

IT'S ALL ABOUT NEEDS:
THE ROLE OF CHRISTIAN CONGREGATIONS IN
ADDRESSING THE SOCIAL EXCLUSION BARRIERS
OF SEASONAL AGRICULTURAL WORKERS

by

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Carissa Groot-Nibbelink

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of Christian congregations in addressing the social exclusion barriers experienced by seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs). This research study reviews the ways in which local churches support SAWs specifically in the Niagara Region. This paper also examines the benefits and limitations of this support and thus offers recommendations to enhance the future work of congregations in this area. This study reveals the evolving role of Christian congregations from offering only fellowship and spiritual services to SAWs to responding to their true needs in areas such as transportation, health care, language, and social inclusion. Because SAWs continue to face significant social exclusion barriers and still remain ineligible for settlement services in Ontario, it is important that congregations continue to do this work, meeting the needs of SAWs and growing in their ability as social service providers.

Key words: seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs), congregations, Christian, the Niagara Region, social services, settlement support, social exclusion, needs

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DEDICATION

To my grandmother, who instilled in me a love for learning as well as a deep passion for the Church and its involvement in social justice. Even to the end, you were cheering me on.

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Introduction

Although the racist, neoliberal, and oppressive structure of the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) remains the root cause of the social problems presented in this research and faced by seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs) themselves, this paper will primarily explore the social exclusion barriers of SAWs and the need for further social service support to be given to this population. In particular, this major research paper explores the need for the increased involvement of Christian churches in providing social support to SAWs in the Niagara Region. A review of the literature reveals gaps in service delivery by federally and provincially funded settlement service agencies. These service delivery gaps stem from barriers such as a lack of funding, continuity of services, and eligibility criterion (Mukhtar, Dean, Wilson, Ghassemi, & Wilson, 2016). One specific gap in these services is that there remains minimal, if any, settlement programming for temporary foreign workers, which includes the specific population of SAWs (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2016). Polanco (2014) describes the justification for this gap in this way, “while Canada has an institutionalized system for supporting newcomers through its immigrant settlement sector, the majority of those with temporary status (including ‘low-skill’ temporary foreign workers) are considered short-term residents and hence denied access to public settlement service[s]” (p. 193). Although several front-line workers have expressed their desire to provide these services to SAWs, due to eligibility requirements and funding cuts, temporary foreign workers as a whole and SAWs in particular remain ineligible to access settlement services (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2016).

Menjívar (2003) reveals that the settlement assistance offered by local congregations has often filled in these gaps left by formal settlement service agencies. Given the complimentary nature of migrant services offered by the Christian churches and the challenges faced by

government funded settlement service agencies, the congregations must further broaden and advance its involvement in offering settlement services to SAWs (Janzen, Stobbe, Chapman, & Wilson, 2016a). This research problem has led me to examine and evaluate the work of Christian congregations and denominational organizations in the Niagara Region in providing settlement assistance to SAWs. I will argue that the support these congregations and organizations provide to SAWs must be further recognized, appreciated, and also enhanced. In order to achieve this work, the paper will be informed by the following three questions:

1. What are Christian congregations doing to provide settlement assistance to SAWs in the Niagara Region?
2. What are the strengths and weaknesses of these congregations in providing settlement assistance to SAWs in the Niagara Region?
3. What would enhance the future work of Christian congregations in providing settlement assistance to SAWs in the Niagara Region?

Purpose and Significance

The purpose of this research is to examine the potential role of the Christian congregations in offering social assistance to SAWs. Since there is limited acknowledgment of their provision of settlement assistance to migrants, this research will argue that Christian congregations have the potential to give significant support to migrants. Menjívar (2003) reveals that this support does not depend on the status or eligibility of the migrant; instead, Christian churches are able to extend their settlement assistance to all migrant populations. Given the fact that temporary foreign workers are not able to access settlement services (Foster & Taylor, 2013), this study will highlight the potential of Christian congregations to be a primary service provider in doing this

work. Using the needs assessment theory as a framework, this paper will evaluate the services provided by Christian churches and outline recommendations on how these services can be strengthened in order to respond to neglected needs of SAWs. If implemented, the findings of this evaluation will help better equip Christian congregations for the ministry of supporting SAWs (Janzen et al., 2016a).

Needs Assessment Framework

This paper will be written from a needs assessment perspective—a framework that asserts that social service providers must be aware of the needs of the target population and therefore must conduct a needs assessment (Stevens & Gillam, 1998). According to Royse, Staton-Tindall, and Badger (2009), a “needs assessment starts with a problem to be addressed to improve the quality of life or living conditions of human beings” who are often at the margins of society (p. 16). As those who perform needs assessments, social service providers must think comprehensively about the population as well as the social environment that surrounds them. By doing so, social service providers then move towards the essence of a needs assessment—that is, “an understanding of what is effective and for whom” (Stevens & Gillam, 1998, p. 1450). Throughout the activity of assessing a population’s need and the corresponding needed services, social service providers engage in work that uncovers the gaps and insufficiencies present in programs and services intended for the target population (Royse et al., 2009).

As a social service provider, churches must engage in this needs assessment work as a way to further the work that they are already doing. Placido and Cecil (2012) state the benefit of a needs assessment framework for churches. They write, “The skills in the area of assessment can be useful in helping congregations to focus and formulate a meaningful direction” in the social services they provide (p. 29). Through this direction, congregations can then provide

increasingly effective social services to populations of focus—such as the SAWs in the Niagara Region.

Given this reality, the needs assessment perspective fits naturally into the contents of the paper. The use of this framework will be most pointedly applied in Sections 3-6. Section 3 will offer a brief overview of the main social exclusion needs facing SAWs. Once the reader is aware of the identified needs of SAWs, Section 4 will use the needs assessment framework as a way of understanding the work of congregations in the Niagara Region and how the services they provide has developed over time. Section 5 and 6 will then integrate the needs assessment perspective as a starting point for evaluating the services of these churches as well as offering recommendations for congregations as they move forward in this specific work.

Methodology

This major research paper will be a qualitative study in which variable and nonvariable concepts are expressed in non-numerical terms. In this qualitative study, I will incorporate my own pre-existing ideas into the data collection process as well as glean new themes from the selected data (Neuman & Robson, 2014). Throughout the data collection and analysis work, I will continue to reflect on these ideas and corresponding data in an interactive manner. In this qualitative work, I will specifically apply a secondary analysis. According to Tarrant (2016), secondary analysis refers to the “reuse of data produced for prior purposes” (p. 601) as a way to gather new research connections, findings, and methodological understandings. In completing this secondary analysis, I will utilize an integrative literature review. Russell (2005) defines this review as a form of research in which “past research is summarized by drawing overall conclusions from many studies” (p. 8). In this integrative literature review, the researcher answers the following four questions about the body of research studied: 1) what is known; (2) what is the quality of

what is known; (3) what should be known; and (4) what is the next step for research or practice (Russell, 2005). Torraco (2005) goes on to note that, in answering these questions, this form of research “reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated” (p. 356).

The documents used in this literature review include scholarly articles, newspaper articles, publications and reports from various Christian denominations, as well as websites, documents, and reports on the activities of local congregations. Search domains included the Middlesex Public Library catalogue, London Public Library catalogue, RULA, and Google. In collecting data from these documents, I used the following key terms as the primary search strategy for this research: “Christian churches in the Niagara Region and seasonal agricultural workers,” and “Christian congregations and migrant workers in the Niagara Region.” For my research, I decided to focus in particular on the Niagara Region because of its large food production and its reputation as an agricultural region in Canada (Welder, 2008).

In selecting articles, I employed the method of purposive sampling. According to Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls, and Ormston (2013), in the method of purposive sampling, “sample units are selected on the basis of known characteristics, which might be socio-demographic or might relate to factors such as experience, behavior, roles, etc. relevant to the research topic” (p. 144). For my research paper, I selected sources that featured the following components: 1) Christian Church (congregations and denominational organizations) as the service provider; 2) settlement assistance and support provided by these services; and 3) migrants with a focus on SAWs as those who receive these settlement services. As these selected sources were gathered, I pulled key themes from the literature that apply to the work of these Christian congregations in

providing assistance to SAWs as well as the corresponding benefits and limitations of this work. From there, I concluded my research recommendations for Christian congregations in offering support to migrant workers, as outlined in the literature.

Section 1: The History of Social Support to Migrant Populations in Canada: Providers and Priorities

Introduction

Whether formal or informal, the social support offered to migrants has a long history in Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000). The historical narrative of this particular kind of support features a wide range of providers and priorities. Private and public actors as well as secular and religious community players have provided settlement assistance to immigrants across Canada. Each provider offers this social support with a specific set of priorities in mind. National, global, and cultural influences continue to shape the support given to migrants and how it is delivered within the Canadian context.

Christian Congregations

History of Providing Social Services to Migrants

Upon arrival, countless immigrants have received social services from Christian faith communities and congregations throughout Canada (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000). The support offered by Canadian congregations began over 200 years ago. At that time, when they arrived in Canada, British immigrants struggled to meet their basic needs. These individuals did not receive assistance from the government; rather, Christian individuals and groups assumed responsibility for their needs. Local congregations, in particular, contributed significantly to this work. In the 1840s, when the Irish immigrated to Canada during the potato famine, many of these individuals connected with local Catholic communities (Toner & Leitch, 2008). Through

these connections, the Roman Catholic churches “provided the Catholic Irish with a strong institutional and community base in which to ease their integration into Canadian society” (Toner & Leitch, 2008, para.11). In 1851, immigrants from Scotland came to settle in Upper Canada. The local Presbyterian churches were the first to greet these immigrants, offering them opportunities to participate in religious life as well as social activities (Cameron, 1971).

During the twentieth century, although the government became more involved in social programs for migrants, social service work was primarily “carried out by community members, and in particular religious communities” (Mulholland, 2017, p. 23). Throughout the settlement process of Chinese immigrants in the early 1900s, Anglican congregations in Vancouver became active in providing inexpensive practical support to this population. During the depression in the 1930s, Chinese immigrants faced additional challenges because they “did not receive the same amount of assistance that was given to white people” (Library and Archives Canada, 2017a, para. 85). Once again, congregations stepped up to respond. Anglican churches in Vancouver’s Chinatown, for example, responded by setting up a soup kitchen to serve this marginalized population (Library and Archives Canada, 2017a).

Local congregations in Canada continued to offer various forms of settlement services to immigrant groups throughout both world wars as well as after the end of Second World War in 1945 (Vineberg, 2012). After the First World War, the second large wave of Ukrainian immigrants came to Canada. During their settlement, local congregations became involved in these immigrants’ integration into Canadian society by functioning as sites for social gatherings for the Ukrainian community (Library and Archives Canada, 2017b). During the Second World War, local Anglican churches in British Columbia helped in the resettlement of Japanese Canadians after their internment (James, 1990) by supporting them with services similar to social

services (Library and Archives Canada, 2017c). Since their arrival in the 1920s and throughout the Second World War, Catholic churches sought to minister to Italian immigrants across Canada. As the Italian immigrant population grew in major cities, priests became increasingly active in participating in immigrant social service work. Local Catholic congregations in cities such as Montreal and Toronto were particularly involved. By 1970s, these churches had established services such as immigrant aid, spiritual support, education, and recreation to serve Italian immigrants in the area (Sturino, 2013).

Congregations have continued to play a significant role in the settlement of immigrants throughout recent waves of immigrants. When Hungarian refugees came into Canada in 1956, Protestant and Catholic churches across Canada functioned as major centers of support from the moment they arrived (Adam, Egervari, Laczko, & Young, 2010). In 1960s, after the establishment of the temporary foreign worker program, the Canadian government received thousands of Caribbean migrants to work in their fields (30 Canadian Immigration Waves, 2015). Labelle, Larose and Piché (2010) note that, “Christian churches play[ed] an important role both in welcoming [the] new arrivals and in helping [them amidst situations of] difficulty” (para.13).

Additionally, during a time when the Canadian government was just beginning to participate in refugee resettlement, Christian groups offered significant assistance to over twenty thousand refugees fleeing Vietnam in the mid 1970s (Bramadat, 2014). Following that wave of immigration, during the early 1980s, congregations welcomed many refugees from South Asia and Central America to Canada. Mulholland (2017) identifies the church as the dominant leader in refugee resettlement at the time. She writes, “it was largely church activists that mobilized to create organizations that provided much needed services [...]” (p. 20). Whether supporting

immigrants, temporary foreign workers, or refugees, the historic involvement of congregations in offering social support to migrants has remained significant (Bramadat, 2014).

Motivations

The distinctive settlement support offered by churches—historically as well as presently—comes from their purpose to establish communities and further the work of social justice. As a body of believers called to mirror the intimate relationship of the Trinity, Christian congregations must embody the good and beautiful community (Smith, 2010). This purpose drives the work of Christian congregations in offering social support to immigrants. In walking alongside immigrants, Christian congregations hope to rebuild social networks (Allen, 2010) for “those who left community behind” (Eby, Iverson, Smyers, & Kekic, 2011, p. 586). According to Akresh (2011), Christian congregations strive to be a space, place, and people of continuity for immigrants. Therefore, much of the support they offer to migrants reflects this purpose. It is no surprise then that members of religious communities contexts view relational integration as the most important form of social support one can give to migrants (Eby et al., 2011). With this purpose in mind, religious groups have done something significant for immigrants—they have created a sense of community for a typically marginalized population (Cadge, Levitt, Jaworsky, & Clevenger, 2013). Not only do churches create vibrant communities for these migrants (Andrews, 2011), these congregations establish a long-term community presence (Eby et al., 2011).

Throughout history, Christians have sought to seek justice in all things. Consequently, Christian churches’ furthering of justice work remains central to the social support they offer to immigrants. In his literary work *The Prophets*, Abraham Heschel (1962) highlights the foundational nature of justice within the work of Christian churches. Here, the command is clear:

pursue justice. That is, Christian congregations must move towards justice—to practice and lean into justice, as Jesus inaugurated it in his first coming (Claiborne, 2006). This pursuit of social justice leads Christian churches to reach out to those in need (Andrews, 2011). With this biblical call and theological vision of justice work, many Christian congregations are then propelled forward to provide social support for immigrants, their way of fulfilling the mandate to help those in need (Eby et al., 2011). In its fullest form, biblical justice—as a vision and a purpose—continues to be the long-term work of Christian churches in the world. Until Christ’s second coming—when all will be made right and when justice will roll down like waters, oppression and injustices will remain. Therefore, Christian churches, as an entity rooted in this biblical understanding of social justice, must give rise to action—life long action to pursue justice for marginalized populations such as immigrants (James, 2015). Historically, Christian congregations have been involved in this way and for these purposes.

The Canadian Government

History of Providing Social Services to Migrants

Although immigration has a long history in Canada, the delivery of government settlement services is quite recent. Vineberg (2012) points to the large movement of Hungarian refugees in 1957-1958 as the event that led the government to increasingly consider “the availability of adequate [social] services to meet the needs of [immigrants]” (George, 2002, p. 465). Because of this situation and others like it, in 1966, the Department of Manpower and Immigration launched formal government support for settlement services (Knowles, 2016). Gradually, from 1966 onward, the federal government became increasingly committed to settlement services for migrants across the country (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000).

As the number of immigrants grew in the early 1970s, so did the need for settlement services for this specific population (Shields et al., 2016). At this time, the Minister of Manpower and Immigration and the Secretary of State “jointly sponsor[ed] a proposal to Cabinet to create a defined Settlement Program” (Vineberg, 2012, p. 27). As a result, in October 1974, the Canadian government established a Settlement Branch within the Department of Manpower and Immigration. The inauguration of this branch made government supported settlement services available to immigrants. Consequently, the government began to assume a broader responsibility for integration, recognizing that immigrants require holistic social settlement and began funding them (Canadian Council for Refugees, 2000).

Motivations

The Canadian government has maintained the view that “the greatest need for assistance occurs in the early stages of settlement and adaptation, which includes acclimatization, locating housing, starting children in school, learning the language, finding jobs, and beginning a social network” (Wang & Truelove, 2003, p. 578). As a funder of settlement services for immigrant populations, the government of Canada contributes to the successful integration of these immigrants in every area—economic, political, and social life in Canada (Winnemore, 2005). However, the Canadian government sees its function as short-term, providing support for the integration of migrants from the time of pre-arrival through the initial settlement period in Canada. Since employment, housing, and education remain the top priorities of immigrants upon arrival (Ashton, Pettigrew, & Galatsanou, 2016), the Canadian government focuses on the social and economic integration of immigrants. Through government-funded programs, the Canadian government offers orientation, interpretation, referrals, employment assistance, and basic English

language instruction services to immigrants (Winnemore, 2005) as a means of achieving successful integration.

In the Canadian immigration model, the government hopes to support immigrants so that they contribute to the economy and further advance the development of Canada (Ashton et al., 2016). Ever since the establishment of the Department of Manpower and Immigration in 1966, the government's primary goal was to provide services for the labour market integration of immigrants (Knowles, 2016). The Canadian government has always focused on services that allow migrants to fully participate in the economy (Shields et al., 2016). According to Aliweiwi and Laforest (2009), this “focus on short-term labour market integration risks undermine[s] broader social integration” (as cited in Shields et al., 2016, p. 13).

Conclusion

Even with the variety of players and priorities present, settlement services—at a basic level—are intended to fulfill one central task: provide assistance to all immigrants. However, the federal government does not consider SAWs to be part of the “immigrant” population and thus these individuals are not eligible to receive such assistance (Wang & Truelove, 2003). The current Settlement Program in Canada gives assistance to “Permanent Residents, Protected Persons, Convention Refugees, Live-in Caregivers, and individuals who have been selected to become permanent residents” (CIC, 2012a as cited in Roberts, 2014). In the provinces of Alberta, Newfoundland, and Ontario, temporary foreign workers are not eligible for federally and provincially funded settlement services (Roberts, 2014). Instead, because these “low-skilled” workers, including seasonal agricultural workers (SAWs), are considered short-term residents, they are denied access to the services they desperately need throughout their stay in Canada (Polanco, 2014). Yet, as Roberts (2014) notes, “whether as temporary workers, permanent

residents or immigrants without status, the reality is that many participants in the TFWP, which includes SAWs, are living in Canada on a permanent, or semi-permanent basis” (p. 79). Many workers come year after year because they often receive a higher wage in Canada than they do back in their country of origin. The hope is that this job and its accompanying pay will offer a better future for the SAWs’ family members. Therefore, since many SAWs live in Canada for most of their working lives, it can be argued that social support should be extended to this specific migrant population as well.

Section 2: Overview of Agriculture and Agricultural Workers in the Niagara Region Niagara Region as an Agricultural Area

According to Russell (2017), much of the research examining the history of temporary foreign workers in Canada flows from local examples as a way of finding themes that apply at the regional, national, and sometimes international levels. This paper focuses on the local context of the Niagara Region in Ontario, which is situated on the northern side of the border between the United States and Canada (Russell, 2017). Because of its location, this region maintains “close proximity to major trading routes, between the U.S. and Canada” (Wedler, 2008, p. 50).

The Niagara Region is known primarily for its tourism and hospitality industry and the favorable climate conditions that support the cultivation of agricultural products (Wedler, 2008). As such, this geographic area features a large food industry as well as an expansive horticultural industry (Hofman, 2006). In particular, the Niagara Region is known for specific crops, producing apples, vegetables, and wine (Wedler, 2008). Moreover, the Niagara greenhouse industry remains one of the most developed in Canada and thus continues to play a significant role in the region’s economic life (Hofman, 2006).

History of Agricultural Workers in the Niagara Region

As noted by Russell (2017), the Niagara Region “has historically included a remarkably diverse range of workers and industries” (p. 140). Leading up to the turn of the twentieth century, many of the workers involved in agricultural production were local workers (Patrias, 2016). However, large numbers of workers from places in the United States came to this area in 1842 to find work and, in doing so, assisted in the construction of the second Welland Canal (Patrias & Savage, 2012). Therefore, as Russell (2017) states, “immigration played a key role in the Niagara Region’s labor market” early on in its history (p. 140).

Like many other Southern Ontario agricultural areas, Niagara has depended on other “imported” workers in its fields, canneries, and orchards since the turn of twentieth century (Patrias, 2016). As the area struggled to fill labor gaps and respond to economic changes during the start of the twentieth century, the Niagara Region was faced with a need (Russell, 2017): to look for workers elsewhere—beyond the local, white, male population. According to Patricia (2016), from the beginning of the twentieth century to the end of World War II, “[these] ‘imported’ workers in Niagara were composed of two main groups: [n]on-British immigrants [and] Aboriginal families from southern Ontario reserves” (p. 70).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Niagara Region experienced a boom in a variety of industries such as manufacturing and construction. Just as occupations in those areas grew in number, so did the vacancies in other labour categories such as agriculture and canning (Patrias, 2012). Consequently, the first group of “imported” workers was immigrants from southern and eastern Europe who came to the area to take advantage of these economic opportunities. Yet, despite the promise that these opportunities presented, their experience in Niagara was not always advantageous. Since “many [Canadian] employers believed that southern and eastern Europeans, and especially those of Asian and African origin, were racially

inferior and only equipped to perform menial labour,” these individuals were often forced to work in the agricultural sector (Patrias, 2012, p. 18). As time progressed, during the early to middle years of the twentieth century, Aboriginal women became the primary component of the seasonal agricultural workforce in Niagara (Patrias, 2016). Given their racialization, Aboriginal women were also seen as those who were only able to do *this kind* of work. As Patrias (2016) notes, this population was considered “inherently suited for menial labor due to their supposed racial inferiority” (p. 70).

During World War I and World War II, a new group of “imported” workers entered into the seasonal agriculture workforce—middle-class Anglo-Canadian females. These women, often referred to as “farmerettes,” participated in fruit and vegetable production work in order to meet the expanding labour market needs at the time (Patrias, 2016). However, the women began to increase their demands for better pay and working conditions. Once these “true daughters of Canada” could find other means of employment, they left the agricultural scene (Patrias, 2016). Therefore, by the end of World War II, a time when Niagara desperately needed to find workers for its farms and greenhouses, farm owners looked globally to attract migrant agricultural workers to the area (Patrias, 2016).

Since European immigrant workers at the time were also able to find better jobs, employees sought out the labor of increasingly racialized individuals—those of African descent (Patrias & Savage, 2012). In the early 1960s, when the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) was introduced in Canada, Caribbean men were recruited to meet labour needs in the agricultural sector. Like other imported populations, “Canadian immigration officers described “ ‘Negro’ males from the Caribbean as childlike, indolent, lazy and stupid” (Satzewich, 1991 as cited in Bauder & Corbin, 2002, p. 3). Since the 1960s, Caribbean and Mexican workers continue to be

the main workers in Niagara's agricultural industry, though not as permanent immigrants but rather as temporary residents.

The Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program

Overview of the SAWP

In 1966, the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) was created because Canadian farm owners were struggling to find labourers to work in their fields (Hofman, 2006; McLaughlin, 2009). The SAWP is based on agreements between Human Resources and Development Canada, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), as well as countries that send migrant workers to Canada (Hofman, 2006). Through these agreements with sending countries, the Canadian government ensures that workers from the Caribbean and Mexico become part of this seasonal workforce and stay for the duration of the harvest seasons. The program first functioned on a trial basis with Jamaica (Brem, 2006). When it proved successful, the government of Canada signed a bi-lateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Jamaica. This MOU allowed the legal entrance of migrant workers from Jamaica to Canada on a temporary basis through the SAWP (McLaughlin, 2009). Over the years, the program has expanded. In 1974, when the Mexican and Canadian governments signed a Memorandum of Understanding, the SAWP was expanded to the temporary legal entry of Mexican workers to Canada (Duarte, 2008). Currently, Canada attracts more than 20, 000 SAWs each year from Caribbean countries (Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Jamacica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St.Vincent, the Grendadines, Trinidad, and Tobago) and Mexico (Government of Canada, 2017; McLaughlin, 2009).

The SAWP in Niagara

For the past 40 years, farmers across Canada have relied on temporary workers from these countries to meet their labour needs and tend to their harvests (Brem, 2006). The Niagara Region is no different. SAWP workers are considered the “backbone” of its agricultural industry. In fact, in 1960, Niagara became the first region to host migrant agricultural workers under this program. In 1998, more than 1,000 SAWs came to work in St. Catherine’s (Bauder & Corbin, 2002). Several years later, in 2006, the Niagara Region recruited 3,000 SAWs for its growing agricultural industry (Duarte, 2008). These high numbers of SAWs have remained constant in the Niagara Region ever since (Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc., 2018). Each year, agricultural areas in Canada, including the Niagara Region, host SAWs workers for up to 8 months a year. In 2008, there were approximately 229 farms registered to employ SAWs (Duarte, 2008). Yet, though the program in the Niagara Region is growing in numbers, these SAWs continue to face social exclusion barriers that negatively affect them during their stay in Canada.

Section 3: Social Exclusion of Seasonal Agricultural Workers

Introduction

Although SAWs may not be considered “immigrants,” these individuals make up a population that have migrated to Canada from another country and often returns to Canada to work year after year. Migrants working in Canada for eight months experience many transitions and challenges. Consequently, like other immigrants, SAWs face social exclusion throughout their time in Canada. The following section provides an overview of the social exclusion experiences of SAWs in Canada.

Lack of Information

Two significant aspects of the social exclusion of SAWs is their general lack of information about their rights as well as available social services (Taylor & Foster, 2015). Since SAWs are not able to utilize settlement services, these migrants have limited access to information about the policies, social services, and rights that relate to them (Hennebry, 2012). Though workers do receive a basic orientation to Canada before they leave their home countries, upon arrival, they soon discover that they do not know much about which services they can access as well as their rights as temporary foreign workers in the province where they are employed (Brem, 2006). Workers are not granted the opportunity to learn about safe work practices, basic entitlements as a worker, and the steps needed to access workplace insurance (Hennebry, McLaughlin, & Preibisch, 2016).

Limited Access to Necessary Health Care Services

Because of the work they do, migrant farm workers are subjected to significant health risks such as injuries, machinery accidents, muscle strain, and headaches (Flecker, 2010; Salami, Mehrali, & Salami, 2015). Overcrowded living conditions further contribute to health risks such as the quick transmission of diseases and sickness (Salami et al., 2015). The health challenges extend beyond physical risks. Inadequate rest, social isolation, stress, and anxiety related to their temporary status also have the potential to cause serious mental health risks (Hennebry, 2012). Therefore, these migrant workers do work that contribute to poor physical and mental health (Salami et al., 2015).

Even though SAWs engage in work that has many health risks and therefore they often need medical assistance (Hennebry, 2012), this population is unable to receive decent health care to maintain an adequate level of physical and emotional wellbeing. The reality is that SAWs experience challenges accessing health care as a result of their temporary status in Canada. As “temporary” residents, certain rights related to health care are not extended to this “transient” population. Although access to the provincial health care system is, in theory, extended to this population, the reality is that health care services have been “designed for citizens,” and not for temporary migrant workers (Hennebry et al., 2016, p. 522). “For example, unlike permanent immigrants, migrant farm workers do not have access to immunization and vaccination programs” (Hennebry, 2012, p. 18).

Hennebry et. al. point out that in 2016 nearly 800 SAWs were “repatriated for medical reasons” (p. 530). Furthermore, although the province of Ontario “extends publicly funded, provincial health care [to migrant workers] upon [their] arrival” (Hennebry et al., 2016, p. 526), there continue to be several barriers that limit this population’s ability to access the health care to which they are entitled to. Additionally, “as liminal subjects, these migrant workers depend on employers to provide them with the health cards required to access the [necessary health] services” (Hennebry et al., 2016, 2016, p. 526). In their study, Hennebry and colleagues (2016) note that, though migrant workers have access to an OHIP card, approximately 19% of their participants that they surveyed claimed that although they needed medical attention, they had still not received their health card. Because employers often have the power to decide whether SAWs can remain in Canada or not, deportation remains a significant fear for workers. Unfortunately, this fear is well founded and leads them to neglect reporting health or work

related problems (Salami et al., 2015). Orkin, Lay, McLaughlin, Schwandt, and Cole (2014) state that under reporting of worker health concerns is common among migrant workers.

In addition, challenges such as long hours of work make it difficult for these workers to go to a walk-in clinic to seek medical attention. Similarly, limited English proficiency, geographic isolation and a lack of adequate transportation significantly limits the health care available to seasonal migrant populations (Salami et al., 2015). Because of these barriers, “few migrants ma[ke] visits to health care providers while in Canada, with less than one quarter [of the participants] reporting [that they saw] a doctor in relation to health symptoms” (Hennebry et al., 2016, p. 529).

Language Barriers

SAWs also confront the challenges of language barriers (Salami et al., 2015). Hennebry (2012) notes that, “migrant farm workers who come predominantly from non-English and non-French speaking countries, such as Mexico, come to Canada with minimal capacities in either of [the national] languages” (p. 14). Although language training is offered to permanent immigrants, temporary residents are not eligible (Hennebry, 2012, p. 14).

Language barriers limit this population’s ability to access the social services they require. Because information is typically only offered in English or French, SAWs have trouble communicating their needs accurately when navigating the bus system, accessing medical treatment, or understanding conversations with health care providers (Cundal & Seaman, 2012). In Hennebry and colleagues’ (2016) study of migrant workers, “nearly half of survey

respondents expressed having problems with communicating health concerns to health care providers” (p. 531).

Naturally, SAWs’ limited English and French language proficiency restricts their participation in the broader community. Not only are they unable to advocate for their own rights, but this population experience isolation and segregation (Hennebry, 2012). On the farms specifically, it has been found that, “workers are segregated by country of origin or language, working only with others from the same county or those who speak the same language” (Hennebry, 2012, p. 15). As a result, migrant workers only socialize with those who speak the same language. In addition, the temporary foreign workers do not have any “verbal interaction with the general [Canadian] public” (Cundal & Seaman, 2012, p. 208).

Low levels of autonomy and safety are associated with SAWs’ limited fluency in English (Hennebry, 2012). Since these individuals often do not speak English and depend on their employers for their status, migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to the dominance of their employers. As such, the rights they have as a worker are often ignored (Flecker, 2010). According to Hennebry (2012), this vulnerability can have serious and hazardous outcomes for migrant workers within the context of their work environment. She writes, “In some situations, the lack of English can prove quite dangerous, since employers and supervisors typically give instructions or training (such as on pesticide use) in English” (p. 14). This often results in the unsafe use of pesticides, which has serious consequences for SAWs (Cruz-Lopez, 2013).

Limited Access to Transportation

Limited access to transportation is a serious problem for SAWs. Migrant workers are not trained and do not have permits to operate a vehicle (Hennebry, 2012). Reid-Musson (2018) writes, “car ownership and licensing are logistically and financially prohibitive for migrant farmworkers in Canada, and very few gain access to a private vehicle” (p. 309). Consequently, a majority of SAWs do not have access to vehicles to transport them to the various places they need to go. Additionally, the geographic location in which SAWs reside during their stay in Canada contributes to their challenges of limited transportation. Because these individuals live in rural and small town settings, SAWs face mobility barriers (Reid-Musson, 2018). Beckford (2016) notes that many farms are located in remote areas where “there is no public transportation such as buses and trains” (p. 173).

This lack of transportation adds to the dependency of SAWs on their employers. This affects their quality of life while working in Canada. Although the law requires farm employers to provide transportation for SAWs, “workers reported that transportation was provided on a limited basis as most farmers said they did not always have the time or resources to take workers whenever they wished” (Beckford, 2016, p. 173). Additionally, since migrant workers relied on a ride from their employer, they had to accept whatever time was convenient for their employers (Beckford, 2016).

Though migrant workers can have some mobility if given a bicycle, this form of transportation is an inadequate form of transportation for this group of individuals (Reid-Musson, 2018). As a result, these migrant workers sometimes find themselves in unsafe situations. As one Jamaican worker recalled, “I had a bladder infection and told the supervisor,

but he would not take me to the doctor. I had to ride my bike 4km after work in the evening” (Hennebry et al., 2016, p. 530). Hennebry (2012) argues that this limited transportation negatively impacts SAWs’ sense of belonging while in Canada. As one worker expressed, “I do not go out to socialize often... I would like to see my cousin, but it is too hard...I don’t have a ‘ride,’ I mean I don’t have transportation.” (Schomberg, 2005 as cited in Hennebry, 2012, p. 19).

Social Isolation

Most significantly, these migrant workers experience social isolation throughout their stay in Canada. It is evident that the social isolation of this immigrant population is unlike that of any other migrant group. Bauder and colleagues (2002) reveal that temporary foreign workers experience limited contact with members of the local communities. These authors argue that this isolation flows from the SAW program, as it “does not promote community interaction” (p. 8). Foster and Taylor (2013) go on to note that “foreign workers are excluded from the life of the community due to their differential exclusion, vulnerable and precarious connection to the labour market, experiences of discrimination, and conflicted transnational community identities” (p. 167). As a group of individuals embedded into a program that “promotes [their] inequality and exclusion” (Taylor & Foster, 2015, p. 153), SAWs continue to face social isolation while in Canada (Siemiatycki, 2010).

SAWs experience social isolation through their temporary status. Because their status characterizes them to be temporary residents, migrant workers are viewed in a negative light (Taylor & Foster, 2015). Since SAWs are understood to be transient residents in a specific area, they are automatically set apart from the rest of society (Hennebry, 2012). Overall, local

communities do not engage with the migrant workers on a social level. As Bauder and colleagues (2002) state, “few residents entertain personal relationships with the workers” (p. 10).

Although many SAWs would like to have relationships with local community members, “the condition of permanent temporariness hampers migrants’ ability to create and sustain meaningful relationships and networks in the communities where they work” (Hennebry et al., 2016, p. 524). Given the fact that this population cannot access permanent residency, SAWs are limited in their ability to “integrat[e] into the communities in which they have lived and worked for many seasons (Hennebry, 2012, p. 20). This status and the challenges that come with it—such as physical separation in remote areas, long workdays, and language barriers—further “exacerbate the migrants’ feelings of social exclusion” (Brem, 2006, p. 14). Therefore, although many of these migrant workers are *permanently* temporary, their temporary status socially excludes migrant workers because there are minimal opportunities for this population to mingle with the local community and vice versa (Hennebry, 2012; Bauder et al., 2002).

This SAWs experience social isolation because of their “invisible” presence in rural areas. Since many of these workers have limited mobility, work long hours, and must live when they work, these individuals remain invisible to the majority of Canadians (Hennebry, 2012). Foster and Talyor (2013) describe these migrant workers as a “shadow population” within the specific, local geographic area in which they work. Similarly, Reid-Musson (2018) refers to SAWs as individuals who have “shadow citizenship”—a citizenship that consistently excludes them from Canadian communities and social spheres. Because of this invisibility, SAWs experiences poor levels of social integration and “exclusion from social and cultural activities” (Hennebry et al., 2016; Cundal & Seaman, 2012, p. 208).

SAWs experience social isolation and exclusion because of the limited support system that they have while in Canada (Hennebry, 2012). There are few opportunities for migrant workers to develop friendships (Brem, 2006); consequently, it is difficult for these workers to seek out and receive support from individuals in nearby communities. In addition, the workers that come through the SAW program stay in Canada “without their families and [thus] experience loneliness and isolation as a result” (Cundal & Seaman, 2012, p. 208). Only a small segment of the SAW population has family and friends also living in Canada and, although they may stay in Canada for most of the year, the ability for these workers to access a support system remains limited (Hennebry, 2012).

Conclusion

Social isolation significantly impacts SAWs throughout their stay in Canada. With this in mind, it is also important to note that barriers to social inclusion are particularly challenging for SAWs because the majority of this population does not have access to the settlement services needed to address these barriers (Taylor & Foster, 2015). Typically, formal settlement service agencies assist immigrants throughout their transition and orientation into Canada. However, because of their temporary status, SAWs are ineligible for settlement services provided both federally and at the provincial level in certain provinces (Roberts, 2014). As Roberts (2014) notes, “Assistance from ISAs could play an important role in supporting and protecting this systematically marginalized group of [immigrants]” (p. 80). Yet, given the government’s lack of support for this population, other informal social service providers have responded to the social barriers and needs of SAWs.

Section 4: Role of Church in Social Services to SAWs

Many community members, organizations, and institutions in the Niagara Region have become aware of the lack of social services available to SAWs in the area. Christian congregations are one such group. Niagara churches have recognized this gap in settlement services: that despite having significant social exclusion challenges, migrant workers are not eligible for formal services in Ontario. Recognizing this gap, a few Christian congregations in the Niagara Region have become actively involved in providing informal social services to seasonal migrant workers in the area.

The Support Niagara Congregations Have Provided to Agricultural Workers

Decades before the SAWP's inception, Christian churches across the Niagara Region actively supported SAWs. Ever since they first arrived, religious community groups supported migrant farm workers across the region (Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers Inc. (2018). As early as the turn of the twentieth century, congregations seemed to be the sole source of support for this marginalized population. For example, authors such as Patrias and Savage (2012) note the long history of congregations offering pastoral care to migrant farmworkers. In 1910, for instance, a Roman Catholic priest in the Niagara Region visited migrant farmworkers in the shacks in which they were forced to stay. He tended not only for their emotional and social needs, but also their physical needs. In doing so, the priest did his best to care for a man dying of tuberculosis because of the harsh living conditions (Patrias & Savage, 2012).

Additionally, Christian congregations participated in advocacy work as a way to support migrant workers during their stay in Canada. For instance, the Methodist Church in the area actively acknowledged the human rights violations of the Italian and Polish immigrant women working in the fields during the early twentieth century. This church called into question the limited freedom of the migrant workers and called on employers to change their ways (Patrias,

2016). In 1915, the Department of Social Services and Evangelism of the Methodist and Presbyterian Church conducted a survey to document the horrific living conditions of female migrant workers at the time. The survey highlighted the slave-like working conditions endured by this population (Patrias & Savage, 2012). From that time onwards, congregations have functioned as support groups and advocacy centers for migrant agricultural workers across the country and specifically in the region of Niagara (McLaughlin, 2009).

Why Congregations in Niagara Support SAWs

Outreach Opportunity

Numerous intrinsic mandates motivate Christian institutions to perform this social support work. Some congregations in the Niagara Region do this work as an opportunity to reach populations “with the love of Christ” (Weeks, 2013). Southridge Community Church began its informal social service work specifically as “an outreach program for Caribbean farm workers” (Di Caro, 2017, para. 27). As one member from the congregation stated, the congregation hopes to “reac[h] out beyond the seats on Sunday to the margins of [the] city and se[e] [the] church be a part of what changes [the] community” (Southridge Community Church, 2014). Others like Dorothy Hewlett from Christ’s Church also understand this work as simply, “a reaching-out opportunity” (Millward, 2018, para.7). As she further articulated, “Jesus said to reach out to those neighbours who are lonely, hungry, and lost” (Millward, 2018, para. 7). Through this informal social service work, these congregations are performing outreach work, which they have been called to do as members of Christ’s church body.

A Form of Hospitality

Congregations also recognize social service work as a form of hospitality. Through this work, churches in the Niagara Region hope to create a sense of community for the workers—a

home away-from-home. St. Alban's Church began participating in informal social service work to provide a welcoming presence for the area's SAWs. Parish reverend Javier Arias notes that, because of the work that the church is doing, "[workers] say they now have a home to come together and receive support" (Millward, 2018, para. 19). Similarly, Christ's Church began its work with SAWs to be hospitable. Dorothy Hewlett, the parish reverend, explains that her church practices hospitality work through simply lending a hand and creating a space for SAWs who spend more than half of the year in their community (Millward, 2018). Tim Arnold, the outreach coordinator from Southridge, describes why churches in the area are doing this work: "Our goal is to welcome these neighbors...while they are here and far away from their homes" (Southridge Community Church, 2014). He further states that the church hopes, "over time, for [the workers] to become part of [its] church family and the greater [c]ommunity" (Southridge Community Church, 2016).

Response to Social Injustice

Additionally, congregations in the area participate in this work as part of their mandate to respond to social injustice. Before launching their new building location in Vineland, Southridge Community Church performed a neighborhood audit to identify which population was most vulnerable in the area. Caribbean migrant workers were identified (Weeks, 2013) and, as a result, Southridge decided to locate a church building in an area where they could reach these workers. As the church's outreach director notes, "Caribbean workers are a vital part of a thriving Niagara yet, unfortunately, they often deal with significant social exclusion and loneliness" (Southridge Community Church, 2014, Anchor Causes). Similarly, Christ Anglican Church joined this informal social service work as a way to see and know Niagara's invisible population—seasonal agricultural workers (Zettel, 2017). Common to all these congregations is a desire to respond to

the social injustices facing marginalized and ignored populations by being “a 24/7 source of hope and help to the most pressing needs of [the] community” (Southridge Community Church, 2014, Anchor Causes).

Initial Support of Congregations

Fellowship

The work of congregations in the Niagara Region unfolded as the true needs of the SAWs began apparent to them. Initially, congregations created a space of fellowship as a way to engage the workers. For example, in 2012, Southridge Community Church launched a migrant worker program that started as a place of fellowship for SAWs. Approximately two-thirds of this church community has become involved in this ministry by building friendships with the workers. In this model, teams of six to ten congregant members from the Southridge community are matched with one individual farm. From there, these small groups connect with the migrant workers from that specific farm by making regular visits, showing some hospitality, and getting to know these workers (Southridge Community Church, 2017; Weeks, 2013). St. Alban’s, too, began their work with SAWs through food and friendship. Parish members went to the farms and invited the workers to come to church events as well as the weekly Sunday service and meal (Forget, 2015).

In addition, local churches including St. Ann’s, Lakemount Worship Centre, Vineland Baptist, Southridge Community Church, Trinity United, and St. Alban’s Church have partnered together to create spaces of fellowship. When workers first arrive in the harvest season, they are greeted with welcome bags. Together, the churches provide companionship to workers by hosting social events and communal meals. Through these partnerships, each of these churches provides weekly meals to the migrants at a local church every Sunday night. Additionally, volunteers assist in driving a bus to and from local farms to bring the workers to the weekly

Sunday night gatherings (Moore, 2016). As one church member stated, “it’s about food and fun and friendship” (Di Caro, 2017, para. 28). These initial church programs were seen as services where SAWs could establish friendships and participate in fun social gatherings that they would normally not have access to.

Spiritual Support

At first, “fellowship” was understood as synonymous to “Christian fellowship” and, as a result, congregations initially focused their efforts on offering spiritual services to migrant workers. In 2001, Immanuel United Reformed Church started its ministry to the growing number of SAWs in Niagara by first establishing weekly worship services in Spanish as well as weekly Bible studies for the workers (Bout, n.d). Uniquely, the migrant worker ministry at St. Alban’s began with a focus around the Eucharist. As the migrant workers came to be fed and nourished through this sacrament, it was hoped that workers would join in a deeper community and feel truly welcomed (Forget, 2015). Similarly, Cornerstone Community Church in Virgil, Ontario, also began its work with SAWs by offering spiritual support through pastoral care and Bible studies. Kevin Bayne, a pastor at the church, “is one of several men on call to offer pastoral care to the offshore workers” (Weeks, 2013, para.11). These on-call pastors offer encouragement and a listening ear to a population facing many significant challenges and spiritual questions. Members of the congregation also visit the farms to lead Bible studies with those workers who would like to participate in a small group focused on the Gospel (Weeks, 2013).

Congregations’ Increased Awareness of Needs

Throughout their ministry with SAWs, each congregation increased their awareness of SAWs’ true needs. These congregations underwent a process of understanding the social barriers face by SAWs. As Braun (2016) notes, “while a few church members had previous experience

connecting with workers[,] the more common response was: ‘How did I miss this?’” (para. 28). Niagara congregations had “missed” having a deep understanding of what SAWs really need. Even congregant members who had lived in the area for a while, never thought to engage with SAWs. Many individuals, such as Andres, had “trained her eyes not to see” the needs of SAWs (Braun, 2016, para. 28). However, once churches began their work in SAW ministry and thus encountered the challenges that SAWs face, they became committed to providing social service work to address these barriers (Di Caro, 2017).

Even so, congregations’ work in addressing these challenges for SAWs is an ongoing process. Whatever the need is, churches try to increase their awareness of it and then respond accordingly. Throughout this process, churches have come to train their eyes not only to see the needs, but also to educate themselves about those needs (Braun, 2016). As a result, congregations have moved towards responding to these needs. One individual from the Vineland community reflected on the medical care barriers that these migrant workers face. She noted, “It’s all about meeting their needs” (Di Caro, 2017, para. 28). Similarly, Rev. Arias from St. Alban’s recognizes that the amount of true needs is vast and so, “We try to fix that situation for them, trying to support them in those ways” (Forget, 2015, para. 9).

Responding to the Identified Needs of SAWs

Transportation Services

Congregations in the Niagara Region support seasonal agricultural workers by assisting them with a significant need—transportation. After realizing that SAWs are isolated because they do not have access to transportation, St. Alban’s began a bike program in the beginning of 2015 to give agricultural workers a means of transportation while in Canada. This program relies on the donation of bikes from members of the community. These donated bikes are either

dropped off at the church or a nearby location (Forget, 2015). Appeals for the donations of bicycles are advertised in local newspapers. These newspaper announcements, as one of the parishioners from St. Alban's reflects, have been very successful in expanding the program. He notes, "we called a press conference about six weeks ago [...] and articles showed up in the various papers from Niagara Falls to *The Hamilton Spectator*, and people started calling and dropping off bikes" (Forget, 2015, para. 18). Once the bikes are donated, volunteers refurbish them as needed. The basement of St. Alban's has now been transformed into a repair shop for the donated bicycles. Volunteer mechanics from the church work in this space to fix up any of the bikes that require it (Forget, 2015). The bikes also come "equipped with front and rear LED lights and reflective vests for the riders" (Moore, 2016, para. 4).

Many local churches now participate in the organization and management of the Bike for Farmworkers program. Michael Hahn, a member of St. Alban's and the main organizer of the program, stated that, "What is really neat, in my opinion, is that area churches are starting to cooperate together to assist these workers" (Moore, 2016, para. 3). Though initially started by St. Alban's, many other local churches have been able to pick up bikes for SAWs associated with their specific congregant or local communities.

One of the other churches participating in the program is St. Ann Roman Catholic Church in Fenwick. Upon learning that migrant workers in the area walked 5 kilometers to get to their church, Father Jim McLaughlin reached out to St. Alban's. Just days later, Father Jim and seven migrant workers went to pick up the bikes (Moore, 2016). Christ Church, too, regularly collects bikes for migrant farm workers to use (Millward, 2018). The "bike program allows the workers to come to [t]own to buy their groceries and meet the local people" (Millward, 2018, para. 27). Since bicycles are vital for these migrant workers, these local churches are engaging in

something very significant. As Hahn, a member of St. Alban's notes, "a bicycle makes a big difference" (Forget, 2015, para. 19).

Not only does this collaboration reduce the responsibility of one church, the added support also expands the number of seasonal agricultural workers who can receive a bike across the region of Niagara. The number of bike donations that have come from these partnering congregations has been unprecedented (Moore, 2016). Upon reflection, Michael Hahn remembers how small the program started and then—through these church partnerships—how quickly it "blew up" (Forget, 2015, para. 17). Through this kind of collaboration, the needs and challenges faced by an all-too-frequently invisible population are identified and responded to by congregations (Forget, 2015; Moore, 2016). As Rev. Arias recently noted, "We've given out close to 600 bikes since we started the program in 2015" (Millward, 2018, para. 25).

In addition to the Bike for Farmworkers program, area churches are also addressing transportation barriers through the provision of volunteer drivers. Some members of local congregations have been put into a pool of volunteers—individuals willing to drive a bus once a month to pick up the workers for Sunday services and other social events at the churches. St. Alban's, for instance, sends out a bus every Sunday night to pick up the workers for the weekly service (Moore, 2016). Based on limitations in distance, time, and finances, the bus makes only two stops, in Jordan and Vineland (Walter, 2018). Christ Church located in Niagara-on-the-Lake has become involved in similar work, and requests that volunteers step up to function as "drivers for a school bus that will drive to area farms to pick up workers and bring them to the church" (Zettel, 2017, para. 12).

Health Care Services

Local churches have also responded to the social barriers related to health care. Southridge Community Church, for example, has set up a free medical clinic at the church (Di Caro, 2017). Through a partnership with Quest Community Health Centre, medical volunteers come to the Southridge to set up accessible medical services—at a time and place that is convenient for the workers (Southridge Community Church, 2016). Churches like Southridge have partnered with Quest Community Health Centre in order to further increase the community’s capacity to provide primary health care services “to residents of the St. Catherine’s area and Niagara Region” (Quest CHC, 2017, para. 1).

The program director of Quest noticed many gaps in the social services provided to SAWs. Because of this, Quest CHC started to offer access to health care for SAWs through Sunday clinics in both Virgil and Vineland. Throughout the growing season (April through October), Quest volunteers and staff members set up clinics for migrant workers every Sunday at one of these two locations. At these clinics, translators are present as well as drivers who are available to take workers to any subsequent appointments or procedures they may need (Quest CHC, 2017).

Language Services

As churches began to work with SAWs, the barrier of language became increasingly apparent. According to Pearce (2018), “in recent years, the demographics of workers in the Niagara Region have shifted, such that now only 33% are native English speakers, while 67% speak Spanish as their first language” (p.1). Area churches have responded to this specific need in two ways. First, churches have established partnerships with one another to provide worship services as well as social service information to SAWs in Spanish.

For example, St. Alban's Anglican Church and Christ Church Anglican established a partnership to expand Spanish-language services provided throughout the local community. Originally, St. Alban's offered Spanish language worship services independent from Christ Church. In 2014, the first year of St. Alban's Spanish language services, approximately 20 SAWs attended. However, over the past four years, the number of workers attending these Sunday evening services grew—now, an average of 80-120 workers come each week (Millward, 2018). As a result, in the summer of 2017, Rev. Javier Arias from St. Alban's approached Rev. Dorothy Hewlett of Christ's Church to offer Spanish services as well. This step expanded Spanish-language services across the Niagara diocese (Millward, 2018). On September 10, 2017, Christ Church's parish council officially began its work as a partner of St. Alban's Spanish worship services (Zettel, 2017). On March 10, 2018, a second Spanish language service, located at Christ Church in Niagara-on-the-Lake, became available to seasonal migrant workers (Millward, 2018). Currently, with the support of St. Alban's and Christ Church two Spanish services are offered every Sunday evening, starting in the month of February and continuing until the month of August (St. Alban's Anglican Church, 2015). With the help of a grant from the Niagara diocese, St. Alban's has been trying to further its work of providing these Spanish worship services by replicating it at other Anglican churches. The hope is that other area churches will “operate as a satellite for many of St. Alban's programs [...]” (Zettel, 2017, para. 3).

Local congregations have also started to hold ESL classes for area SAWs. After working with SAWs for a few years, Immanuel United Reformed Church, Heritage Reformed Congregation of Jordan, and the Vineland Free Reformed Church started up weekly English classes for local SAWs. English classes (beginners, intermediate, and advanced) are offered

every Tuesday night at 7:30pm, starting in March and ending in November (Bout, n.d.). St. Alban's also participates in the provision of ESL classes for SAWs. St. Alban's donates a classroom space, school supplies, and volunteers to assist in a fully bilingual Spanish-English ESL course for the local workers (Pearce, 2018; Zettel, 2017).

Social Inclusion

Most notably, Niagara churches have become aware of SAWs need for social inclusion within the local community. Through her experience in SAW ministry, Hewlett, the leader of Christ Church Parish, has come to understand that this population experiences severe social isolation. Therefore, one pressing need is social inclusion. "That's where," she notes, "the churches can come in" (Zettel, 2017, para.7). Social inclusion, as these churches have begun to realize, goes beyond fun, friendship, and fellowship. Instead, social inclusion involves activities that acknowledge that the individual is, indeed, a member of the larger group. As many churches have noted, what SAWs long for most is a deep sense of belonging within the community where they work (Forget, 2015).

To further establish a sense of belonging among workers, local churches organize big social events for this population. Many of the local churches get involved with the Workers Welcome Concert, organized by the foundation of Niagara Workers Welcome, which occurs on the first Sunday of May (Keung, 2013). These churches support it in any way possible—through organization and preparation prior to the event, running the event, as well as the financial support to sustain this event every year (Weeks, 2013). By offering a building space or assisting in the entertainment plans for the concert, local congregations like Southridge further create a deep sense of belonging among SAWs in the Niagara Region (Rosts, 2017). As Jane Andres, the

organizer of the event notes, “Various churches contribute to the event, creating a purpose-filled community-minded event” (Weeks, 2013, para.8).

Throughout the process of understanding the true needs of SAWs, congregations have come to realize that acts of social inclusion include the recognition of individual rights. After becoming increasingly aware of the needs of SAWs, the pastor of St. Alban’s church asserts that, “it [is] very important to offer [s]ervices” to SAWs so that they can fulfill their rights within the community (Millward, 2018, para. 19). To promote the rights of SAWs, congregations in Niagara began the work of community organizing. Community organizing is “the practice of bringing people together to create systemic change in their community” (Salvatierra & Heltzel, 2014). These congregations “started to talk to community leaders and the mayor and other social service experts, asking ‘how can we be part of what’s already happening?’” (Southridge Community Church, 2014, Anchor Causes). This then led St. Alban’s Anglican Church to form relationships with newspapers, stores, and farm owners, to widen its capacity to support migrant workers and defend their rights as SAWs.

Participation in social inclusion efforts has made SAWs feel at home. Tim Arnold, the outreach coordinator at Southridge, describes the relational impact as “transform[ative]” (Southridge Community Church, 2014, Anchor Causes). Jane Andres, a local leader in the Vineland community, reflects on the power of social inclusion efforts within congregant communities, both parties are now dependent on each other (Di Caro, 2017). Therefore, over the years, local churches as well as their surrounding communities have become a second “home” or “family.” As one migrant worker from the Vineland community articulated, “Well, it’s never easy leaving home...especially when you have the young kids like I do... but being here ...at South Ridge outreach program ...you guys have been so wonderful to us. You’re making us feel

like we have a family here too. And we always feel like we are at home away from home” (Southridge Community Church, 2014). Another worker describes the feeling of social inclusion like this: “We are like one family...Jamaicans, Canadians...so we says no problems” (Southridge Community Church, 2016, Carribean Workers Program).

Although progress in this area can be noted, congregations continue to focus on inclusion (Millward, 2018). Churches such as Christ Church Anglican hope that increased contact between SAWs and the broader community will further the engagement of local members with SAWs (Zettel, 2017). Local congregations hope that their work moving towards social inclusion for SAWs will further “address [the] divide that exists between migrant workers and the community at large” (Zettel, 2017, para. 13).

Section 5: Evaluation of Services Provided by Christian Congregations

Like government funded settlement service entities, Christian congregations have both strengths and weaknesses as a social service provider. This section will evaluate the social services offered by congregations to seasonal agricultural workers in the Niagara Region. Though not an exhaustive exploration, this section describes the main benefits and limitations of services offered by Christian congregations.

Benefits

Commitment to Services and Service Recipients

One benefit of the services provided by Christian congregations is the high level of commitment that these churches have to social services and their recipients. Rooted in Gospel hope and justice, congregations exhibit radical participation in areas of social injustice (Littlefield & Opsahl, 2017). This theological motivation and understanding of the responsibility to provide social support led churches to offer services with intentionality (Janzen et al., 2016a; Reimer et al., 2016). Congregations in the Niagara Region provide a great example of this

commitment to social service. Area churches remain in conversation with social service leaders to further discern how they might continue to participate in social service work.

The social services offered by Christian congregations demonstrate a deep commitment to those receiving the services. The volunteers for these church social programs never lack the spirit to serve and care for individuals seeking assistance (Cnaan et al., 2004). As Janzen and colleagues (2016b) recognize, members of churches are considered to be more generous and devoted to those receiving social service support than the average service provider. Smidt et al. (2008) supports this finding, noting that congregant members' "commitment to social engagement lasts, on average, longer than that of [another] citizen" (as cited in Janzen et al., 2016b, p. 231). The intentionality of congregant members can also be noted in the flexibility of church leaders to assist immigrants. As Menjívar (2003) observes, "The pastors seemed to be 'on call' at all hours of the day" (p. 35-36). These congregant members distinctly show intentionality at the micro-level, everyday life of the migrant (Menjivar, 2000). In the Niagara Region, members of local churches have shown their commitment to SAWs by caring for the details of each person's life. As one migrant worker stated, "It's very tough for me because even this year I leave my son in the hospital for over two months...[the congregant members] all call always asking about my son" (Southridge Community Church, 2016, Caribbean Workers Program).

Distinctive Services

A second benefit of congregations is that churches play a distinct role in offering social services to migrants through their community-based assistance; relational, emotional, and spiritual support; and informality of service provision. Community-based assistance proves to be advantageous because it helps migrants find the social assistance they require. The breadth of local networks connected to Christian churches heightens their ability to support migrants during their stay in Canada. Connections to local services, resources, and leaders equip congregations to

help migrants navigate broader social structures (Menjívar, 2003). Using these networks, congregations can efficiently address the immediate and practical needs of migrants such as transportation, ESL programming, and material items (Ley, 2008).

There are many examples of church networks nurturing their social service initiatives. Some churches in Canada, as described by one Vancouver pastor function as, “walking yellow pages to [migrants]” (Ley, 2008, p. 2065). Niagara churches illustrate the benefits of this community-based assistance. Local networks allow congregations to meet the needs of SAWs in an efficient manner: connections with local newspapers equip congregations to provide bicycles for migrant workers facing transportation barriers, and ties to the local community give St. Alban’s church additional resources—bags of toiletries from the Beamsville Shoppers Drugmart—to pass along to the SAWs.

Christian congregations offer distinct relational, emotional, and spiritual support. The relational support of churches comes from their strong desire and capacities to provide a long-term presence and a deep sense of community (Janzen, Chapman, & Watson, 2012). This communal support comes from Christian congregations’ commitments to hospitality (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2014). Bramadat (2014) notes that—although assisting migrants requires a tremendous amount of work—churches are inspired to do this work as an extension of their religious conviction to welcome the stranger. Prompted by this expression, congregations feel called to respond and offer relational support (Bramadat, 2014). This kind of support then naturally emerges from within the Christian Church community (Janzen et al., 2012).

Congregations support immigrants by functioning as long-term community presences (Bramadat, 2014). Cnaan and Curtis (2013) note that one of the unique aspects of social services offered by “local religious congregations is their longevity” (p. 22). Ley (2008) argues that

congregations have the ability to establish longer-term relationships because they are free from the inflexibilities of regulations and bureaucracy. These long-term relationships extend to a long-term commitment to the smooth and successful transition of migrant populations throughout their time in Canada (Vineberg, 2012). Congregations within the Niagara Region maintain this long-term community presence to area SAWs. For example, Southridge Community Church began its work of long-term relational support to SAWs in 2012 and now two-thirds of the congregation continues to maintain lasting relationships with these local migrant workers (Southridge Community Church, 2016).

Because it remains central to the Christian faith, establishing a sense of deep community for local individuals is a key component of the social services offered by Christian congregations (Menjívar, 2003). As one congregant member in Menjívar's (2003) study expressed, "I see our work as being truly, fundamentally community-oriented; we have to encourage and to create community" (p. 34). Through fellowship and friendship, Christian congregations in particular reach out to migrants who often have a minimal or fragmented sense of community (Ley, 2008). Churches often create this communal feeling through home cooked meals, social activities, and authentic friendships. Congregations offer a "home away from home" as well as "a safe place to grow and feel accepted" (Ley, 2008, p. 2063). As a result, many migrants gain an immediate sense of community (The Angus Reid Institute, 2018). In a recent report by the Angus Reid Institute (2018), immigrants find this deep sense of community within a congregation "not even associated with their own religion" (para. 11).

Recognizing SAWs' experiences of social exclusion, Christian congregations in the Niagara Region have responded by establishing a sense of community for local migrant workers. Reverend Hewlett from Christ Church comments on the significant role local churches play in

simply building relationships with the workers. Through cricket matches, warm meals, excursion trips, and visits to the farms themselves, the congregations in the Niagara Region have formed and continue to maintain a deep sense of community for the area SAWs. Thus, some congregations in Canada are actively promoting a deep sense of community for migrant populations.

Congregations possess a unique ability to reach migrants through the provision of emotional support. Within the context of congregations, “caring and counseling are important services on offer from church leaders and, where necessary and accessible, onward referral takes place” (Ley, 2008, p. 2065). Many marginalized populations identify faith congregations as “hubs of trust and island[s] of peace” throughout emotional difficulty (Cnaan et al., 2004). In his examination of Catholic and Evangelical congregations that provide social support, Mejivar (2003), too, notes that congregant members and church leaders often function as counselors and informal confidantes to immigrants experiencing emotional challenges. Menjívar (2003) further identifies local congregations as “perhaps one of the most supportive and welcoming institutions for [m]igrants, particularly for those who face extremely difficult circumstances” (p. 25). Niagara congregations specifically illustrate this reality: for example, pastors and leaders of congregations such as Cornerstone Community Church function as “on call” counselors to the area SAWs.

Through sharing in acts of religious expression and guidance, Christian congregations also offer unique spiritual support to immigrants during their settlement experience. Although affiliation with world religions is becoming increasingly balanced in representation, the majority of Canada’s immigrants (47%) continue to identify as Christian (Statistics Canada, 2011). Upon arrival, most Christian migrants first turn to their faith community for needed spiritual support

(Loewen & Friesen, 2009). Christian congregations then welcome these migrants by offering familiar religious services and theologies (Bramadat, 2014). Congregations may also provide immigrants with a range of commonly known religious activities such as Bible studies and Sunday school education classes (Janzen et al., 2012).

Even if immigrants do not have specific ties with a local Christian community, they often still seek out this spiritual support because they identify with the larger transnational Christian tradition (Bramadat & Seljak, 2008). Whether the migrant knows of these local Christian churches or not, these congregations continue to provide religious familiarity to migrants (Hirschman, 2004; The Angus Reid Institute, 2018). This trend holds true for Christian congregations in the Niagara Region that continue to extend this religious familiarity to area SAWs. Christ Anglican Church, for example, holds Spanish services every Saturday night as a way to meet the spiritual needs of local SAWs. Alicia Dela Cruz of Mexico attends these services even though she identifies as Catholic. Christ's Church is the closest Christian church to the farm where she has worked for the past 16 years. Though it is a different denomination, Alicia is grateful for this service (Walter, 2018). "It's good the service is being held nearby," she shares (Walter, 2018, para. 19).

Not only do churches provide various social services to benefit immigrants, but they also lead immigrants to find religious meaning amidst the challenges they face while in Canada (Han, 2011; Han, 2009). Primarily, these faith communities move the migrant population to hope rooted in faith (Ley, 2008). Congregations thereby provide psychological comfort for immigrants in the face of difficulty by providing an anchor amidst much adaptation and change (Menjívar, 2003; Hirschman, 2004). As one Catholic immigrant expressed, "[our] faith is very important because, without it, it's very difficult to survive here... One finds many barriers in this country,

enormous barriers...the language, customs, legal barriers. So our faith keeps us going. The church helps us get through all this” (Menjívar, 2003, p. 28). Through this faith commitment, SAWs receive the spiritual support needed from local Christian congregations. For instance, the Heritage Reformed Congregation of Jordan and the Vineland Free Reformed Church offer weekly Bible studies and worship services for area SAWs (Bout, n.d.). These spiritual support services are unique to church institutions.

The informality of social service provision is also unique to Christian congregations. Though these services may be non-structured and voluntary, churches provide necessary social services to marginalized populations, including immigrants (Tsang, 2015). Reimer et al. (2016) note that this form of aid holds advantages when assisting migrants. For one, churches are able to adapt to the changing circumstances of immigrants. The grassroots ministry of Christian congregations in an area presents a distinctly organic response (Bramadat, 2014). Because of the informality of these services, congregations often can adapt by incorporating newly identified needs in the planning of services (George, 2002). As one congregant member noted, “We tend to respond to situations and needs” (Bramadat, 2014, p. 397). Reimer and colleagues support this idea, noting that, “church support for [migrants] tends to be ad hoc, contextual, and malleable” (p. 503). This kind of informal support—that adapts to the needs of the social service recipients—is a feature of the social service work that congregations give to SAWs in the Niagara Region. As illustrated in section 4, local congregations continue to modify their services and programs in order to address the true needs of area SAWs.

Most importantly, congregations do not operate in the formal ways that other social service bodies do, and informal arrangements are often advantageous to migrant populations. Informal services contrast with formal settlement agencies, which have “an increasingly risk-

averse and bureaucratized context shaped by CIC regulations” (Bramadat, 2014, p. 918). These informal services sometimes fill in the gaps left by formal service agencies (Mukhtar et al., 2016). Menjívar (2003) finds that, in the United States, local churches provide migrants with “the assistance and protection that the [g]overnment has refused to extend them” (p. 24). Formal service providers have to follow eligibility requirements outlined for immigrant programs and services (George, 2002; Cnaan et al., 2004). Congregations, on the other hand, remain outside the bureaucracy of settlement service agencies (Mulholland, 2017, p. 24) and thus are not tied down to the program restrictions that come from a funding relationship with the government (Ley, 2008). Reimer et al. (2016) discuss the benefits of this. They write, “the informal nature of churches, with their lack of structure, volunteer base, and localism allow them to be easily deployed” (p. 504). Since congregations do not depend on funding, staff, or restricted hours of operation to respond to issues, these churches can mobilize freely around the needs of migrants. In the Niagara Region, for example, Christian congregations have been able to respond efficiently to the transportation needs of SAWs because congregant members showed an abundance of interest in the Bike for Farmworkers program.

Breadth of Services

A third benefit of congregations as social service providers is that they offer a breadth of services to disadvantaged populations in Canada such as SAWs (Bramadat, 2014). Chaves and Wineburg (2010) support this notion, noting that churches respond in a variety of ways to address the needs of a specific social group. In particular, Christian congregations reach migrants through many different programs and informal supports (Madison & McGadney, 2000). A recent report by the Angus Reid Institute (2018) notes that religious congregations assisted migrants significantly by providing material support, functioning as a community and social network, and

creating a spiritual home for individuals during their stay in Canada. Christian congregations in the Niagara Region illustrate this finding, as area churches continue to show the specific benefit of far-reaching and diverse forms of support to migrants such as SAWs. Not only do the churches provide donations of bikes, facility space, and clothing, they also establish communities, mobilize around the promotion of migrant rights, provide emotional support, and hold worship services for local SAWs. The scope of this work is unlike any other. The breadth of this work holds the potential to meet a range of needs of marginalized populations such as SAWs as well as others. Although congregations cannot replace government social services, no government social service work can replace the breadth and contribution of congregations' social service work (Cnaan & Curtis, 2013).

Limitations

Many Acts of Charity, Few Acts of Justice

As many scholars and theologians have noted, Christian congregations primarily perform acts of charity instead of acts of justice, which limits the ways in which churches offer social service support to marginalized populations. In his article entitled *Justice, Not Charity: Social Work Through the Eyes of Faith*, Wolterstorff (2006) makes a distinction between “faith-filled justice activity [and] the Christian duty of charity” (Janzen et al., 2016b, p. 231). The distinction is this: acts of charity address human needs, while acts of justice address the root causes of human needs present in unjust systems and institutions (Wolterstorff, 2006). With this distinction in mind, Thacker (2015) argues that the bulk of social services that congregations offer continue to resemble small-scale acts of charity. In a recent report from the Angus Reid Institute (2018), when asked about the role that congregations played in their integration process in Canada, half of the migrants interviewed spoke about the material assistance they received from churches. As a result, it can be argued that congregations' social services work, “fail[s] to address the wider

social issues that perpetuate the cause of [the marginalized populations'] distress" (Taylor, 2003 as cited in Thacker, 2015, p. 113).

There are several barriers that prevent Christian congregations and individual congregant members from engaging in acts of justice. In Janzen and colleagues (2016b) survey work, three main themes presented themselves. Complexity, lack of time, and lack of awareness all prevent congregations and congregant members from participating in acts of justice. Congregations identify the complexity of justice work as a barrier to furthering their acts of justice as a social service provider. The study from Janzen et al. (2016b) reveals that 27% of the congregant members studied agreed with the following statement "justice seems so complex, it's hard to know what to do" (p. 240).

Lack of time, as noted by Janzen and colleagues (2016b), was another barrier to a heightened participation in justice work among congregant members. On one level, congregant members note that their busy life styles limit the amount of time and energy that they have to help others. On a secondary level, congregant members state that they do not have time because their church is involved in other activities—ministries tailored specifically to its members (Janzen et al., 2016b). In this way, congregations are often more interested in the development of personal faith and Christian discipleship practices than the development of justice work and fair public policy. Janzen and colleagues (2016b) argue that "this lower ordering of justice relative to other aspects of Christian faith seems to impact action" (p. 242) which, in turn, reduces the full engagement of congregations as social service providers (Delehanty, 2016).

Lack of awareness also limits the acts of justice that congregations take as social service providers. In Janzen and colleagues (2016b) study, congregant members who identified lack of awareness as an obstacle to justice engagement agreed with the following statement "I'm not

very exposed to people who experience injustice” (30%). As one participant noted, “we do not hear much about specific needs for justice...[we] just do not know enough” (Janzen et al., 2016b, p. 240). This lack of awareness or empathy for diverse populations—those who often face social injustices—stems from a general socioeconomic privilege and homogeneity (Gilbreath, 2006). This lack of awareness on social justice issues functions as an obstacle for congregations in increasing their acts of justice and further serving marginalized populations (George & Toyama-Szeto, 2015).

As noted by Delehanty (2016), the “majority of [c]hurches thus engage in charitable and civic activities but stop short of seeking change to the underlying structural causes of socioeconomic and racial disparities” (p. 42). Congregations in the Niagara Region mirror this trend to an extent. A large amount of the social service support that congregations offer to SAWs in the area can be categorically understood as acts of charity. Once the workers come to the area, local Christian churches welcome them with packages of clothing and toiletry for their stay in the community. These “welcome packages” are intended to meet the basic needs of the workers. Programs such as the drop-in health clinics, the Workers Welcome concert, and Bikes for Farmworkers function in the same manner, providing accessible health care, hospitable spaces at the beginning of the season, and bicycles to meet the social barriers facing SAWs. Though these social services do meet the needs of SAWs, the unjust systems and institutions—the root causes of these needs—are left untouched.

Inadequate Resources

As a social service provider, congregations often do not have the resources needed to serve the populations that they would like to assist. Since Christian churches are not formally considered a “social service entity or agency,” they have minimal resources available to do social service work (Cnaan et al., 2004). These inadequate resources significantly limit the ways in

which congregations can function as social service providers. Todd and Rufa (2013) note that congregations have minimal justice mobilization resources such as time, energy, money, knowledge, and leadership. These specific resources are required in order to respond to the systemic challenges facing marginalized populations. Because churches lack these resources, it can be noted that congregations have a limited capacity to engage in social justice mobilization work—the kind of social service needed for effective structural change (Janzen et al., 2016b).

The inexperienced, untrained and limited number of church staff members further inhibits congregations' abilities to appropriately serve those needing social services. Unlike formal social service organizations, congregations often do not have professionals to perform the specific tasks of social service work as it relates to a particular group (Cnaan et al., 2004). As a result, many of the individuals who engage in social service work within churches do not have knowledge of the barriers facing migrant workers and thus they remain unaware of what the target population needs and how the church can accordingly respond (Todd & Allen, 2011). As previously noted in section 4, the limited knowledge that staff members had about the various needs facing SAWs negatively affected their ability to assist as a social service entity. Because these volunteers and staff members were unaware of the actual social barriers experienced by SAWs, it took time for them to gain understanding of what they needed (Cnaan et al., 2004). As a result, an extended period of time passed when the needs of SAWs were not being met.

Additionally, even when staff or volunteers from congregations are aware of the needs, these needs remain greater than their capabilities to address them (Cnaan et al., 2004). The limited capabilities present in a congregation's staff can be seen on two levels. On one level, congregational staff "often have limited experience in external [f]undraising, grant proposal writing, or formal program development and evaluation" (Cnaan et al., 2004, p. 61). When no

program evaluation takes place, the social service provider gives minimal thought or discussion to the success or problems with its current programs. As a result, programs may remain inefficient, irrelevant, unrealistic, and substandard. On another level, the small amount of staffing tends to have detrimental effects on the quality of the social services provided by Christian congregations. Since the majority of churches rely on volunteers who have a range of other commitments, there is a limited amount of time and energy that can be put into a congregation's social services (Cnaan et al., 2004; Janzen et al., 2016b).

Finally, the limited financial resources of congregations often prove inadequate for the social service work that needs to be done. As stated by Cnaan and colleagues (2004), "budget size is an important variable in explaining the scope of social services involvement" (p. 58). These authors found that over half of the congregations that they studied operate out of an annual budget of less than \$100,000. Within these operating budgets, congregations utilize funds primarily for spiritual programs for congregant members (Bible studies, worship services, etc.) and building maintenance (Cnaan et al., 2004). The funding for social service work comes after those priorities. Chaves and Eagle (2016) note that, "the median congregation involved in social services spent [only] \$1500 per year directly on [social service] programs" (p. 1). Given this reality and that the majority of congregations are struggling financially, there remains a continual financial limit on the social service programs and support that congregations can offer (Cnaan et al., 2004).

Underlying Purpose of Evangelism

Another limitation of congregations as social service providers is that the underlying reason some congregations participate in social service work simply is to evangelize to a broader population. The goal of evangelism is one of the many "issues related to running social programs in congregational settings" (Cnaan et al., 2004, p. 46). Instead of being solely committed to the

task of social justice and taking on a “no strings attached approach”, some congregations may use social services as a means of evangelism or boosting membership (Reimer et al., 2016, p. 508; Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2014). This underlying purpose may turn individuals away from receiving social services as well as inhibit the social service programs that congregations offer marginalized populations. As Janzen and colleagues (2016b) state, “[the] spiritual prioritizing of nurturing individuals faith [comes] at the expense of encouraging robust engagement with social issues” (p. 232). Additionally, as an institution that focuses on spiritual support and evangelism, congregations may turn people away because they want to preserve their reputation as a faith community or religious group (Cnaan et al., 2004). Though it is not documented, this may be the case for SAWs in the Niagara Region. As a result, SAWs in the area may not be receiving the social services they need because congregations may have the goal of evangelism in mind.

Section 6: Recommendations

Areas for Growth: Congregations as Service Providers

As providers of social services, congregations have specific areas of growth moving forward. Section 5 identified some of the limitations of congregations in providing social support to marginalized populations, in particular SAWs. In this chapter, I have identified three main areas of growth for congregations as they continue to engage in social service work. These three areas are deeply connected to the limitations of congregations supporting SAWs that have been recognized by both scholars and researchers alike. Additionally, this section includes two areas in which the social services provided by congregations to SAWs can be further supported.

Increasing Congregations’ Commitment to Acts of Justice

In her work entitled *Systems over Service: Changing Systems of Inequality through Congregational Political Engagement*, Sager (2018) notes that although there are congregant members who do not wish to challenge systemic inequality, acts of justice cannot be considered

optional to a congregation, they must be considered central to their mandate. As Kimber (2001) writes, “the need for an aggressive and committed Christian social activism cannot be an elective activity for the church—it must be a compulsory commitment for the entire congregation as an approach to ministry” (p. 38). For some congregations, commitments to social justice may be unfamiliar, as they do not see acts of social justice as a top priority for Christians (Janzen et al., 2016b). Other congregations may just need to highlight social justice more (Jones, 2015). By shifting understandings of what churches are called to do in this world, congregations as service providers may improve their ability to contribute to systemic change.

To shift these understandings and thereby heighten congregations’ commitments to acts of social justice, Beyerlein and Hipp (2006) offer a few strategies for churches to implement. First, congregant leaders and members alike can “stress the importance of reaching out to those who are in need” during prayers, conversations, liturgies, and sermons (p. 99). This would challenge the current reality wherein “most congregations dissociate sustained interrogation of inequality at the societal level from religious activities and practices” (Delehanty, 2016, p. 42). Second, congregations can bring in speakers from social service agencies or the political arena to increase broader discussions of current systemic inequalities facing marginalized populations as well as potential responsive acts of justice in the community. Through these speakers, a systemic understanding of justice may then “lead some to be critical of such structures and work for systemic change—an approach typified in the Christian tradition by such figures as Wilberforce and King” (Janzen et al., 2016b, p. 241).

Third, congregations can cultivate social justice skills within the church building itself, and transfer these skills outside of the church context to the civic sphere. Beyerlein and Hipp (2006) provide a few simple tasks to cultivate these skills among congregants. These tasks

include writing letters to political leaders and community organizations, organizing and planning meetings that focus on current issues of injustice, giving presentations to other churches to heighten awareness, as well as attending city hall meetings where decisions are made.

Heightened Role in Advocacy Work

As noted extensively in the research, advocacy remains one area of growth for Christian congregations providing social services to SAWs. According to a Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Center (2015) report, one way in which Christian churches can “be the Church” and “do the work of the Church” is by participating in activities such as “local initiatives or the nation-wide work of advocacy” (p. 1). As a body of believers called to engage in social justice work, congregations must give voice to issues that are in need of attention (Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Center, 2015). One such issue is the situation facing migrants in Canada. KAIROS Canada (2012) specifically identified three migrant populations that congregations should focus their advocacy efforts on, including SAWs.

A heightened role in advocacy work can lead congregations to contribute to systemic change. According to Preisbisch (2003), for systemic change to take place, a group of individuals needs to stand up, speak, and act. Churches, in particular, hold the potential to establish powerful and innovative practices to engage in advocacy work to address the shortcomings of policies (Flecker, 2010). Additionally, as congregations function as advocates for this migrant population, they will “imagin[e] and forg[e] a more inclusive polity” (Nagel & Ehrkamp, 2016, p. 1041) and thus influence members of both the public and the government. Griffith (2003) notes that if congregations further their lobbying activities, the government will feel the pressure to address the burdens that these migrant workers face by establishing fair labour practices and policies. Other scholars such as McGrew (2012) argue that the advocacy efforts of congregations will also impact members of the broader public sphere. The support and public voice of

congregations around policy and social justice issues has the potential to “have considerable local influence” (p.1). As a result, the increased participation of congregations in advocacy can benefit migrant workers in Canada (Menjívar, 2003). Preisbisch (2003) notes that the role of churches in advocating for fair labour laws has, in large part, proven to be beneficial to SAWs. Yet, more work needs to be done. SAWs continue to face social barriers and social exclusion. Therefore, local congregations must heighten their role in advocacy work as a way to directly address the true needs of SAWs in Canada.

Initial and Ongoing Assessment of Community Needs

Another area of growth for congregations as service providers is their assessment of community needs for marginalized populations. Instead of waiting to understand the true needs of the target population once social services are underway, congregations could perform initial and ongoing assessments of needs. Mulder (2018) argues that the immediate and progressive assessment of community needs will benefit both parties. Churches will increase their awareness of those living around them and what those individuals need, while the target populations will receive more effective, need-based assistance (Jones, 2015).

To identify the initial and ongoing needs of the target population, congregations must first partake in rigorous research and exploration of these needs. According to Jones (2015), congregations must first research the root cause of the issue that the target population is facing. For congregations serving SAWs, for example, congregations must perform extensive research on the impact of racism and neoliberalism within the TFWP. With this initial knowledge in mind, congregations will be able to better understand the social situation of the target population and what will be helpful to that group moving forward (UC Davis, 2010). Additionally, it is

important for congregations to continually ask questions such as “what types of marginalization is this community experiencing?” (UC Davis, 2010, p.10). It is essential that churches maintain the ongoing exploration of needs so that congregations can adjust their social services as necessary.

In conjunction with document and data research analysis, congregations could also engage in primary research, talking with the target population themselves. UC Davis (2010) highlights the importance of ongoing inclusion of community perspectives because the population knows about their own situation and needs better than anyone else. In order to do this work, congregations must have intentional conversations with the members of the target population, listening to and asking thoughtful questions about the population’s true needs (Jones, 2015). Throughout the entire process of initial and ongoing assessment of community needs, congregations will be better equipped to develop a more effective response to the issues at hand and therefore have a meaningful impact on the population that they serve (UC Davis, 2010; Mulder, 2018).

Further Support for Christian Congregations

Given the significant role that Christian congregations play within the broader settlement landscape, it is important that churches be better equipped to do this social service work, particularly as it relates to SAWs. Though congregations are just one part of the broader social service community, it is evident that the work of churches remains unrecognized. It is important for the social support offered by congregations to be acknowledged by all stakeholders within settlement and general social services, so that the work of congregations may truly flourish and serve SAWs in their communities (Bramadat, 2014). In order for these services to be

strengthened and further supported, congregations could actively pursue specialized training for staff members as well as establish partnerships with other social service agencies.

Specialized Training Workshops for Congregant Members

Since congregant members are often inexperienced with—or ignorant of—social services, systems, and marginalized populations, there is a need for training for these individuals as they engage in social service work. For congregations serving migrants, these training workshops must be specially tailored towards this specific niche of social support and ministry (Janzen et al., 2016a). These training workshops will further support the social service work that congregations currently offer and thus churches will be increasingly equipped to participate in their settlement and integration ministry (Bramadat, 2014). Since these workshops will be educational, congregant members will increasingly understand and consider their tendencies to exclude and hold on to prejudices (Ehrkamp & Nagel, 2014). Congregant members will also become more aware of the practices of racialization and how racism permeates immigration policy. As a result, the work of congregations will become increasingly critical and reflective of the policies that affect populations, such as SAWs.

Trainings that focuses on immigration policy, social barriers, anti-oppression, and anti-racism will lead congregations to grapple with the challenges of various migrants, including SAWs. Through these workshops, congregations will begin to understand—early on—the true needs of the target population (George, 2002). Once this understanding has been established, training also has the potential to enhance the empathic responses and relational presence that congregations already possess as social service providers.

Training workshops will also make policy and legislation more understandable for congregant members. In Janzen and colleagues' (2016b) study highlights, many congregant members find it difficult to participate in social service work because they do not have a robust understanding of social issues, policies, or the language often used to describe the two. Training workshops will likely make social service activities such as community organizing more accessible to local congregations (Slessarev-Jamir, 2004). Finally, training will enhance the work of congregations as a social service provider by decreasing the dependence that lay members have on their leadership staff. The services that congregations offer will then become more effective, as laity will no longer depend upon the direction of the pastoral staff (Slessarev-Jamir, 2004).

Partnerships With Social Service Agencies

Though “the idea of sharing a ministry or program delivery with an outside or non-religious organization is far less common,” partnership with outside social service providers will enrich the work of congregations as they serve migrant populations (Cnaan et al., 2004, p. 60; Bramadat, 2014). Such partnerships will enhance and expand the support that congregations give to migrants such as SAWs. There would also be a significant increase in resources. As Mulder (2018) notes, even a highly committed church with good resources cannot do all this work alone. Instead, congregations need social service partners (such as government-funded agencies) to provide them with the additional network and resource base necessary to meet the needs of migrant populations (Vineberg, 2012). This push toward cross-sectoral partnerships will also lead both parties to a deeper understanding of current immigration legislation and the specific

needs of migrants (Janzen et al., 2015). Additionally, these partnerships will advance congregations' social service work, as they will work closely with professionals in the field.

Though congregations in the Niagara Region have established partnerships—as illustrated in the delivery of health care services to SAWs, there is an increasing need for other congregations serving SAWs to develop such partnerships. Since SAWs face numerous social barriers, suffer from material needs, and even endure violations of their human rights, strong networks are needed to construct a powerful base able to formulate a broad response to unfair policies (Slessarey-Jamir, 2004). Although most congregations carry out their social ministries and services on their own, this does not have to be the case (Cnaan et al., 2004). Instead, partnerships with social service agencies could be formed and the efforts of congregations to provide services to migrants, such as SAWs, could expand in profound ways (Janzen et al., 2016a).

Conclusion

Through their work with SAWs, Christian congregations in the Niagara Region have responded to the identified needs of this population by providing social services in areas such as health care, transportation, and language. When evaluating the work of congregations as a social service provider, it is important to recognize the benefits and limitations of this work in serving the needs of area SAWs. Although services offered by congregations feature commitment, distinctiveness, and breadth of services, these services remain limited in their capacity for acts of justice, a wide resource base, and work that extends beyond the goal of evangelism. Since government funded settlement services in Ontario do not provide services to area SAWs, local congregations in Niagara must grow in their social service work to SAWs, filling in this

significant social service gap. In doing so, congregations must increase their commitment to acts of justice; heighten their role in advocacy efforts; and maintain initial and ongoing assessments of the needs of SAWs. As congregations continue to grow in these areas, further support must continue to be extended to them. The developments of specialized training workshops for congregant members as well as an increase in congregation-social service agency partnership in the area are two tangible ways of furthering this support. Since SAWs do not receive social support from the government during their stay in Canada, it is essential that the work of congregations in the Niagara Region expand the support they provide to SAWs in the years to come.

Appendix

Terminology

- *Congregation*: “A group of Christians who regularly gather together at a designated location to worship, promote religious beliefs, and minister to each other as well as others” (Tyndale Intercultural Ministries Centre, p. 22).
- *Migrant worker/ temporary foreign worker*: refers to an individual who comes to Canada through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program.
 - Elgersma (2007) describes this term as: “a foreign national engaged in work activity who is authorized, with the appropriate documentation, to enter and to remain in Canada for a limited period” (p. 1).
- *Seasonal agricultural worker (SAW)*: an individual employed under the SAWP. These workers must be hired from the SAWP participating countries for a maximum period of 8 months, between January 1 and December 15, to do primary agricultural work in Canada (Government of Canada, 2017).

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