", and "Fear of Job or Income Loss" Codes in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Easily deported acknowledged	5	7	0	0	5	17
Fear of deportation	10	5	0	0	10	25
Fear of job or income loss	9	4	0	0	14	27

Table 22: Comparison of "Easily Deported Acknowledged", "Fear of Deportation", and "Fear of Job or Income Loss" Codes in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Easily deported acknowledged	18	9	0	0	8	35
Fear of deportation	22	9	0	0	24	55
Fear of job or income loss	30	7	0	1	34	72

Comparing the data from both timelines, it is evident that the pandemic increased worker's fear of deportation, job and income loss, as well as an overall acknowledgment – and in turn, awareness – that migrant workers can be easily deported. The increase in data in the during-COVID timeline could point to a subsequent increase in opportunities for abuse. Migrant farm workers say they have been punished by their employers over disagreements about COVID-19 precautions, fueling calls for an independent oversight agency that would empower

temporary foreign workers to register complaints without fear of reprisal (Nguyen, 2020, The Globe and Mail). It is also worth noting that migrant workers who contract the virus have more implications than simply their physical health due to their increased vulnerability:

> There are many unknowns – but mounting concern – over the long-term health impacts of COVID-19. McKinney said if workers were to experience lasting lung damage, they may struggle to return to physically demanding farm labour in Canada – or may simply never be recalled by their employer. (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star)

The consequences of getting COVID as a temporary foreign worker are paramount because their status in Canada is directly tied to their employment. So, if a worker gets too sick to work, they risk not only job loss, but deportation as well.

When workers in the articles spoke up about their fears, they almost always requested their name not be mentioned in the articles for fear of employer retribution. One worker said her temporary status in Canada gave her stress, anxiety, and "fear of being removed, a fear of speaking up because I might be deported" (The Canadian Press, 2020, p. 2, Toronto Star). In another article, workers were cited saying they were underpaid and mistreated but remained quiet for fear of being deported back to their home countries (Brundale, 2019, Toronto Star). An additional article explained that workers were assaulted on a farm but said that a "fear of deportation was a major factor in deciding whether to report their assaults" (Weiler & Cohen, 2018, p. 4, National Post). From these few examples, there are clear patterns in worker sentiments regarding a general fear of deportation and job loss. These representations, however, lead to increased public awareness which could, in turn, impact policy and migrant worker experience.

These fears were not acknowledged in either of the timelines by government groups or farm owners, apart from one time by the government. The one acknowledgement of worker's fear of retribution made by the government came from The Globe and Mail and states: "Ottawa has promised to overhaul the temporary foreign worker program to better protect foreign nationals and empower them to come forward with complaints without fear of reprisal" (Baum & Grant, 2020). While this promise by the government does acknowledge that workers experience a fear of reprisal, it is still a vaguely worded statement that fails to adequately address the concern. It is also quite convoluted – rather than expressing their intentions to improve the program to alleviate the reasons workers complain in the first place, they are focused on "empowering" workers to come forward with their complaints, which is an interesting approach. The failure to acknowledge the anxieties and unease workers experience regarding their fear of deportation and retribution from both the government and farm owners points to an unwillingness to address the issues or acknowledge their role in the matter. It also possibly points to an oversight of the news article in not including these questions or issues. These representations, or lack thereof, establishes the priorities of these two stakeholder groups, as well as the news article, and contributes to the overall narrative that they maintain oversight of the program.

8.2 Reforming the TFWP and Permanent Residency as a Solution

This research also seeks to explore the popular potential solutions to revising the TFWP that arise in the news media, one of which is providing migrant workers with the opportunity for permanent residency. This theme materialized frequently in the articles, largely from the perspective of advocacy groups. The following tables provide a comparison of the use of the code from each perspective, both before COVID and during COVID.

Table 23: "Permanent Residency as a Solution" Code in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Permanent residency as a solution	12	3	1	4	0	20

Table 24: "Permanent Residency as a Solution" Code in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Permanent residency as a solution	63	10	0	2	11	86

The findings indicate a significant increase in discussions on permanent residency as a potential solution to improving conditions for migrant farm workers during the pandemic. Advocates have long demanded for permanent residency upon arrival for TFWs, which would essentially provide them with the same ability to leave bad jobs as other workers in Canada (Mojtehedzadeh, 2021, Toronto Star) and would immediately lessen the disproportionate power of the employer (Weiler & Cohen, 2018, National Post). Some of the articles go as far as to say that without fundamentally having the right of permanent residence status, you can't assert any other right that you have (Mojtehedzadeh, 2020, Toronto Star), and describe that bringing workers to Canada without the opportunity to gain permanent residency is exploitation in its truest form (Redmond, 2018, The Guardian). They argue that giving permanent immigration status would "level the playing field" to ensure everyone has the same rights, services, and benefits in Canada (Hussan, 2020; as cited in Ziafati, 2020, The Chronicle Herald).

It is clear that the pandemic has intensified calls for permanent residency, however, while the federal government has broadly said they support these initiatives, nothing has officially been done to get the ball rolling. In September 2019, one article cites a statement made by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who discussed "revamping" and "redoing" the program to make it fairer, more transparent, more understandable, and less onerous on both sides while making sure they are protecting people, later stating "I think the best path in that is to ensure that temporary foreign workers have a pathway to citizenship" (Mojtehedzadeh, 2019, p. 2, Toronto Star). Despite this, as of today, workers in the SAWP still lack access to permanent residency. The only opportunity that came close was an announcement the federal government made in April 2021, declaring a special program to provide permanent residence for over 90,000 essential workers who are actively contributing to the economy (Alhmidi, 2021, The Globe and Mail). Some SAWP workers, considered to fall under this category of essential, will be selected for permanent residency after obtaining one year of Canadian work experience. However, it will be difficult for them to fulfill language requirements and compete with essential workers in other industries for limited spots to attain permanent status (Akbar, 2021). Thus, the efficacy of this short-term program in terms of safeguarding vulnerable agricultural workers is not guaranteed (Akbar, 2021).

Generally, there is a consensus across all groups in the articles that the TFWP needs to be reformed. This theme was coded in relation to a variety of factors, such as housing conditions, working conditions, increasing inspections on farms, providing opportunity for permanent residency, and ensuring workers have access to more rights and protections, among others. The increase in the use of the code in the during-COVID timeline can again be attributed to the way in which the pandemic exposed the long-standing systemic problems with the TFWP that puts

workers in precarious positions. The following tables show the results from the “TFWP Needs Reform” code in both timelines.

Table 25: "TFWP Needs Reform" Code in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
TFWP needs reform	5	5	0	7	0	17

Table 26: "TFWP Needs Reform" Code in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
TFWP needs reform	31	3	0	16	2	52

What stands out, especially in comparison to the data from other codes, is the propensity of government officials to acknowledge that the TFWP generally needs to be reformed. Across the articles, government officials made comments such as “The federal government must do more to protect temporary foreign workers” (Mojtehedzadeh, 2019, Toronto Star) and “while we are proud of the worker protections we have in this country, we recognize that there are important issues that need to be addressed within the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and we are taking action” (Mojtehedzadeh 2020, Toronto Star). It is a step in the right direction that the government is acknowledging that the program generally needs to be reformed in some way. However, considering the general awareness the government has regarding the desperate need of reforming the TFWP, particularly in areas such as housing conditions and the disproportionate

tie of workers to their employer, not much is being done on the ground. This points to the ways in which the government uses the media as an avenue to make empty promises that are seemingly progressive and advantageous, but, in reality, are a strategic manoeuvre to placate workers and advocates.

Relatedly, a common theme throughout the articles was that, generally, the government is not doing enough to support TFWs and improve conditions of the program. Ultimately, the ability to make structural changes to the program lies in policy makers and government officials. The code “Government is not doing enough” provides insight into stakeholder perceptions of government responses (or lack thereof) to the program’s deficiencies. The following tables present the data from this code.

Table 27: "Government is not Doing Enough" Code in Pre-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Government is not doing enough	39	8	1	2	1	51

Table 28: "Government is not Doing Enough" Code in During-COVID Timeline

	Perspective of Advocates or other Group	Perspective of Article	Perspective of Farm Owner	Perspective of Government	Perspective of Worker	Total
Government is not doing enough	94	25	8	12	6	145

Again, there is a dramatic increase in the code post-pandemic, which in this case likely points to the government's shortcomings in protecting the safety of migrant workers during the pandemic, such as the lack of PPE for workers in the early stages of COVID or failing to provide proper socially-distanced accommodations.

8.3 Conclusion

SAWP workers face a unique form of deportability stemming from the uncertainty institutionalized into agreements between sending and host states; that is, their deportability is a feature of their legal status (Vosko, 2019). These institutionalized restrictions, such as the lack of access to permanent residency status, allow the state to continually secure a labour force that is seasonal in nature, permitting the expulsion of workers when their labour is no longer needed. Workers' deportability and the dire implications that deportability has on their experiences and well-being constructs a labour force that is exploitable in nature. This discourse was further highlighted during the pandemic through which living and working conditions worsened for workers and consequently exacerbated the urgency for additional measures to be implemented to protect SAWP workers. Both advocates and workers have long expressed concern about this system, and the consensus from these groups across the articles is that the TFWP needs to be reformed. A common solution across the articles was to offer migrant workers in the SAWP the opportunity for permanent residency. Interestingly, the academic literature frequently suggests open work permits as an option for reform, whereas the news media is fairly consistent with exclusively opting for permanent residency. While advocacy groups were the most likely to express this concern, it was acknowledged by government groups as well, particularly during the pandemic when such issues gained traction in the news media.

The overall news media representation that the SAWP needs to be reformed and that TFWs should have the opportunity to access permanent residency is a productive element in the overall trajectory of improving the program. The drastic increase in these codes during the pandemic is advantageous to increasing public awareness of the discrepancies with the program and its role in maintaining the precarity of migrant workers in the SAWP. Furthermore, the data shows that COVID made it well-known in news media representation that the government should be doing more to protect this marginalized group of workers which indicates that public perception on the topic is becoming increasingly critical towards government groups.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates that news media representation of the SAWP and its workers can reinforce potentially discriminatory and racially-motivated narratives. Simultaneously, however, it also sheds light on the deficiencies with the program and the inequalities experienced by workers. The recognition of inequalities could lead to positive material impacts, such as improvement to the structure of the program via policy reform, bettering living conditions or increasing housing inspections, offering the opportunity to change employers through open work permits, or providing pathways to permanent residency. An increase in coverage on the SAWP could lead to important progress regarding the narrative, due in part to the increasing significance of the news media and its capacity to shape public perceptions and opinions of the social world. Migrant agricultural workers are a group that is generally separated from wider society due to the fact that workers both live and work on the farm, resulting in minimal contact with the world off-farm. This means that a great deal of Canadian perceptions and opinions about migrant workers comes from the news media, rather than on social interactions. Studying news media representations of the SAWP and migrant workers is an important area of research.

This study sheds light on the incongruencies between stakeholder groups and differences in their priorities. Generally, it reveals the tendency of government groups to make ambiguous statements that are broad enough to placate all parties, as well as to make promises to reform the program that seem to rarely come to fruition. This thesis also demonstrated that advocacy groups were the most likely to assert concern over inequalities with the program or to challenge discriminatory practices towards workers. Migrant workers interviewed or cited in the news articles largely aligned with the position of advocacy groups and the issues they raised, albeit less often. In contrast, farm owners were largely uncited in the articles, except when discussing

topics such as labour shortages. As previously discussed earlier in the methods chapter, this could point to the priorities of journalists in directing particular topics towards specific stakeholder groups. This research also demonstrates that, as a whole, news media discussions of the SAWP increased across the board during the COVID-19 pandemic, pointing to how the pandemic both expanded on existing narratives and constructed new ones, such as drawing attention to concern over migrant worker health in the midst of the pandemic.

This research shows that the dominant news article themes related to the SAWP and migration align with academic literature on the topic. Scholars are fairly critical of the program, as were many of the representations across the news articles. The importance of linguistic choices are also highlighted in this research. Many instances in which racism or discrimination was perpetuated within the articles were results of word choice, often through statements that referred to migrants as "these people" or similar narratives that maintain migrant othering through an "us" versus "them" dichotomy. This study emphasizes the ways in which migrant othering, racism, and discrimination can become naturalized and normalized through online news media discussions. Acts of racism and discrimination can be easily concealed or overlooked through seemingly raceless statements that are, in reality, micro-aggressions against a racialized workforce.

9.1 Final Remarks

The persistent growth in the SAWP is evidence that the program has grown beyond its objective of being a temporary measure to fill temporary labour shortages to becoming a permanent strategy in minimizing labour costs (Lange et al., 2022). It has also been suggested that the fact that workers keep coming back year after year is an indication of their satisfaction with the program, but this notion ignores the fact that workers opt to participate in the first place

because of adverse economic conditions in their country of origin, and a large number of them might keep returning because these economic realities persist (Ferguson, 2007). The success and growth of the SAWP can be attributed to inequalities in global conditions as well as the state's ability to capitalize upon migrant productivity to extract labour to a greater extent due to colonial forces that justify the treatment of racialized workers from the global South. The existing scholarship and this project point to the normalization of these discourses through the structural and systemic injustices of the program that continually position migrants as precarious workers through their isolation, exploitation, replaceability, deportability, and unequal hierarchical relationship between employer and worker.

Despite their essential contributions, under the SAWP, migrant workers are unable to settle permanently in Canada. The essential quality of migrant labour is related to their precarity; migrant worker vulnerability ensures they are constantly available to fill this "essential" role. This uncertainty framing the legal and employment status of temporary foreign workers is institutionally produced, socially practiced and individually experienced (Horgan 2012). As a result, TFWPs produce diverse impacts on the experiences of migrant workers in Canada, both through systemic injustices and the direct influence on migrant worker lived experiences. Awareness should be directed toward the systemic makeup of the program that maintains these conditions, and the news media certainly draws attention to these factors. The media, as an expansive and far-reaching outlet, has the opportunity to provide a collective and diverse range of data regarding public perspectives and opinions on temporary foreign workers. The relationship between the state, the media, and the SAWP is relevant when considering the opportunity for positive outcomes from these discourses. The potential for positive discursive and material implications for the SAWP and migration by virtue of the news media

representation that recognizes the systems upholding inequalities with the program – and how these systemic injustices are reproduced on the farm – can lead to drastic consequences for migrant workers.

9.2 Study Contributions and Directions for Future Research

This thesis contributes to the sociological literature on the topic through its relevancy to both the current time period and social climate. Given that the COVID-19 pandemic is a fairly recent phenomenon, its impact is just now being studied thoroughly. As a result, this project is important in its contributions to newly expanding research on the topic. Furthermore, I contribute to the field by recognizing the importance of stakeholder group perspectives in changing the narrative of dominant themes as well as comparing their impact in the larger course of the collection of news articles, an approach I have yet to encounter in existing scholarship.

Building upon the findings from this research, a future study could examine the representation of the SAWP and its workers across a variety of different media platforms, such as social media. Social media is unique in its function to connect users instantaneously. This project could be adapted to search similar codes within social media platforms to discern how the topics are being taken up by a wider variety of groups.

Moreover, the codes for this thesis were constructed largely from existing themes in the academic literature. This study could be further elaborated upon by incorporating codes that go against the dominant themes in the literature to examine the ways in which the news media contests or challenges scholarly positions.

The increase in news media coverage on the SAWP and the subsequent acknowledgment of inequalities with the program and often poor treatment of workers could lead to positive reform in terms of policy implementation and material effects for workers. This is a theoretical

argument; while I hypothesize that these effects could happen, I cannot be sure of its actual impact on the ground. A future study could examine whether the news media representation of the SAWP analysed in this thesis does eventually lead to prospective improvements to the program or better supports for migrant agricultural workers.

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