EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONS, EXPERIENCES, AND CONTRIBUTIONS OF

YOUNG PEOPLE MOVING INTO RURAL NOVA SCOTIA

by

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Abstract

The presence or absence of young people in a rural place is one indicator of the overall state of the community. Many rural communities in Canada are experiencing high rates of out-migration of people under 30, causing concern for communities and policy makers. This research explored the motivations, experiences, and contributions of young people who are countering the trend of youth out-migration and rural population decline by moving into rural communities in Nova Scotia. Two case studies were used to gain insight into experiences across rural Nova Scotia: Maitland, East Hants County; and Liverpool, Region of Queens Municipality. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with key informants and young in- and return migrants, respectively. This study adds to the understanding of youth and rural migration, as well as connections between migration, young people, and community well-being. Quality of life, social capital and the importance of stable employment were key elements influencing the motivations and experiences of in-migrants. Returnees' motivations and experiences were shaped by the idea of home. Young in-migrants and returnees were perceived by key informants and by themselves as adding to the sustainability, resiliency, prosperity, and vibrancy of these rural places. Their presence was recognized as critical to the future of the community.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Problem Statement

Having strong and vibrant rural communities is critical to the sustainability of Nova Scotia's economy, environment, and culture (Bruce, Lister, & Ellis, 2005; Harling-Stalker & Phyne, 2014), especially as 43% of its population lives in rural areas (Statistics Canada, 2011). Changes in many rural communities in the province indicate decline, as demonstrated by high rural unemployment rates, higher percentages of elderly populations and lower numbers of youth, and closing schools. These trends are seen as serious threats to the region. A common theme in the literature on rural communities is the out-migration of youth (Drozdzewski, 2008; Dupuy, Mayer, & Morissette, 2000a; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Gibson, 2008). While there is migration in other age groups, it is not to the same scale. Youth are of particular interest as the rapid life changes and decisions they face, combined with technological and economic factors, make them particularly mobile (Rérat, 2013). The migration patterns and characteristics of youth are considered "an indicator of the state of rural areas and a key factor in rural development" (Rothwell, Bollman, Tremblay, & Marshall, 2002b, p.1). The permanent or long-term loss of young people to a region represents major losses in current and future community well-being. This out-migration contributes to a cycle of community decline through impacts such as labour pool shortages, the loss of services, changes to infrastructure needs to accommodate the increased proportion of elderly people, and negative attitudes both within and towards rural communities (Corbett, 2007). It is therefore understandable that rural youth out-migration presents "a source of anxiety" for rural community members and policy makers (Gabriel, 2002, p. 209).

While the out-migration of young people is an issue that has both historical roots and contemporary implications, a focus on out-migration does not paint the whole picture of rural youth migration nor of the potential connections between young people and community well-being. In reality, there *are* some young people moving into rural communities in Nova Scotia, and while there is *some* understanding of their potential motivations (e.g. Bijker, Haartsen, & Strijker, 2012; Dupuy et al., 2000; Rérat, 2013), less is known about their experiences in these places. Similarly, while it is commonly understood that in-migration can add to the economic development of rural communities (Kalantaridis, 2010; Stockdale, 2006), a better understanding of a broader range of contributions of new young people across the rural landscape could be used to more effectively leverage existing and future capital.

This study, through an appreciative lens, explored the motivations and experiences of young people who recently moved into or returned to rural communities in Nova Scotia. Interviews and focus groups with key informants and young people were conducted in two rural communities to gain a deeper understanding of these motivations and experiences and also how young people are seen and see themselves as contributors to their communities. Overall, this research adds to the understanding of youth and rural migration, as well as connections between migration, young people, and community well-being.

This chapter provides an introduction to the thesis. First, the research objectives are presented. Next, background to youth migration in the Nova Scotian context is provided. Then, the two case study communities that are the focus of this thesis research are described. Finally, the format of the rest of the thesis is outlined.

1.2 Research Objectives

This research was guided by two primary research objectives.

1. Explore, through an appreciative lens, the motivations and experiences of young in-migrants (aged 20-29) in rural Nova Scotia.

    o *Why have some young people returned or moved into rural communities in Nova Scotia?*
    o *What have been the experiences of these young people in settling in, fostering relationships, and making a livelihood?*

2. Explore connections between youth in-migration and components of community well-being.

    o *How do young people see themselves as contributing to the communities they have moved or returned to?*
    o *How are young people viewed as contributing?*

1.3 Background

1.3.1 Nova Scotia Context

Nova Scotia is one of the most rural provinces in Canada, with 43% of its population living outside of an urban area (Statistics Canada, 2011). Its total population was 942,700 as of July 1, 2014, down from 942,900 in 2013 (Statistics Canada, 2014b). In 2014, a report was released detailing the

challenges and opportunities facing the province as well as goals and game changers essential for turning around the Nova Scotia economy. Now or Never: An Urgent Call to Action for Nova Scotians, known more commonly as the One Nova Scotia Report or the Ivany Report, called attention to key demographic and economic issues such as low economic growth, an aging population, and the out-migration of young people (One Nova Scotia, 2014). Concern around these demographic trends has been catalytic in igniting a number of province-wide and local actions, such as the recent School Review Process, which prompted the Nova Scotia Small Schools Initiative to work with several communities to try to save their small rural schools (Bennett, 2013). Population projections show an overall population decrease, as well as significant decreases in the labour force in coming decades (Canmac Economic Ltd., 2006; One Nova Scotia, 2014). This labour force shrinkage is linked with Nova Scotia's aging population and is exacerbated by youth out-migration. The importance of retaining and attracting young people is acknowledged in the public sphere. According to the Ivany Report, "when [young people] leave, to a serious extent, they take the future of their communities with them" (One Nova Scotia, 2014, p. 23). Immigration, in addition to retention of young people, is seen as essential to solving these challenges; however, due to the low economic growth in the region and high youth unemployment rates (Dupuy et al., 2000a), these demographic groups are being attracted to career opportunities in the rest of Canada (One Nova Scotia, 2014).

These trends may add to a cycle of rural decline, contributing to various other challenges such as a lack of succession plans for businesses, reductions in rural services, and negative attitudes about opportunities in rural places (Bruce, 2007). While these trends will affect all of Nova Scotia, rural areas are expected to be more negatively impacted than more urban areas such as Halifax (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006, One Nova Scotia, 2014; Savoie, 2010). It is within this context that rural youth in-migration was explored.

1.3.2 Youth Migration in Nova Scotia: Historical Context

A decline in the rural population has impacts on a variety of scales. All levels of government are faced with challenges due to the combined trends of rural decline and urbanization (Bruce, 2007). Rural municipalities are faced with a lower tax base and therefore are less able to provide quality services. At the provincial level, problems arise when making decisions about healthcare and education funding and infrastructure (e.g. the Nova Scotia school review process). Finally, at the

federal level, trade-offs have to be made between cost effectiveness and equity of service provision (Bruce, 2007). There are also social implications at the household and community levels for those left behind by out-migration (Harling-Stalker & Phyne, 2014; Stockdale, 2004). For example, in their study of out-migration in the Strait Region of Nova Scotia, Harling-Stalker and Phyne (2014), found impacts of out-migration on various 'community support structures', including healthcare, education, and volunteerism. Fewer volunteers, shifting healthcare requirements, and school consolidation and closure were just some of the effects explored in their research.

Rural population decline is not a new concern for Canada as a whole (Rothwell et al., 2002b) or for Nova Scotia specifically (Bollman, Beshiri, & Clemenson, 2007a; Brookes, 1975; Thornton, 1984). Out-migration of youth and of the rural population in general has been of concern in Nova Scotia for over 100 years. A mass exodus, extending from 1860-1920, was characterized by large-scale out-migration from rural areas into larger urban centres in Canada and subsequently on to the United States (Brookes, 1975; Thornton, 1984). Job opportunities and skills were cited as major predictors of individual migration patterns and the 'restlessness' of young people was a common theme of public discourse (Brookes, 1975). Over the period from 1966 to 1996, the Atlantic Provinces experienced relatively low migration rates due to minimal rates of both in and out migration (Rothwell et al., 2002b). When analyzed based on age, however, the story is somewhat different. During this same period, youth were the most mobile and the 20-24 year old group showed the highest rates of out-migration (Rothwell, Bollman, Tremblay, & Marshall, 2002a). These were followed by relatively higher in-migration rates of individuals 25-29 (Rothwell et al., 2002a), but these were not enough to make up for the out-migration of the younger cohort. A closer analysis of youth migration revealed a 'rural youth exodus' in this same period, with large numbers of rural youth leaving rural areas and not returning (Tremblay, 2001). This exodus was most pronounced in Atlantic Canada and was paired with stable urban youth populations, pointing to high levels of youth lost through inter-provincial migration (Tremblay, 2001).

Over the last ninety years, out-migration of young people has continued as a challenge for rural communities (e.g Bollman et al., 2007; Lambert, 2005). More recently, rural youth out-migration is still of public concern in the Nova Scotian context. According to a 2006 report on Nova Scotian demographic trends, the greatest population losses in Nova Scotia were due to interprovincial flows (to Alberta for work in the oil and gas sector, for example) and are particularly evident in youth populations (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006). In addition to interprovincial flows, Nova Scotian

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youth are also migrating at high rates to the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) and surrounding counties (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006). Recent province-wide community consultation has revealed that both of these youth migration patterns are a concern for residents in rural communities (One Nova Scotia, 2014), although the final report stresses that the province must work together and view the success of one region as a success for the province (One Nova Scotia, 2014). These demographic trends have contributed to a number of province-wide and local concerns, such as the recent School Review Process, which prompted the Nova Scotia Small Schools Initiative (Bennett, 2013). The Review Process identified several rural schools with small student populations for potential closure. Community groups worked to keep these schools open, with one option under consideration being a community hub model, which would include businesses and community organizations within the school building (Bennett, 2013). Ultimately, the local school board voted to close the schools.

While this has been a concern across the nation, net-migration in rural areas is not consistent temporally or spatially (Rothwell et al., 2002b) and the ability to migrate and experience of migration is not consistent through space and time and depends on factors such as gender, race, and socio-economic status. In contrast with the absolute population decline experienced by rural communities in Nova Scotia, rural populations across most of Canada are growing, albeit at a slower rate than urban areas (Bollman, 2013). Outside of Atlantic Canada, youth out-migration rates from rural areas were lower than in Nova Scotia and were generally paired with net in-migration of youth in urban areas (Tremblay, 2001). Therefore, while the future of rural communities, and out-migration of youth in particular, is on the radar of policy makers across Canada, it has been much more of a concern in the Atlantic region, where absolute numbers of rural youth are declining. These historical differences combined with the current high levels of aging and increasing draw to employment in other provinces point to a topic of great concern for policy makers in Nova Scotia (One Nova Scotia, 2014). It is within this context that instances of rural youth in-migration was explored.

1.4 Case Studies

Within the Nova Scotian context described above, case studies were used to meet the research objectives framing this research. Two case studies inform this study: (1) one in the community of Liverpool, Queens County, and (2) one in the Maitland area, along the shore of East Hants County. Below is an overview of the case locations. More detail about the study design will follow in the methods chapter and results from each case study are presented in chapters three and four.

1.4.1 Liverpool

Liverpool is a rural community on the South Shore of Nova Scotia, accessible by highway from Halifax, which lies approximately 140km to the north. The case study area consists of the former town of Liverpool and included participants from within the town as well as the adjacent communities that use Liverpool as a service hub, most notably Brooklyn, which lies across the river from Liverpool and is home to the former Bowater Mersey Paper Company site. The case study will be referred to as Liverpool throughout this thesis.

The town of Liverpool was founded in 1759 by settlers from New England (More, 1972, p. 10). In 1996, the town merged with the surrounding county, becoming the Region of Queens Municipality (Gorman, 2011). Liverpool is the economic, political, and service hub of the Region of Queens Municipality. Historically, its main economic bases have been fishing and lumbering. For many years, a major employer in the region was the Bowater Mersey Paper Company. Due to a variety of factors including decreases in the global price of paper, the mill closed in 2014. At the time of its closure, it employed 320 people (Ware, 2014). This closure has been dominant in the public discourse around Liverpool for several years and its importance was reflected in the number of times the mill was referenced by participants. Tourism is also important to the region's economy. The area is adjacent to Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site as well as several ocean beaches, freshwater lakes and rivers.

Liverpool's population as of 2011 was approximately 2660, down 3.8% from 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2012a), while the larger area had a population of 6380 in 2011, a decrease of 8.9% over the same period. The median income in the region for individuals in the area in 2011 was approximately $23,500, compared to $27,570 for the province (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014a). Liverpool's relative immigrant population (2.3%) is lower than the Nova Scotia average (5.3%), as is the percentage of residents over the age of 15 with a post-secondary degree, certificate, or diploma (46.9% versus 53.8%) (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014a).

1.4.2 Maitland Area

The second case study used for this research is the Maitland area. For this thesis, the 'Maitland area' includes the communities from South Maitland to Noel along Highway 215 in East Hants County. East Hants is in the central part of Nova Scotia and its main economic hub is the corridor along Highway 102 from Truro to Halifax (Municipality of East Hants, 2014). The Maitland area case

study is a rural area of the municipality along the shore of the Minas Basin and Shubenacadie River and is approximately 40 kilometres from Truro and 90 kilometres from Halifax. In the nineteenth century, shipbuilding in the region was a booming industry, with shipyards located all along the shore (Forbes & Muise, 1993; Gwyn, 1998). This history of shipbuilding is one focus of the area's tourism, which, along with agriculture, constitute the two major employment sectors in the area. The Maitland area has a small number of businesses that serve the local population as well as several parks, art galleries, museums, and outdoor tourism companies. Recently, the elementary school in Maitland was under review by the school board and now faces closure due to low enrolment.

The Maitland area case study overlaps two sub-municipal districts: Maitland, and Noel and Walton. The Maitland district had a population of 762 in 2011, which is down 12.6% from 2001 (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014b). The Noel and Walton district had a population of 1,107 in 2011, which is 6.5% lower than 2001 (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014c). In Maitland, the median income for employed adults in 2011 was approximately $26,700, compared to $27,570 for the province (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014b). Also in 2011, Maitland's relative immigrant population (5.1%) was somewhat lower than the Nova Scotia average (5.3%), as was the percentage of residents over the age of 15 with a post-secondary degree, certificate, or diploma (50.1% versus 53.8%) (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014b). In the Noel and Walton district, the median income for individuals in 2011 was approximately $21,325, compared to $27,570 for the province (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014c). Also in 2011, Noel and Walton's relative immigrant population (2.3%) was lower than the Nova Scotia average (5.3%), as was the percentage of residents over the age of 15 with a post-secondary degree, certificate, or diploma (40.8% versus 53.8%) (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014c). These numbers represent the entirety of these two districts and thus are only approximations of the case study area, which only includes the communities along the shore between South Maitland and Noel. The Maitland area case contains a greater proportion of the Maitland district than the Noel and Walton district.

1.4.3 Young People and Migration

Table 1.1 shows the results of an analysis of population statistics to demonstrate the net-youth migration in the case-study areas from 2001-2011 by cohort. The cohorts were chosen in order to examine net-migration of people aged 20-29. Percentage change for each cohort was calculated and

is reported for time intervals 2001-2006 and 2006-2011. For context and comparison, the same analysis is also presented for total population in each community and for the provincial level.

Nova Scotia had modest total population growth and negative growth in the target population of individuals in their twenties. Both case study areas have experienced negative population growth as well as net out-migration in the target demographics between 2001 and 2006. Overall, the case study areas experienced higher rates of out-migration than the province as a whole. The only instances of positive population growth were in the total population of Noel and Walton between 2001 and 2006 and in the Maitland cohort aged 25-29 in 2011 between 2006 and 2011. The percent change in cohort reveals complexity. For example, the cohort born June 2, 1976 to June 1, 1981 (age 30-34 in 2011) had higher out-migration in Noel and Maitland (18.6% and 20%) than Liverpool (10%) between 2001 and 2006, but lower rates of out-migration (12.5% and 12%) than Liverpool (14.8%) between 2006-2011. The data also demonstrates a small portion of the heterogeneity between rural places. Overall, both rural areas are experiencing out-migration, which is greater in the target population than total population, but there is a considerable amount of variation in the rates of out-migration.

Table 1.1 Net-migration rates in target age cohorts and total population (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d)

Age Cohort (Year Born)	Net migration from 2001-2006				Net migration from 2006-2011			
	Nova Scotia	Liverpool	Noel and Walton	Maitland	Nova Scotia	Liverpool	Noel and Walton	Maitland
June 2, 1976 to June 1, 1981 (age 30-34 in 2011)	-9.9%	-10%	-18.6%	-20%	-1.9%	-14.8	-12.5%	-12%
June 2, 1981 to June 1, 1986 (age 25-29 in 2011)	-8.1%	-25.7	-31.9%	-40.4%	-8.5%	-26.9%	-6.4%	+3.2%
June 2, 1986 to June 1, 1991 (age 20-24 in 2011)					-3.0%	-25%	-36.0%	-16.7%
Total Population	0.6%	-4.5%	+3.3%	-5.9%	0.9%	-3.8%	-9.5%	-7.2%

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1.5 Outline of Thesis

This first chapter introduces the thesis, outlining the research objectives as well as background to the Nova Scotian context, which provides place-specific rationale for the importance of this research. Chapter 1 also includes a description of the two case study areas used to inform this research. Chapter 2 is a literature review, focusing on rural youth and migration literature, with a focus on motivations, experiences, and contributions of in-migrants and returnees. Key concepts used throughout this thesis are also defined. Next, Chapter 3 presents the methods and methodology employed to meet the research objectives outlined above. This thesis is presented in manuscript based-format. This means that Chapters 4 and 5 have been written as standalone papers with the intention of submission to academic journals for publishing. These two chapters include a statement of student contribution, in following with Dalhousie's policy for this format of thesis. It is important to note that because these chapters are written as standalone papers with their own literature and methods sections, there will be some repetition across chapters. Chapter 4 focuses on the results for both research objectives in the Maitland case study and discusses the motivations, experiences, and contributions of the young women who have recently moved to the community from outside the province. Chapter 5 centres on the Liverpool case and discusses the themes arising through both research objectives for young returnees in the community. Finally, Chapter 6 is an integration of the two case studies. It provides a brief comparative analysis of the results from the two case studies as well as discussion of the key findings of the thesis. Finally, limitations, directions for future research, and recommendations are provided as conclusion to this thesis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The discourse surrounding youth, mobilities, and rural places is often focused on out-migration. The literature examines demographic trends (Dupuy et al., 2000a), perspectives of younger youth (15-24), and plans to leave (Drozdzewski, 2008; Gibson & Argent, 2008). This focus is valid, as out-migration of young people from rural places is a widespread reality (Dupuy, Mayer, & Morissette, 2000b; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 2003). Research on out-migration provides academics, policy makers, and community leaders with insights as to why youth may be leaving. However, the reasons for in-migrating have not been well explored. Understanding potential motivations for youth and young adults moving into or returning to rural communities could aide in the development of strategies to attract and retain more young people. Much of the research focusing on return migration of youth and in-migration more broadly (Bijker, Haartsen, & Strijker, 2012; Bruce, 2007; DaVanzo, 1978; Farrell, Mahon, & McDonagh, 2012), has been largely quantitative and/or regional in scope.

While traditionally the discourse focused on 'keeping' youth in communities, it is now acknowledged that it may be beneficial for both the individual and the community if youth 'go out into the world' to gain education and experiences (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 2003; Stockdale, 2006). Once youth leave, however, they often do not come back (Dupuy et al., 2000b). This challenges communities with a loss in human capital; that is, the skills, experiences, networks, and leadership of these young people are not available to their home communities (Eversole, 2001; Rothwell et al., 2002b). Rural communities must then come up with ways to attract and retain new sources of human capital.

While communities desire and require increased numbers of youth, it may not be ideal for all youth to live in rural areas, based on individual experiences and preferences (Gabriel, 2002). Therefore, the focus may need to shift to attracting both former residents as well as new youth to the community once they have become educated, learned skills, and broadened their experience (Stockdale, 2006). Removing the focus of keeping youth or encouraging only the return of local youth allows for a balance between community needs and those of individual young people.

2.2 Motivations of Migrants

Individual motivations have long been of interest in migration studies. An understanding of the major motivations of migrants can point to elements on a variety of scales (e.g. local, provincial, regional, national, and global) that influence population flows, demographics, and quality of life, etc. Motivations can be defined as the factors that contribute to people taking action or making a decision. Migrants can have multiple, even conflicting, motivations for relocating (Bruce, 2007; Corbett, 2007; Gibson & Argent, 2008). While some quantitative studies emphasize the single most important motivator, it is valuable to understand the complexity of the decision-making process (Bijker et al., 2012) and to understand the structural conditions within which the decision is being made (Davies, 2008). Within the process of migration, motivations can be differentiated between push and pull factors. Push factors are what cause residents to consider leaving a community (e.g. no job opportunities, lack of recreational activities, etc.) and pull factors are what influence migrants to move to certain places (e.g. good schools, low housing prices, etc.) (Corbett, 2007; Glendinning et al., 2003). These can include both real and perceived elements (Davies, 2008; Eversole, 2001; Gibson, 2008).

Rural migration motivation research often reveals a trade-off between economic reality and personal values (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Drozdzewski, 2008; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Historically, rural in-migration was explained as a result of middle class families and retirees moving from the urban in search of the rural idyll (Ní Laoire, 2007). While this is one type of migrant present in some contexts, the focus on this rendition of the concept of counterurbanism has been rejected as an oversimplification of the motivations, characteristics, and origins of rural in-migrants (Bijker et al., 2012), and migration is seen as a complex decision-making process in response to structural conditions and personal situations (Marshall & Foster, 2002). This means that given the same social, cultural, and economic factors, two individuals would not necessarily make the same migration decision.

The study of rural youth migration often starts with youth on the cusp of making important life decisions about education and employment after high school. Availability of local employment and educational opportunities is cited as a critical factor in the decision-making processes of rural youth leaving high school (Drozdzewski, 2008; Gibson, 2008). Cuervo & Wyn (2012) found that relationships, to people and place, are the most important decision-making factors for young people,

although other researchers have found social and employment opportunities to be significant as well (Davies, 2008). In studying in- and out-migrants, motivating factors can be grouped into two major categories: economic and social (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Stockdale, 2006). Economic factors could include a particular kind of job or raise in salary, as well as educational opportunities. Social factors include elements such as proximity to relatives, marital status, and growing families. The physical environment and associated quality of life are also important motivators; for example, the ability to purchase a detached home with a yard (Bijker et al., 2012). A study of young graduate returnees in Switzerland suggested that jobs, rather than being the key motivating factor, were what allowed potential migrants to act on their true motivations (Rérat, 2013). It is evident that the motivations and decision-making processes of migrants are complex and influenced by social, economic, and environmental factors.

The characteristics and motivations of migrants are complex and multi-dimensional. They also could be influenced by the characteristics of the destination community (Bijker et al., 2012; Bollman et al., 2007). Bijker et al. (2012) found that in the Dutch context, 'less popular' rural areas attracted a younger cohort of in-migrants than 'popular areas'. This was largely attributed to social motivations such as ties to friends, family, and place (R. A. Bijker & Haartsen, 2012). In the Nova Scotian context, it was found that places in decline attract fewer in-migrants, adding to their cycle of decline (Bruce, 2007).

Motivations were looked at broadly in this study; participants were asked to describe the factors in their decision-making process to migrate, but categories of motivations arising from the literature, including push, pull, economic, and social motivators, served as a preliminary framework. The differences in characteristics of migrants across rural Nova Scotia had not been explored prior to this research.

2.3 Qualifying In- and Return Migrant Experiences

When qualifying the experiences of migrants, one may find it useful to measure through objective economic means, but perhaps more importantly also with regards to individuals' personal perceptions of the migration process. Using a qualitative approach may reveal the often-experienced short-term difficulties of migrants as well as a longer-term reflection on the past, present, and future (Stockdale, 2004). Employment can be a key factor in the experiences of a migrant. In some cases, employment opportunities are the major motivating factor, but where is it not, migrants often experience trade-

offs between income or preferred job type and a decrease in costs or increase in certain amenities (von Reichert, Cromartie, & Arthun, 2011). Individuals and households must enact strategies to overcome challenges associated with seasonal or precarious work (von Reichert et al., 2011). Their success or willingness to engage in these strategies may influence both their perception of the community and intentions to remain in the long-term.

A feeling of belonging or being part of the community is important to migrants (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Marshall & Foster, 2002; Stockdale, 2004; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Strong social connectedness among newcomers has been positively associated with having children, perceived high levels of support from employer upon arrival, and a longer period of stay (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). In some cases, social networks are built only between newcomers, creating almost separate communities of migrants and locals (Stockdale, MacLeod, & Philip, 2013). This may create conflicting perceptions of both belonging and being outside or 'other' (Marshall & Foster, 2002). Social interactions and elements of social capital that support migrants are important for both individual and social well-being (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). As social capital is created and strengthened, trust and belonging improve the quality of interactions within the community, and then can benefit collective and individual learning (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). Through this, locals and incomers may be influenced by migration and changes can occur at the community level as well (Marshall & Foster, 2002). In this way, new migrants can add to the well-being of a community, bringing new ideas and expanding social networks.

The migrant will have chosen the receiving community for reasons such as perceived economic, social, quality of life, and environmental opportunities. When their experiences living in the community do not match with expectations this can lead to the unhappiness of migrants and locals (Stockdale et al., 2013). Bosworth and Willett (2010), in a study of counterurban migration in the UK, found that "the contrasts between the 'idyll' experienced as a visitor and the daily realities of rural life can also create tensions between indigenous and in-migrant residents" (p. 1). Therefore, the previous experiences and knowledge migrants hold can influence their experiences in their new community.

Migration experiences are not homogenous within a receiving community. The experiences of in-migration differ between individuals and also between types of migrants. For example, the origin country, household structure, age, and values of a migrant will all impact perceptions of the

migration experience (Marshall & Foster, 2002). An individual's previous migration experiences can also change their perception and ability to facilitate a move and create new social networks (Easthope & Gabriel, 2008). Stockdale et al. (2013) found that migrants who cared more about being part of the community were more affected by the acceptance of locals than those who did not value being part of the community. Farrell et al. (2012) observed that return migrants in rural Ireland who were unsure about or felt they had no choice but to return were more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation.

2.4 Contribution: Impacts of In-Migration in a Heterogeneous Rural Landscape

A connection between youth and community well-being has been recognized by scholars and community practitioners, who focus on youth out-migration as a symptom and cause of rural decline, as well as on strategies to keep youth in rural communities (Cox, Frere, West, & Wiseman, 2010; Hanavan & Cameron, 2012; Nova Scotia Community Services, 2008; The Aspen Institute, n.d.). A high or growing population of youth in a community points to high levels of or increasing community well-being. The connections between the in-migration of youth and broader community well-being has not however been heavily examined in the literature.

Of greater interest to academics has been the connection between in-migration and entrepreneurial activity, such as new business creation, as well as direct and indirect job creation due to in-migration (Findlay, Short, & Stockdale, 2000; Kalantaridis, 2010; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011a; Stockdale, 2006). Stockdale (2006) believes that if young people in-migrate in large numbers, there would be a significant impact on the rural economy. The positive connection between higher levels of youth and community development is generally assumed, however research on the impact of in-migration on community development has uncovered mixed results (Kalantaridis, 2010; Stockdale, 2006). The connections between in-migrants and new business creation have been explored and shown to be a "cumulative rather than transformational" factor (Kalantardis, 2010, p. 427). That is, communities that are already experiencing some level of entrepreneurship and business growth will benefit more from in-migration than communities in decline (Kalantardis, 2010). This presents a 'chicken and egg' scenario, whereby community vibrancy and economic opportunities are needed to attract residents, and more residents are needed to increase community well-being (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Reimer, 2007; Stockdale, 2006). While migration is seen as key in altering rural labour markets (Findlay et al., 2000), communities cannot simply wait for migration to occur. Stockdale (2006),

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suggests that in-migration is not being fully taken advantage of to improve communities from within. Therefore, while not all communities benefit from large numbers of in-migrants, there may be opportunities in leveraging what new human capital has come into the community.

A focus on human capital flows (generally described by educational attainment level) is used to explore the negative and positive impacts of in- and out-migration (Stockdale, 2006), although the presence of human capital does not automatically lead to rural development (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Stockdale, 2004). In an exploration of the connection between in-migration and endogenous development, Stockdale (2006) asserts that even if not opening a new business, in-migrants can have indirect impacts on the rural economy. These indirect impacts were not explored further; they could be economic in nature such as increased demand for local goods and services (Findlay et al., 2000) but may have aspects that impact the other dimensions of well-being.

Contributions of young in-migrants beyond economic impact have been identified by several researchers. In-migration has been used as a proxy for community well-being (Stedman, Parkins, & Beckley, 2004). There is the potential to add diversity in life experience, culture, background, and worldview, which can be positive for a community (Hanson & Barber, 2011). Returnees and newcomers also help to replenish the population (adding to the tax and service base), bring more children for schools, add new perspectives on various aspects of community life, and increase human capital. Some of these impacts, such as increased population, or diversity in worldviews, are not necessarily tied to the age of the migrant, yet certain impacts could result from younger in-migrants, such as particular new perspectives, and the addition of children.

Connections between migration and social networks reveal the potential for new in-migrants to contribute to the community in more diverse ways. As migrants often retain ties with networks from past residences, elements of culture can be diffused between communities and learning can occur (Brown, 2002; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Farrell et al., 2012). Migration can also bring new ways of thinking and sources of leadership (Brown, 2002). One must be careful to apply this effect broadly, however, as in-migration of individuals who are similar to the existing population (in age, income, education, etc.) is not likely to lead to significant changes within the community (Kalantaridis, 2010). The in-migration of youth is particularly interesting here, as it offers an opportunity for new viewpoints, experiences, and knowledge to enter the community. The experiences of migrants, for example, whether they feel welcome or how (if) they participate in community life, can point to their

contributions to well-being. Dabson, Schroeder, and Markley (2010) found that young people were not generally asked for their input on how rural communities might attract and retain more young people. There may be potential then, to facilitate enhanced contribution of young people through the inclusion of their voices in community processes. More than just attraction, support and retention may be key to greater long term benefits in communities seeking to increase or maintain numbers of young people (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Similar to the phenomenon of a large ethnic population attracting more immigrants of the same ethnicity (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007), a large or growing youth population may contribute to higher levels of youth in-migration through established social networks.

2.5 Key Concepts

2.5.1 Definition of Rural

There is not one sole definition of 'rural', even within the context of Nova Scotia. Generally, definitions of rurality are based on quantitative factors such as population size, density, and proximity to urban centres, but can also include qualitative descriptions of way of life, community values, or heritage. Rurality has been defined in many disciplines and often is defined by what it is not, i.e. urban (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012). When choosing the constraints of the rural landscape, one must consider both the scale of the issue at hand as well as which factors are most relevant (du Plessis, Beshiri, Bollman, & Clemenson, 2002). There are several pre-existing definitions, even within Statistics Canada (du Plessis et al., 2002), and therefore it is up to the researcher to choose one, combine several, or determine his or her own definition of rural. While this may seem trivial, the way in which rural is defined changes not only the percentage of rural residents in the province, but also which residents are considered rural (du Plessis et al., 2002; Halseth, Markey, & Bruce, 2010). As this study does not depend on the numbers of rural residents, but rather the general characteristics of rural places, a broad definition will be used.

Following the Rural Communities Impacting Policy report, communities within Halifax County were not considered for this study (Dalhousie University & Coastal Communities Network, 2003). In addition, the common definition of rural places as communities with less than 5,000 people (Bruce, Ryser, Halseth, & Giesbrecht, 2005; Statistics Canada, 2014a) was applied to narrow the study scope to exclude towns such as Truro and New Glasgow. Communities with large student populations (i.e. with universities or community colleges) were also not considered, as many in-migrants are likely

temporary and their motivations based on choice of program or school rather than community context. This definition was used to guide the case study selection process. Even within the confines of this definition, there still exists a large amount of diversity within the rural landscape. In Nova Scotia, communities outside of the HRM with less than 5000 people can further be described as town, village, or countryside; rapidly declining, slowly declining, or growing; or by the major economic sectors represented. The literature review was not restricted to this definition of rural. Instead, the researcher was simply aware of the use of rural by various authors and how that may differ or compare to its use in this study's context. While it was necessary to define rural so as to define the scope of study, diversity within the rural landscape, as well as a continued blurring of the boundaries between urban and rural places, is acknowledged (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012).

It is useful to look at differences within the rural landscape in addition to those between rural and urban places. Diversity across the rural landscape and changes in technological and social innovations challenge the traditional simplistic urban-rural dichotomy (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012). A recent study out of the Netherlands categorized the popularity of rural areas using highly elastic housing prices as an indicator (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012). A cluster analysis of housing prices across the rural landscape was performed to determine categories (less popular, average, and popular) of communities and the general characteristics of these categories were then explored (e.g. proximity to urban centres, employment sectors, and physical landscape attributes). Comparably, while rural decline is a major issue across Nova Scotia (Mills & Legault, 2007), not all communities face this challenge, particularly those close to urban centres (One Nova Scotia, 2013). This diversity is important to consider when examining rural processes (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007). Ignoring the differences within rural regions and between communities provides a limited picture of factors at play, therefore it is important to look at the characteristics of the specific community and not just rural areas generally (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012).

Bijker & Haartsen (2012) highlight the lack of understanding of the relationship between migrant motivations and characteristics of the destination community as a gap in the existing literature. This gap was explored within this research through the exploration of migrants' motivations and experiences in two communities that represent some of the diversity across the rural landscape.

2.5.2 Well-being

This research takes a holistic view of the concept of community well-being, building from the conceptual framework developed by Kevany & MacMichael (2014). Community well-being can be broadly understood through the interrelated concepts of resiliency, prosperity, sustainability, and vibrancy, all of which can be connected to the presence (or absence) of youth and young adults in a community. It is important to note that these factors extend well beyond economic development, although that has been the focus of many rural migration studies. The ways to measure community well-being are vast, yet many of these techniques reach similar conclusions (Garrod & Stapleton, 2008; Pannozzo & Colman, 2009; Whaley & Weaver, 2010). The indicators will not be defined in great detail, therefore, as changes at that level are unlikely to affect the perceived existing level of or individual contribution to community well-being. This study did not seek to empirically measure the well-being of the case study communities; rather, it explored how the in-migration of youth may be contributing to community well-being through the four concepts considered to describe it.

2.5.3 Social Capital

The idea of social capital was conceptualized by Bourdieu in his 1986 work, The Forms of Capital. According to his research, social capital is "the aggregate of… resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group" (Bourdieu, 1986). Being a member of this group gives one access to a form of collective capital they can draw on for various needs and functions (Bourdieu, 1986). Social capital is formed and maintained through interactions and the development of relationships (Bourdieu, 1986; Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Macias & Williams, 2014; Manderson, 2010). In relation to this work, social capital impacts the migration process from decision-making to the experiences that migrants have in settling in and becoming comfortable in a place. In the decision-making process, community and family ties can be a critical factor, with many return migrants citing family and social reasons as major decision criteria in their move (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Rérat, 2013). Migrants may not always be aware of the importance of social and family networks in the decisions that they had made, but the complexity of the decision making process can be revealed through qualitative methodology (Stockdale, 2002). In their study of international migration in rural New Brunswick, Hanson and Barber (2011) found that even when social networks may not have been essential in the decision to move to a place, the development of these networks and of social capital are necessary factors influencing the decision to

stay. In the settling-in process, a feeling of belonging or being part of the community has been found to be important to migrants (Stockdale, 2004).

Forming meaningful connections with both other in-migrants and locals create a sense of belonging for individuals and add to the social capital held by the community as a whole (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Marshall & Foster, 2002; Stockdale et al., 2013). Social connectedness is a related concept, which grows as individuals join formal and informal groups and organizations within the community (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). As the social capital accessible by newcomers increases, new connections are made both within the community and between the previous communities and networks of newcomers, increasing potential for collective and individual learning (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Farrell et al., 2012; Macias & Williams, 2014; Marshall & Foster, 2002). Newcomers can also strengthen existing organizations and movements, by introducing new ideas and replacing or supplementing the potentially dwindling volunteer base (Harling-Stalker & Phyne, 2014). Communities with strong social capital benefit beyond the individual as high levels of social capital have been linked to lower crime rates, good public health, economic performance, and other elements of community well-being (Helliwell & Putnam, 2004). A feeling of belonging and participation in community groups increases the likelihood that a migrant will stay in the community long term (Hanson, 2013; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Not all expressions of social capital create positive experiences, however, as membership in a group implies the possibility of exclusion. Several studies have revealed migrants experiencing feelings of exclusion and loneliness (Bosworth & Willett, 2010; Farrell et al., 2012; Hanson, 2013; Mitchell & Madden, 2014) related to the "impenetrability of local social networks" (Hanson & Barber, 2011, p. 15). Evidently, social capital can be an essential component of both attracting and retaining migrants.

2.5.4. Conceptualizing Community

A term used frequently in this research is 'community'. Community is used to refer to the case study sites and interactions within them. Considerable literature exists to define the entity and process that is community. Much of this literature comes to us from anthropology, as community is a key unit of study in that discipline. The concept has frustrated scholars for its ambiguous, yet common, usage (Amit, 2003; Cohen, 1985).There are common elements one can use to describe what a community might entail, but it becomes difficult to definitively describe what a community is (Amit, 2003, 2010; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009; Ramsey & Smit, 2002). While this has frustrated some scholars and some

have dismissed the term as being essentially meaningless as it means all things, Amit (2010), asserts that its very vagueness is part of its functionality.

Two broad definitions, which capture the essence but also the difficulty in defining the concept, are: "community is that entity to which one belongs, greater than kinship but more immediately than the abstraction we call society" (Cohen, 1985, p. 15); and, perhaps even more simply, "an agglomeration of people, including their interactions" (Ramsey & Smit, 2002, p. 369). These definition reveal two key elements: community is grounded in, first, a combination of geographic, imagined, and social space (Amit, 2003; Amit & Rapport, 2002; Hanson, 2013), and, second, belonging or membership (Amit, 2010; Cohen, 1985; Mannarini & Fedi, 2009).

The symbolic aspect of community is an important one, but to realize an imagined community, it must be grounded in at least some level of day-to-day social interactions (Amit, 2003). Amit (2003) argues that the concept of community is used more now to describe 'an idea or quality of sociality' rather than 'an actualized social form' (p. 3). To describe a particular community, it may be simpler to define what is not in the community. Cohen (1985) uses the idea of the 'boundary' as a starting place for delineating community. According to his work, for community to be successfully a community, members must feel they have more in common with other members than those outside the boundaries, yet the symbolism of a community also provides a range of individuality. In addition to variation of individuals within a community, people can also identify with multiple or nested communities (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009), further confounding attempts to define an absolute boundary. In community research, further difficulty arises when attempting to represent the community as there is not one sole voice or opinion within the community (Jewkes & Murcott, 1996).

When studying community level processes, such as social capital, it becomes necessary to state the boundaries of your study area or population. Depending on the intent of the research, there are several ways to do this. For example using social network analysis (Ennis & West, 2012), applying defined geographic or political boundaries (Amit, 2003), asking participants about their daily trips and interactions (Mannarini & Fedi, 2009), or a combination of approaches.

This research took a somewhat broad definition of community, which combined geography and social interaction. The boundaries of the community or case site were loosely defined and when asked by community bridgers who was eligible to participate in terms of geography, they were told

that, if the community bridger and the individual felt that the individual is part of the community (i.e. if they frequent the area on a daily basis, have friends and/or familial connections, and live within a few minutes' drive of the community) then they are able to participate as members of the community. The methods of recruitment (snowballing, through local communication channels) were at the community level and revealed interactions in the places of interest. Participants were almost all known to one another or connected in some way. It was not the intention of this research to define community in absolute terms, but to explore it in an organic manner.

Chapter 3. Research Design and Methodology

3.1 Methodological Framing: Appreciative Inquiry

A broad application of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) was used to frame the design and fieldwork of this research. AI was originally developed as a technique for organizational development (Cooperrider & Srivastva, 1987) and uses an asset-based approach to discern current strengths and how those might be built upon. Researchers and community developers soon adapted AI as part of the larger participatory engagement movement (Aldred, 2009). While AI uses a positive lens, more 'negative' discussions are not glossed over (Bushe, 2012; Ospina & Dodge, 2005); in fact, AI has been found to encourage more honesty and openness through the interview process (Michael, 2005). Research in other rural communities in Nova Scotia has revealed the suitability of AI as a research methodology when examine factors of well-being in community contexts due to its elements of *positivity, relational dynamics, multivolcality,* and *generativity* (Kevany & MacMichael, 2014).

While this research was not considered a full application of Appreciative Inquiry, AI formed the framework for my research questions, as well as the question guides for the focus groups and interviews with participants. One of the key components of AI is the selection of a 'positive' topic (Ludema, Cooperrider, & Barrett, 2001) and this provided a starting place for this research. By framing this research on the experiences of incoming young adults, in contrast to the more typical focus on those leaving, space was made for a different conversation. To mitigate potential bias, rigour was applied in the design as well as the undertaking of the community studies. In the focus groups participants were free to reflect positive and negative experiences. Using an appreciative or asset-based approach for facilitating discussion can spark conversations that give voice to what is already present and appreciated, and that may change what participants focus on, consequently influencing the way they evaluate their community or personal circumstances (Aldred, 2009). This may help to build and strengthen existing social capital through relationships and interactions (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Stockdale, 2004). This work may provide alternative perspectives to challenge negative stories coming out of rural communities (Bruce, 2007; Kevany & MacMichael, 2014). It may also contribute positively to generating ideas and attitudes in support of rural Nova Scotia (One Nova Scotia, 2014).

3.2 Case Study Method

A case study method was chosen in order to explore the processes associated with rural youth in- and return migration at the community level. Case studies can provide the opportunity for rich understanding and insights into complex processes (Flyvbjerg, 2006). While some argue that case study findings and insights are restricted to the case itself, the strategic selection of case studies may allow for the application of place specific research to be applicable on a larger scale (Flyvbjerg, 2006). It is acknowledged that the findings of this research are context-specific, however there are some general trends that may be more widely relevant.

3.2.1 Choosing a Case Study

To reflect the diversity of rural experiences, two case study communities were chosen that fall within the proposed definition of rural and yet have some dissimilarity. The cases differed in terms of population density (i.e. town versus countryside), main industries, growth rate, and net-migration rate in the target age group. The size and nature of this study may not allow for direct comparison between the two study sites, yet by choosing distinct study sites, some of the diversity of the rural landscape was reflected in the study. While keeping in mind the small scale of this study, the findings help to reveal deep insights into a range of experiences and possibilities for young in-migrants in rural Nova Scotia.

In order to choose appropriate sites, a number of approaches were employed. First, recommendations were sought from knowledgeable contacts across Nova Scotia. Second, these recommendations were explored for their suitability through a cursory analysis of the population statistics, online research, and initial contact with potential community bridgers. Community bridgers were individuals and organizations with knowledge of and connections in the community. The analysis of the population statistics revealed differences and similarities in growth rates and net-migration rates in the target age groups, while the other two approaches revealed other community characteristics as well as the potential for finding sufficient and suitable participants for interviews and focus groups.

3.3 Qualitative Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups

In the literature surrounding migration studies and rural youth, there is a call for both quantitative and qualitative methods to fully understand both large-scale and micro-scale processes (Bijker et al., 2012; Gibson & Argent, 2008). In order to capture the depth of experience, one-on-one interviews

and small focus groups (or group interviews) were chosen as the main method of data collection. Following Michael (2005) and Kevany and MacMichael (2014), interview and focus group questions were constructed through an appreciative lens (See Appendices A and B). Eight interviews were conducted with key informants. Nine key informants were interviewed in total (two key informants participated as a couple). To engage the young in-migrants, small focus groups were used. Two focus groups were conducted in Liverpool and one in Maitland. Due to challenges with recruitment and to ensure inclusion of a variety of voices, one young in-migrant in Maitland was engaged in a one-on-one interview, using the same question guide as the focus groups. The other young migrants were engaged through focus groups that had two to four participants. In total, nine young in-migrants participated. See Table 3.1 for a numerical breakdown of participants, interviews, and focus groups.

Table 3.1 Breakdown of participant and data collection numbers

	Maitland	Liverpool	Total
Number of key informants interviewed	7	4	11
Number of focus groups	2*	2	4
No. of young migrants	4	5	9

One of these 'focus groups' had only one participant

Several techniques were used in the focus groups to create a comfortable and stimulating space for conversation between myself as facilitator and the participants, including providing food, water, and tea; providing materials and giving permission for participants to doodle, take notes, or draw during the focus group, and the use of a centerpiece exercise. The centerpiece exercise involved each participant presenting an object that they had brought from home that served as a representation of why they came to or back to the community. Participants were asked to bring this item during the recruiting stage and reminded once the date was set. As the objects were presented, they were placed in the center of the table as a way of starting the conversation and of symbolically centering the conversation on the idea that they had all chosen to come for some reason. This centerpiece exercise was also used in the sole one-on-one interview with a young in-migrant.

3.3.1 Defining Inclusion Criteria

Two groups of participants were identified: key informants and young in-migrants. Key informants were people who were knowledgeable about community and municipal affairs, formal and informal efforts to attract and engage citizens, and the history of the community. They included municipal employees, business owners, and other leaders within the community as recommended by

community bridgers. Community bridgers also were invited to identify themselves as key informants and as participants to be interviewed.

Young in-migrants were those who moved into the rural community in the past two to seven years and were in their twenties at the time of the move. Young people who were completely new to the community, as well as those who had returned after living away from the community for a time, were invited to participate. The age range of 20 to 29 was defined as such so as to capture a wide range of in-migrants in a demographic that generally sees net out-migration (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006). In many cases, a net out-migration of 15-24 year olds is closely matched with an in-migration of 25-29 year olds (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Dupuy et al., 2000b). This in-migration is not enough to offset the loss of younger youth, however (Dupuy et al., 2000b), and most individuals who do return do so once they are over 30 years of age (Davies, 2008). It has been found, however, that the longer out-migrants are away from their original community, the less likely it is that they will return (Stockdale, 2002; von Reichert et al., 2011). There may be some value in seeing why some people return at such a young age when they have only been away for a short time, as much of the existing research focuses on return- and in-migration of older migrants. In choosing this age range, which does not typically see high levels of return and in-migration, this research was able to explore the processes within this migration, and also provide insight into youths' experiences directly after completing post-secondary education (Rérat, 2013).

Two to seven years was chosen as a range for migration because it was recent enough that participants would be able to remember their original motivations for moving into the community, yet it was long enough that there was some permanence to the move. An upper limit was imposed to reduce challenges associated with memory recall and post hoc rationalization of participants (Bijker et al., 2012; Stockdale, 2006). For example, as time goes on, participants are more likely to recall decision-making processes and migration experiences in a rational or positive light. New migrants (present for under two years) were not considered for study because although their memory recall will be greater, there is little evidence of the migration being long term (Phyne & Harling-Stalker, 2011).

3.3.2 Recruitment and Community Connections: Process

Once the communities were chosen, the identification of community bridgers and site visits were used to gain a deeper understanding of the community context. The role of the community bridgers

were to identify potential participants and methods of recruitment (community publications, key meeting places, knowledgeable community members). After identifying the community bridgers in each case study area through personal networks, full-day site visits were conducted in each community. The community bridgers introduced potential key informants, facilitated a tour of the community, and in the case of Liverpool, even arranged a radio interview to encourage participation. Flyers were posted in public spaces throughout the community to encourage participation. Contact was also made with staff in the municipal office, who shared information through the municipality's on-line social media sites.

As the study design and target population did not lend themselves to a random sampling method, snowball sampling was essential to reach adequate numbers for the focus groups (Rérat, 2013). A risk of using snowball sampling is a bias in participation whereby only 'successful' migrants are invited or willing to participate (Stockdale, 2006). To reduce this bias, recruitment materials presented the research study in a way that appeared un-prejudiced and non-judgmental to participants. Additionally, community bridgers were informed that a variety of participants were welcome, including diversity in employment status, income, gender, and sector of employment. While the focus groups were not considered a representative sample, having diversity within the participants helped to develop a more inclusive understanding of experiences. To further encourage participants in the focus groups and to thank them for their time, food and child/eldercare was advertised and provided during the focus groups.

In Liverpool, initial contact was made through the municipal website. A community bridger was then identified through a family acquaintance. Connecting in this way, through mutual acquaintances, proved to be most fruitful in this case. A visit to Liverpool was arranged by the community bridger, including a tour of the community, meetings with potential interview and focus participants, and an interview on the local radio show. These initial meetings provided opportunity to begin the snowball sampling method. This opportunity was also used to put up recruitment posters in key places around the community. Additionally, an interview about this research was featured in the local newspaper. The publishing of this story was followed by a number of emails from interested youth as well as community members who were supportive of the study. Finally, the municipality shared information about the study via their on-line social media sites.

In Maitland, the main community bridger was also identified through a mutual acquaintance, although not a family connection. This bridger began speaking to people in Maitland about the project and started identifying potential participants for the focus group. These individuals were contacted with a recruitment letter outlining the research and their potential role. They were also asked to recommend other potential young people or key informants. A number of potential interview participants were identified through personal networks as well. The municipality also provided a list of names. Once initial contact was made, a full day visit to Maitland to conduct interviews, meet with the community bridger in person, and explore the community was undertaken. During this visit, key informant interviews were conducted and various businesses and tourist attractions in the village were explored. Posters were put up in these locations to attract more young people as participants and casual conversations with residents were used to spread the word about the research. Additionally, an advertisement was placed in the local community flyer.

3.4 Data Gathering, Transcription and Analysis

All conversations were audio-recorded with the informed consent of the participants. As a back up to the audio-recording, and to ensure that key points were captured, notes were taken during the interview and focus groups. The audio recording of the focus groups and interviews were fully transcribed.

Transcriptions were coded thematically using NVivo 10 software. Thematic coding is a qualitative data analysis method that allows for the identification and examination of both the frequency and context of important ideas in a text to determine patterns and connections (Boyatzis, 1999; Joffe & Yardley, 2004). In analyzing the transcripts, a combination of deductive and inductive coding was used. First, deductive coding was applied using a start list or codebook of themes that is grounded in the literature (Joffe & Yardley, 2004; MacQueen, McLellan, Kay, & Milstein, 1998; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Deductive coding is useful for comparison of results within the field (Joffe & Yardley, 2004).The start list of codes was derived from the literature and the research questions and framed the three main areas of inquiry: motivations, experiences, and contributions.

To allow for new and emerging ideas, inductive coding was used to create the majority of the codes. Inductive coding refers to codes being drawn from the text itself as they arise (Joffe & Yardley, 2004). Once the deductive framework was created, inductive coding began. Flexibility was allowed by splitting, refining, linking, and adding codes as they revealed themselves in the text (Joffe &

Yardley, 2004). As new codes are added to the codebook or existing codes are redefined, these changes were noted and previously coded texts were recoded to ensure rigor and consistency (MacQueen et al., 1998). This was an iterative process and involved multiple passes over each transcript and regular reference to the codebook. As the analysis progressed, codes were sorted into hierarchical or nested (i.e., parent, child, and grandchild) nodes to convey relationships and levels of detail. The completed codebook had 29 parent nodes, 51 child nodes, and 24 grandchild nodes.

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 show the basic coding structure. Table 3.1 shows the themes within the three major areas of inquiry. In addition to themes that fit explicitly in one of these areas, there were a number of cross cutting themes (Table 3.2). These were created as separate codes. A more detailed code book, showing code definitions and hierarchies is included in Appendix E. During analysis, connections between these cross-cutting themes and the major areas of inquiry were explored using node matrices built using NVivo 10 software.

Table 3.2 Main areas of inquiry and key themes arising from analysis

Main Areas of Inquiry	Key Themes
Motivations	Economic reasons
	Having a family
	Physical landscape
	Quality of life
Experiences	Mixed or negative experiences
	Positive experiences
Contributions	Age specific
	Diversity
	Economic
	Energy
	New ideas and perspectives
	General positive
	Getting involved

Table 3.3 Cross cutting themes arising from analysis

Cross Cutting Themes	
• Access to services	• Not for everyone
• Agriculture	• Real estate
• Challenges	• Rural versus urban
• Economic imperative	• School
• Expectations	• Seasonal work
• Environment	• Stayers and leavers
• Good to leave	• Tourism

3.5 Methodological Challenges and Responses

Several challenges were encountered during the recruitment and data collection phase of this research. Difficulty in finding participants prompted a number of changes to the recruitment process and criteria. The initial inclusion criteria was too strict, leading to exclusion of potential participants with valuable insight into youth migration in rural places. This was an issue due to the very small numbers of potential participants in the two case study communities. Two to five years was originally chosen as the range for in-migration. Following the identification of recruitment challenges, this was extended to seven years. It is was reasoned that an additional two years would not make a significant difference in the recall of participants, but would increase the number of potential participants as there were a number of young people identified in the case sites that were interested in participating but had been in the community slightly longer than the original five year cut-off. This measure was deemed sufficient to reach more participants in Liverpool and a second focus group was held to increase the number of young in-migrants participating in the study. Maitland, however, posed a greater challenge in recruitment as even this did not reveal any additional potential participants.

Due of the limited number of participants in Maitland, one person was allowed to participate who was slightly above the age range when they moved to the area (30 years of age). This was allowed in order to have a larger sample and because this person had much in common with the younger participants. In Maitland, there appeared to be a younger cohort of incomers and then a large age gap.

This individual was on the younger side of the gap and fit the rest of the criteria (i.e. moved in the last 2-7 years). Even with the addition of this participant, there were still a smaller number of participants than anticipated in the design stage. To address this, the case study site was expanded to include a broader region along the Maitland-Noel shore.

Following approval of methodological amendments by the research ethics board, a number of steps took place to increase participation through the expansion of the case area. Key informants in Maitland were re-contacted and asked to answer brief follow-up questions to determine the applicability of their previous Maitland-centered comments on the larger rural area. Another key informant at the opposite end of the newly defined case area was sought, and recruitment commenced for a second focus group with young people from across this larger area. This process yielded one additional key informant and one young in-migrant. A one-on-one interview using the focus group question guide was conducted with the in-migrant from the wider Maitland area.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Because the study involved human participants, research ethics approval was required and received. While participants' names were kept confidential and they were referred to by pseudonyms in reports and publications, the nature of in-person interviews and focus groups meant that maintaining true anonymity was impossible. Identifying information (e.g. name of street they live on, etc.) was not included in any publications, but participants' general information and stories may identify participants to those who know them or the community. Additionally, most participants have some familiarity with one another due to the small size of the communities and the nature of snowball sampling. These challenges were explained to the participants both in the recruitment phase and at the beginning and end of each focus group. Participants were asked not to repeat or discuss any personal or confidential information that was shared in the focus group, however they were also made aware that it would not be possible to prevent others from repeating anything they shared. Even given these concerns, the potential risk for participants was considered low. There were no additional physical risks in attending and participating in the focus group and potential emotional risks (e.g. recalling times of distress or revealing sensitive information) were mitigated by explaining that participants were not required to provide answers for every question. A consent form was provided to all potential participants. This form indicated the parameters of the study and the potential benefits and possible costs. No deception was involved in this study and no safety issues arose.

After transcription, the responses to the interviews and focus groups were sent to participants for their review. In this way, participants could ensure that their words reflected what they meant to say. They were able to clarify points or ask for certain comments to be removed from the transcript. After this review process, all identifying information from the transcripts was removed.

3.7 Positionality

Research is not conducted in a vacuum, but by individuals with specific experiences, political beliefs, values, and a particular worldview (Rossman & Rallis, 2012). While rigour was applied throughout the research process to increase objectivity and transparency, it was important to acknowledge potential biases. The following is a statement of my positionality as a researcher based on my academic and work experience as well as other significant factors. My positionality means that I have a personal interest in the subject matter and may even one day be a member of my population of interest. I recognize, however, that not everyone values a rural lifestyle and that each person faces numerous choices and circumstances that influence where they live. Positionality is multifaceted.

- My experience and worldview are necessarily influenced by my socio-demographic characteristics including gender, race, and class.

- I grew up in a rural community in Nova Scotia and was a member of 4-H, a rurally based youth program, for eleven years. Most of my friends have moved away (at least temporarily) from the community that they grew up in.

- I completed my undergraduate degree at Mount Allison University in geography and environmental studies. My focus was in human geography and I took a number of courses on rural-related topics and policy.

- Following my graduation I worked for a small environmental non-profit in Sackville, New Brunswick on a program focused on community transportation in the Westmorland-Albert region. This project introduced me to many of the accessibility and transportation challenges facing rural populations.

- Through these experiences, I have become very interested in how we can make our rural communities more vibrant and sustainable and in creating space to let positive changes happen through facilitation and conversation. I have attended and gained tremendous insight from a number of conferences and workshops related to these including the Georgetown Conference,

the Canadian Rural Revitalization Conference (2014), and an Art of Hosting workshop on facilitation techniques.

- I personally value a rural lifestyle and look forward to living in a small community and owning chickens.

Chapter 4: Motivations, Experiences, and Community Contributions of Young Female In-Migrants in the Maitland Area, Nova Scotia

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4.1 Statement of Student Contribution

M. MacMichael coordinated the primary data collection, conducted analysis, and wrote all sections of this manuscript. K. Beazley, K. Kevany, D. Looker, and D. Stiles provided supervisory oversight of the data collection and actively contributed to the writing process.

4.2 Abstract

This paper examines the motivations, experiences, and community contributions associated with rural in-migration processes in the community of Maitland, Nova Scotia. Similar to other research, major factors motivating rural in-migration include quality of life, life course, physical landscape and amenities, and economic and employment factors. Young female in-migrants expressed having a positive experience, largely due to the friendliness and neighbourliness of other residents. Although the participants reported positive experiences overall, they were not without challenge. Two significant obstacles identified were finding or creating satisfactory employment and increasing access to opportunities in the community. By exploring beyond the actual move and migrant experiences, this research revealed key factors in ongoing mobility and migrants' long-term decision-making. Whether or not the young in-migrants' plan to stay depended on a variety of factors including employment, life course, and changes in the community such as a school closure. Compared to past research, a more holistic inquiry was undertaken, exploring community consequences arising from in-migration, going beyond job creation and entrepreneurship. The young in-migrants were involved directly in volunteer organizations, attended community events, and developed relationships and a sense of community, demonstrating formal and informal contributions to community life. The energy, new ideas, and perspectives they brought to organizations and events, were viewed as positive by key informants from the community, and with enthusiasm by the young in-migrants themselves.

4.3 Introduction

Discourses on youth, mobilities, and rural places are often focused on out-migration. This focus can be considered valid, as out-migration of young people from rural places is a widespread reality (Dupuy et al., 2000a; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003). While the scholarship on out-migration provides academics, policy makers, and community leaders with greater understanding of why youth may be leaving, it does not explain real or potential motivations for the small number of young people moving into or returning to rural communities. This knowledge could aid in the development of policy or strategies to attract and retain more young people.

Individual's motivations have long been of interest in migration studies. Overall, it is evident that motivations and decision-making processes of migrants are complex and are influenced by various social, economic, and environmental factors. It is valuable to understand the complexity of the decision-making processes, looking beyond defining a single most important motivator for individuals (Bijker et al., 2012; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b), and to understand the structural conditions within which the decision is being made (Davies, 2008). Migrants can have multiple motivations for relocating (Bruce, 2007; Corbett, 2007; Gibson & Argent, 2008). Many studies of motivations for rural migration and the perceptions of rural youth reveal a trade-off between economic reality and personal values (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Drozdzewski, 2008; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Jobs, rather than being the key motivating factor, may be what allow potential migrants to act on social motivations (Rérat, 2013).

Understanding the experiences of migrants may reveal insights about both the incomers, and the receiving community, beyond the initial motivating factors for migrating. In some cases, employment opportunities are a major motivating factor in a move, but often migrants experience trade-offs between income or preferred job type and a decrease in costs or increase in certain amenities (von Reichert et al., 2011). Work can be seasonal in nature or precarious in other ways, requiring various strategies to overcome these challenges (von Reichert et al., 2011). A feeling of belonging or being part of the community is also important to the experiences of migrants and can be conceptualized through components of social capital (Stockdale, 2004). Employment and social elements could influence both perception of the community and intentions to remain.

The experience of in-migration differs between individuals and also between types of migrants. The household structure, origin country and community, age, and values of a migrant can all impact

perception of the migration experience. For example, Stockdale, MacLeod, and Philip (2013), found that migrants who cared more about being part of the community were more affected by the level of acceptance by locals than those who did not value being part of the community.

Rural policy makers and scholars have long recognized a connection between young people and community well-being, focusing on youth out-migration as a symptom and cause of rural decline as well as on strategies to keep youth in rural communities (Cox et al., 2010; Hanavan & Cameron, 2012; Nova Scotia Community Services, 2008; The Aspen Institute, n.d.). The current paper uses a broad definition of well-being, consisting of the interrelated elements of sustainability, resiliency, prosperity and vibrancy (McIntosh et al., 2008; Kevany et al., in press). These four concepts span the environmental, social, economic, and cultural components of community well-being. The focus of the majority of studies looking at in-migrant impact have focused on the connection between in-migration and entrepreneurial activity, as well as direct and indirect job creation (Findlay et al., 2000; Kalantaridis, 2010; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Stockdale, 2006). The connections between a more holistic conceptualization of community well-being and the in-migration of youth, however, have not been heavily explored.

More holistic contributions that young in-migrants may bring to a community have been identified by some researchers and these types of contributions, beyond job creation, are the focus of this research. Returnees and newcomers aid in the replenishment of the population (adding to the tax and service base), bring more children for schools, add new perspectives on various aspects of community life, and increase human capital (von Reichert et al., 2011). There is also the potential to add diversity in life experiences, culture, background, and worldview, which can be beneficial to a community (Hanson & Barber, 2011). Migration can also bring new ways of thinking and renewed sources of leadership to rural communities (Brown, 2002). The in-migration of youth is particularly interesting in this regard, as it presents an opportunity for new viewpoints, experiences, and knowledge to enter the community.

This study focuses on the motivations, experiences, and contributions to community of young people who have recently moved into the rural environs of Maitland, located in central Nova Scotia, Canada. This paper intends to contribute to a deeper understanding of why some young people are moving into rural communities when the trend is toward the opposite. The experiences of these individuals

are explored in settling in, making connections, making a living, and their contributions to community well-being.

4.4 Methods and Methodology

4.4.1 Case Study Site

This research focuses on a case study that includes the communities from South Maitland to Noel along Highway 215 in eastern Hants County, Nova Scotia. Maitland is situated along the shore of the Minas Basin and Shubenacadie River and is approximately a 30-minute drive from the Town of Truro (2011 population 12,059) and one-hour drive from the city of Halifax (402,400 in 2011) (Statistics Canada, 2012b, 2015). The region that includes the case study site has a population of 1,869 and its two districts have experienced population declines of 6.5% and 12.6% since 2001 (Province of Nova Scotia, 2014b, 2014c).
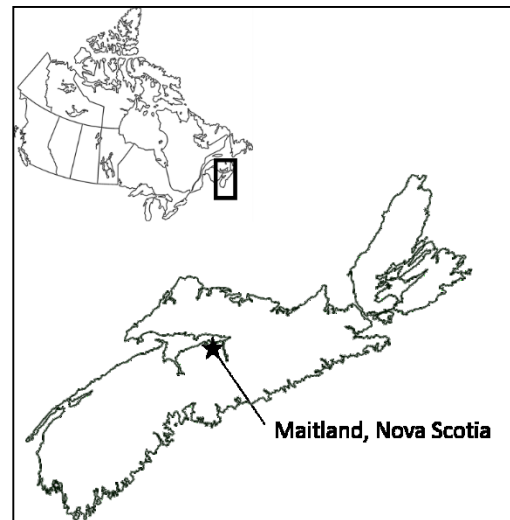
Figure 4.1 Map showing location of Maitland within Canada and Nova Scotia

In the nineteenth century, shipbuilding in the Maritimes region of Canada as a whole, and in Maitland in particular, comprised a booming industry; shipyards were located all along the Minas Basin shore (Forbes & Muise, 1993; Gwyn, 1998). This history of shipbuilding is one focus of the area's tourism, which along with agriculture, constitute the two major employment sectors in the area. The Maitland area has a small number of businesses that serve the local population as well as several parks, art galleries, museums, and outdoor tourism companies. Since this research was completed, , the elementary school in Maitland was review by the school board and faces closure due to low enrolment.

4.4.2 Participant Recruitment and Data Collection

Community bridgers were used in this study to identify potential participants and avenues of recruitment, including key community publications and gathering places. Community bridgers are individuals and organizations with knowledge of and connections in the community (Kevany, Biggs, Ma, & MacMichael, *submitted*) and were identified using the networks of the primary researcher and through contact with the municipal office. As the study design and target population did not lend

themselves to a random sampling method, snowball sampling was essential to recruitment (Rérat, 2013).

Sources of data included two groups of participants, key informants and young in-migrants, identified with the aid of the community bridgers. Key informants were chosen to provide context, as they had different perspectives due to their age and role and because for the most part they had been in the community much longer than the young in-migrants. Young in-migrants were defined as individuals who had moved into the rural community in the past two to seven years and who were in their twenties at the time of the move. The age range of 20 to 29 years was chosen to capture a wide range of in-migrants in a demographic that generally sees net out-migration (Rothwell et al., 2002a). As in many rural areas, there were few young in-migrants to the community, resulting in a limited population from which to recruit participants. Two to seven years was chosen as a range of time since migration because it would be recent enough that participants would be able to remember their original motivations for moving into the community, yet long enough that there was some permanence to the move. An upper limit was imposed to reduce challenges associated with memory recall and post hoc rationalization of participants (Bijker et al., 2012; Stockdale, 2006).

In order to capture depth and complexity, one-on-one interviews and small focus groups were chosen as the main methods of data collection. Questions were framed to gain an understanding of context; motivations, experiences, and contributions of young in-migrants; and potential for current and future initiatives to attract and support young people to rural communities. Six interviews were conducted with key informants. Seven key informants were interviewed in total: three male and four female. One male and female participated as a couple. Most had grown up in the community, while two had moved to the community in the last ten years. Key informants included a municipal councillor, the owners of two local businesses, and two retired individuals. All key informants were or had been heavily involved in a volunteer capacity within their community. To engage the young in-migrants and ensure ease of participation, group and one-on-one interviews were used depending on the availability of the participant. One group and one individual interview were conducted. Four young in-migrants participated. All were females between the ages of 22 and 36. One participant was married and had one child and the other three were single with no children. An inclusive call was made for any in-migrants in the area to participate and, while this is a small number of participants and all were female, it represents a large majority of the in-migrants in the target age group in the

case study area. This was confirmed through discussions with participants and other community members.

All conversations were audio-recorded with the informed consent of the participants. The audio recording of the focus groups and interviews were fully transcribed. Identifiers were removed and pseudonyms were given to participants to anonymize their responses. Transcriptions were coded to reveal themes and patterns, using NVivo 10 software. Tables 1 and 2 show the basic coding structure. Three major subject areas (i.e., motivations, experiences, and contributions), were constructed deductively based on the literature review and reflecting interview and focus group questions. Within each of these areas, themes were revealed inductively (Table 1). In addition to themes that fit explicitly in one of these areas, there were a number of cross-cutting themes (Table 2). These were created as separate codes. During analysis, connections between these cross-cutting themes and the major areas of inquiry were explored using node matrices built using NVivo 10 software.

4.5 Results

Discrete themes were revealed around motivations, experiences and contributions to community (Table 4.1). Other themes emerged that pertained to or cut across all three areas of inquiry (Table 4.2). Each is presented and discussed in detail in the following sections.

Table 4.1 Main areas of inquiry and key themes arising from analysis

Main Areas of Inquiry	Key Themes
	Economic reasons
	Having a family
Motivations	Physical landscape
	Quality of life
	Mixed or negative experiences
Experiences	Positive experiences
	Age specific
	Diversity
	Economic
Contributions	Energy
	New ideas and perspectives
	General positive
	Getting involved

Table 4.2 Cross cutting themes arising from analysis

Cross Cutting Themes
Access to services
Agriculture
Challenges
Economic imperative
Expectations
Environment
Not for everyone
Real estate
Rural versus urban
School
Seasonal work
Tourism

4.5.1 Motivations

In this section, factors involved in the young migrants' migration decision-making, as well as comments made by these individuals and the key informants about why young people might want to move to the community or rural places in general, are revealed. Key informants and young in-migrants also provided ideas for what might entice more young people to move to rural communities. Major elements include quality of life, life course, physical landscape and amenities, and economic and employment factors. These factors are presented below.

4.5.1.1 Quality of Life

Lifestyle factors, such as simplicity and sense of community, featured prominently in migrants' decision making. These included both pull factors of what they expected to experience in Maitland, as well as push factors that had sent them looking outside an urban environment. Pull factors were perceived as positive attributes of the community, such as simplicity of lifestyle and sense of community.

> *But yeah, you have to want a simpler life if you come out here. Because that's what you're getting. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*
>
> *And that's one of the things that draws people…. that they like, it gives a sense of community. If you're here, the community is here with you. (Bradley, Key Informant)*

Comparing the quality of life or lifestyle they could have in a place like Maitland to their past experiences, mostly in urban settings, was a common theme accounting for push factors. Some individuals looked at the migration decision as a direct response to their negative experiences in urban places, while others said they enjoyed both, but would still rather live in a rural place. The potential for a slower pace of life and increased balance were seen as main benefits of a rural lifestyle when compared to an urban one.

> *I think a huge drive, to be honest with you, to come out here is just, like, I really did not want to live in a city anymore, I really didn't. (Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)*
>
> *There are people, younger people, who are very different than…my generation and older in their desire for balance and lifestyle and all of those kinds of things. (Debbie, Key Informant)*

Participants and key informants recognized that, although they felt this way, not everyone would be motivated by these things.

> *Like I said, if you're not from the area and, you know, like the lifestyle, there's not much to attract you to come here. (Bradley, Key Informant)*
>
> *If they're looking for a certain lifestyle, if they like to go to the bar or, you know, the theatre, you know, any of those more urban type of activities, then they're not going to stay in a community like Maitland. (Debbie, Key Informant)*

4.5.1.2 Life Course – Having a Family and School

Many of the key informants described Maitland as a good place to raise kids and said that they thought aspects of community, safety, and schooling would be motivating factors for young people.

Only one of the young participants had a child and she said that the small school in Maitland was a significant factor in her and her partner's decision to move there.

> *It's a great place to come raise your family. (Chris, Key Informant)*

> *And we also really were attracted to Maitland because it has a school and we were going to have a family. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*

4.5.1.3 Physical Landscape and Amenities

The physical landscape was a contributing factor in the young migrants' decisions to move to the area, related to quality of life. References to the tides, the bay, and the beauty of the landscape were frequent. Having visited the area and seen its beauty influenced their decisions to move there.

> *I think it was mostly the connection to nature and the fact that, from where I live, I can walk to the beach. The tides are so incredible. (Sarah, Young In-Migrant)*

> *I'm where I want to have my vacation at. I moved to where other people have to travel to… I can watch the sunset at the bay. (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)*

> *It's like, well look around, it's a no brainer. Like, this place is paradise. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*

Several key informants mentioned the proximity to urban centres as a benefit that would attract young people. None of the migrants mentioned that as an explicit piece of their decision-making, although one is a co-owner of a business that relies on easy access to markets in Halifax and another found employment in the outskirts of Halifax.

4.5.1.4 Economic Opportunity and Employment

Although quality of life was the major draw of rural living for participants, economic and employment factors were considerations in the decision making of young-migrants, and key informants identified several opportunities in this area as a way to attract migrants. Both groups of participants recognized the necessity for anyone moving to or living in a rural place to be able to make a living.

The availability of low-priced real estate was mentioned by several people as a draw as well as an opportunity for attracting migrants. Availability of jobs and opportunity in tourism were cited as potential elements as well.

> *I could see possible benefits if we were to… get all the empty houses in some kind of an advertisement and send it to a place like Fort McMurray where there are people who are in the middle of their career, and … they're stressed out… And*

who may say, 'maybe I won't make as much money there but I could probably buy
a waterfront property or a heritage house or something and live for practically
nothing'. (Debbie, Key Informant)

If there's availability of jobs and support from the government, then it's easier for
young people to make that decision. (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)

And then there's the bigger opportunities; like, we do happen, in Maitland, to live
in an area where there's a lot of tourism potential, and we're just starting to see
more businesses starting to open up. (Debbie, Key Informant)

Although employment-motivated migration did not seem the norm in Maitland, two young women had moved specifically because of their interest in agriculture. This type of self-employment was linked significantly to the lifestyle that one could have as a farmer and to the physical attributes of the area.

I wanted to work on a farm and I wanted to grow stuff, and mostly, yeah, I just
really wanted to be outside, grow stuff and to be able to have the space to do that!
(Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)

Overall, the migrants were motivated to move to Maitland based on lifestyle factors over economic ones. The low price of real estate was mentioned by several as a positive aspect of living in a rural area and this potentially increased the feasibility of such a move. Exploring migrant motivations may illuminate why young people might move to a rural community. But perhaps more interesting to rural policy makers and communities are their experiences once they have arrived and whether or not they will stay. Individual migrant experiences are examined in the following section.

4.5.2 Experiences

This section provides a general description of migrants' experiences following their move to the community, focusing on what has influenced their experiences and plans for future mobility. Migrants were asked whether or not their experiences matched up with their expectations prior to moving. For the most part, migrants did not feel they had many expectations.

I didn't really have expectations. I think some of my early designs or plans or whatever
were probably misinformed a little bit, but not, I don't know. It wasn't like I had
expectations, but I've just learned so much more of the details. (Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)

4.5.2.1 Positive Experiences: Neighbours and Community, Quality of Life, Personal Growth, and
Intentionality

Overall, the young in-migrants expressed having a positive experience in moving to and living in the Maitland area. When asked directly whether their experiences have been negative or positive, all responded that they have been very positive. Key elements here were the friendliness and neighbourliness of other residents, which contributed to a strong sense of community. Participants felt that they belonged, that the community was friendly, and that these factors had influenced their enjoyment in living there.

> *You get to know people so quickly here, because it's just so small. And everybody,*
> *if you're new, people, like, look at you and, if you dare, you talk to them and then*
> *you're, like, you're in, right? You get invited to people's homes pretty easily.*
> *(Ellen, Young In-Migrant)*

> *I have a close relationship, I would say, with, like, pretty much all the people that*
> *live around me. Close enough that I would trust that they would take care of*
> *something if something were to go wrong or if I needed them. (Tracey, Young In-*
> *Migrant)*

Many of the factors that had motivated their migration were significant factors in their experiences. Quality of life factors, such as the beauty of the physical landscape and simplicity compared to an urban lifestyle, factors that had attracted them originally, remained significant in their feelings about the community now that they had been living there for some time.

> *I love to step out of my house and be at work and be at home in a second and then*
> *go out and get my beer and watch the sunset. (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)*

In addition to discussion of general positive features of living in Maitland, young in-migrants also discussed how that experience had impacted them. Several felt that living in Maitland had contributed to their personal growth and that they had learned new things that they may not have otherwise learned. Two of the participants expressed that they had learned a lot about the environment and related issues, particularly organic farming, local food, and hydraulic fracturing, the latter of which had met considerable opposition in the region.

> *You start to think a lot differently about what's going on around you because*
> *that's where you're getting your water and your food from, right? (Sarah, Young*
> *In-Migrant)*

Some of these positive experiences were specific to the area, but many were about living in a rural area in contrast to an urban one.

> *Yeah, a whole, a more whole feeling of existence. I love the cities and I love the stink and the chaos, but this is way more meaningful on a day-to-day basis. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*

Another factor identified in the positive experiences of the migrants was the intentionality and the effort that they made to take part and meet people in the community. Although others in the community were generally welcoming and friendly, the young women felt that to develop relationships and become part of the community, an active effort on the part of the newcomer was required.

> *But it came later, when I decided to be here long-term, pretty much, that you get more and more involved in other things. (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)*

4.5.2.2 Challenging Experiences and Responses: Employment and Services

Although the participants reported positive experiences overall, they were not without challenges and there were other factors in their decisions to stay long term and whether or not they would recommend the experience to others. The biggest challenges were related to finding good employment and access to services and activities.

> *I don't meet a lot of people who are, like, 'I'm here to work'…. That's a struggle. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*

> *There's not as many social opportunities. If you're the type of person that likes to go to a coffee shop, which I am, there's certainly no coffee shop around. (Sarah, Young In-Migrant)*

In particular, respondents mentioned the risk of losing the elementary school in Maitland.

> *When it will happen, I don't know; but you have a school like that closing, it becomes really difficult to be here. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)*

The response to these challenges depended on the individual, but resilience was revealed in the strategies and efforts that some participants employed to stay in the community. Long commutes, to the city (Halifax) or other parts of the country, in particular the oil sands region of Alberta, were one of the strategies used to maintain economic stability while living in a rural area. This particular passage reveals what one woman has experienced to stay in the community.

It's been four and a half years. I lived in seven different places, I lived without running water, I worked or pursued over twenty-three different ways of making a resume. Whether it's a job or a self-start-up venture…, I'm constantly flying by the seat of my pants and on the edge, making it work. (Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)

Participants also recognized that although all of them loved living in Maitland, this lifestyle was a choice and was not necessarily the best choice for everyone.

It needs to come in each individual's head. And everybody feels it in themselves, too. Where do I want to be? (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)

Despite this, the young in-migrants felt overall that more young people could benefit from living in rural communities. The young women felt that living in a rural place had positive impacts on their emotional and physical well-being.

People need to realize that this is an opportunity and an option for them to change their lives into something completely different, which they might actually, a lot of people might actually, really need. (Ellen, Young In-Migrant)

4.5.2.3 Should I Stay or Should I Go?

The original motivating factors point to what influences migrants' long-term decision-making. Individuals may move to a rural community for some of those things, but whether or not they stay depends on these and a variety of factors including employment, life course, and changes in situation. One participant demonstrated that great experiences are not always enough to keep someone in a community. Other factors such as having a stable income and changing life goals were influential, as were changing circumstances in the community itself. Although she expressed a love for the community and did not regret moving there, other factors, such as the school closing and a lack of employment, have prompted one participant's decision to move to another province.

And I know, personally, I've had a bit of a hard time making a decision to leave it because of that reason, right? … Quite honestly, if that school was going to stay open, I think we might have toughed it out. Well, I don't want to say 'toughed it out'; but, I mean, we would have stayed longer than we are going to now. That was [a] big turning point for us. (Tracey, Young In-Migrant)

4.5.3 Contributions to the Community: Energy, New Ideas and Perspectives

Rural leaders and community members are interested in in-migration not only because of the potential for positive experiences for the individuals, but for the impact on the community more broadly. Consequently, we examined the perceived community contributions of young in-migrants in

rural places based on comments from young in-migrants and community leaders in Maitland. The two most common themes revealed in responses to the question 'what do young people bring to the community' were energy, and new ideas and perspectives. Key terms and phrases used by key informants and young in-migrants to describe this were: energy, creativity, innovation, risk-taking, vitality, try new things, fresh ideas, young blood, and youthful spirit. Newcomers can share new perspectives and experiences with locals, expanding individual viewpoints. Key informants and young migrants qualified how this might be different from what locals or older in-migrants might be bringing, although there was recognition that all newcomers could bring energy and new ideas to some degree.

> *There's lot of opportunity for the big ideas and for the little ideas, I guess. And those ideas aren't going to come from people who have been here forever. They come from, most often from, people who come here, discover it, love it and want to start something, want to find a way to make a living. (Debbie, Key Informant)*

> *Oh they bring in fresh ideas, they bring energy, which we need lots of. They bring in, you know, just a whole youthful spirit. (Mark, Key Informant)*

> *I think young people moving into the community brings energy. Like, even when you're not doing that much. (Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)*

A third key theme is related to the volunteer base and community activities in the Maitland area. Volunteer burnout was a common concern among community members and it was generally acknowledged that more young people are needed to keep initiatives going. This more structured element of contribution revealed linkages between contributions, social networks, and formal involvement in community. Several participants felt that the more intentional young people are in their desire to be in the community, the more likely they are to contribute through participation in community events and volunteering. All of the young women mentioned their own personal involvement in multiple community organization and events.

> *It's hard to keep those core volunteers because a lot of them are interacting volunteers that work in all the other ones. And with less people it becomes more work, and pretty soon you're at the stage where you burn out. (Bradley, Key Informant)*

> *The younger people are quite active in the community because they chose the community. (Olivia, Key Informant)*

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Entrepreneurship and job creation were not heavily discussed as benefits derived from young people moving into the community, although one young in-migrant said that they had begun to hire more local people on their farm. Young in-migrants, in addition to contributing through their own actions, are seen as a benefit to rural communities just by simply being there. In Maitland, which like many other rural communities is experiencing population decline, in-migrants can help to maintain or increase service levels. This is particularly relevant in Maitland as participants identified the need for more young families to keep the local elementary school open.

> *I think most people realize that without young people, we can't, we can't thrive, we can't grow, we can't probably even survive as much of a community. (Debbie, Key Informant)*

> *When the young people come, it's a boost and a bonus because they're bringing their families back, there's more children to go to your school to keep your numbers up, so you're not worrying, you know, 'Is my school going to close because we don't have enough numbers? Are we going to lose this service?' (Bradley, Key Informant)*

Although participants acknowledged that any newcomers to the community would be of benefit to the community of Maitland, there was specific value seen in adding young people, particularly as they are currently a small proportion of the community. One in-migrant felt that they, as women, potentially had a positive impact on the young girls growing up in the area.

> *I notice sometimes in here, like the gender roles are very postdated…. I do see a difference in the generation of the girls coming up, but I always want to be a good example…. And I just think we contribute by giving those girls a… twist on what a gender norm is and give them different things to think about. (Kaitlyn, Young In-Migrant)*

Having diversity in age or other factors was seen as a benefit to rural communities.

> *I think it certainly is. I think in any community a mixed population is a very good thing. So, I can't see any downside to it and I would have to think that it could, it could only be a good thing. (Mary, Key Informant)*

Diversity is not without challenges, as one key informant pointed out. Introducing new perspectives and ideas into a community has the potential to cause tension. This was not extensively talked about, however, and generally in-migrants and key informants were positive about newcomers getting involved in community activities. All participants agreed that, overall, increased in-migration of young people would be positive for Maitland, and indeed for any rural community. The young

women were involved directly in volunteer organizations, attended community events, and developed relationships and sense of community, demonstrating formal and informal contributions to community life. The energy, new ideas and perspectives, and new bodies they bring to organizations and events were viewed as extremely positive by key informants and with enthusiasm by the young female in-migrants themselves.

4.6 Discussion and Conclusions

This research, through exploring the motivations, experiences, and community consequences of young women in-migrating to rural Nova Scotia, adds to the literature on rural and youth migration and provides some potential entry points for policy review or change for community leaders and policy makers. It should be noted that, while the focus in the research discussion was on young people more generally, all of the migrants sharing their personal experience in this analysis were women. These young women represented the majority of individuals who fit the criteria of having moved back at a young age within the last seven years. This is interesting, as Corbett (2007) found that in the contemporary context, women tend to move away from rural areas at higher rates than their male peers. Women's experiences in rural areas, however, have historically been differentiated by gender, and class, and have changed over time. For example, Beattie (1992, 2000) revealed how young women in one generation would out-migrate from Nova Scotia, and support the family farm back home as well as themselves, while young women in a later generation would in the main support themselves, and would not be providing financial support for the folks back home in Nova Scotia (and also were less likely to return home, as well).

The women did not explicitly frame their motivations, experiences, and nor for the most part, their contributions, as particular to being a woman or as confined to women in general. Further research looking at both male and female in-migrants to rural places could help to distinguish the extent to which motivations, experiences, and contribution are influenced by gender. The motivations of the young women in the case study are similar to those of other in-migrants in previous research. Primary motivators were social or personal in nature, but economic factors did play a role, consistent with the findings of others (Bijker et al., 2012; Bruce, 2007; Rérat, 2013; von Reichert et al., 2011). Contrasting to some research on rural migrant motivation, these individuals were not drawn by family ties to the area. Quality of life factors were the main motivators for migration, and in some cases, this resulted in a trade-off of economic stability, similar to results from research in other parts

of Canada, as well as the United Kingdom and Australia (i.e., Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Drozdzewski, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). While employment was not the main reason for moving to the area, it was a factor in the experiences of individuals and their future decision-making about whether or not to stay long term in the community after they moved there.

This research adds to the understanding of what happens after the initial decision-making process is over and demonstrates that migration does not end with the move. Although many researchers have focused on the initial move and the motivations behind it, migrants' responses to challenges demonstrate that what happens in the destination community is still part of the migration process. The general experiences of migrants and the challenges they face, combined with their personal values and goals, influence their vision for themselves and the community long term. In this case, all participants were happy with their decision to move to the Maitland area, but at least one has made the difficult choice to leave as a consequence of the challenges faced after the move. Despite initial motivating factors to come to a community, internal or external circumstances can change (e.g. school closure, loss of employment, birth of a child, life goals, etc.), and this can prompt another move, this time away from the community. This points to the potential importance of interviewing individuals who have moved into a community and have been living there for several years as well as those who moved in and did not stay if the researcher is interested in longer term impacts of in-migration.

Social elements of the community were found to be a key factor in the experiences of the young in-migrants in the Maitland area, similar to other research (Hanson, 2013; Stockdale, 2006). Elements including friendliness and a strong sense of community contributed to the overall positive experiences of migrants. Maitland participants showed, however, that quality of life factors, including social capital, may not be sufficient for retention in all cases, a result that potentially contrasts with previous research about the importance of social networks to immigrant retention (Bruce, 2007; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Similar to the decision of whether or not to move to a rural community (Marshall & Foster, 2002; Stockdale et al., 2013), this second migration decision, whether or not to leave, was found to be a highly individualized decision. For example, one woman experienced significant employment and economic barriers but had resolved to stay in the community, while another has made the decision to leave based on difficulty finding local employment as well as the potential closure of the school. The differences in this decision-making process were related to personal elements including life-course and long-term goals of individuals.

Connections were revealed between the experiences of in-migrants and their potential to contribute positively to components of community well-being, such as sustainability, prosperity, vibrancy, and resiliency. Similarities to past research findings were found, but overall, this exploration of community consequences to in-migration allowed for a richer picture of the perceived impact as participants responded to open-ended questions about the impact of the participating women and young in-migrants generally. Young migrants have the potential to add to the economic and ecological sustainability of the Maitland area through their interest in organic and small-scale farming practices, and an increased awareness of and involvement in environmental issues. The economic prosperity of the region was considered to be positively impacted through additions to the tax base of the area, and efforts to maintain services, such as the elementary school. Unlike other research, which has focused on new business and employment creation (Kalantaridis, 2010; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b), this was not a major theme explaining the perceived importance of newcomers to the community. Young people moving into the community was seen as a major boost to vibrancy, through increased participation in community events, increased diversity in experiences and worldviews, and, as also found by Brown (2002) and Kalantaridis (2010), the introduction of new energy and ideas. Resiliency, a key element of future community well-being (Magis, 2010; McIntosh et al., 2008), is potentially enhanced through various means: an increased volunteer-base to draw on in times of need; a sense of intention and commitment to the community from these individuals; the potential for these individuals to inspire others to move to or get involved in a rural community; and, consistent with Flint (2010), an increased diversity of experiences and worldviews. The women showed personal resiliency and elements of 'survivalism' (Corbett, 2013) to make things work, and 'tough it out', in a rural place.

This research demonstrates the potential to attract young people to rural communities based on quality of life. Yet elements in addition to general quality of life are needed to meet the service and economic imperatives of individuals. In the context of this case study, the closure of the Maitland school is seen as a significant loss to the community by all participants, and represents the removal of a major leveraging item for attracting and retaining young people, particularly those with or looking to start families (Bennett, 2013).

As participants pointed out, life in a rural community is not for everyone; attraction strategies, as a function of policy, should likely be targeted to individuals with values or interests aligned with rural living. More research is needed to identify these groups, but potential targets might be individuals

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with interest in community neighbourliness, off-grid living, small-scale or organic farming, or nature-recreation/tourism. Building on this study, further research focused on in-migrants in particular contexts could be beneficial for policy makers, community organizations, and local governments looking to attract and retain young people. In the Nova Scotian context, this research adds to the province-wide effort to improve factors of well-being, with increased in-migration and retention as key goals.

Chapter 5: Return Migrant Motivations, Experiences, and Contributions in Liverpool, Nova Scotia

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5.1 Statement of Student Contribution

M. MacMichael coordinated the primary data collection, conducted analysis, and wrote all sections of this manuscript. K. Beazley, K. Kevany, D. Looker, and D. Stiles provided supervisory oversight of the data collection and actively contributed to the writing process.

5.2 Abstract

This paper examines the motivations, experiences, and contributions to community well-being associated with the return migration of young people in the rural community of Liverpool, Nova Scotia, Canada. Key themes from interviews and focus groups were identified, looking at the decision to return, individual experiences of the return process, decisions regarding future migration, and the role and importance of young return migrants to the community. The primary motivation for return was 'home', which was seen by participants as a safe and familiar place, particularly in transitional times. For the participants, the return 'home' was associated with their childhood home and parental support, rather than specific characteristics of the community. Although living away was considered beneficial to the personal development of migrants, it also led to difficulties for individuals as the new experiences and perspectives they had gained from being away impacted their social relationships and satisfaction with Liverpool. Value placed on family was a key factor in the experience and plans for the future of migrants. Increased diversity, energy, new perspectives, and positive impacts on the future of the community were identified as key elements of in-migrant benefits. Increased youth in-migration was seen as critical for the future sustainability of the community. Return migrants were mixed as to their individual involvement and contributions.

5.3 Introduction

This paper examines the motivations and experiences associated with the return migration of young people in a rural community in Nova Scotia, Canada, and the contributions of these individuals to

community well-being. While discourse has traditionally focused on 'keeping' youth in communities, it is now acknowledged that it may be beneficial for both the individual and the community if youth 'go out into the world' to gain education and experiences (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Stockdale, 2006). Migration out of the familial home is also seen as a natural part of the life course (Glendinning et al., 2003), although independence from the family has been challenged as a normative developmental trajectory (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012). Once youth leave, however, they often do not come back to the community, particularly in the short-term (Dupuy et al., 2000b; Stockdale, 2004). Communities are then faced with a net loss in human capital; that is, the present and future skills, experience, networks, and leadership of these young people are not available to their former communities (Eversole, 2001; Rothwell et al., 2002a). Communities are then challenged to come up with ways to attract and retain new sources of this capital. While communities desire and require increased numbers of youth, it may not be ideal for all youth to live in rural areas, based on their individual experiences and preferences (Gabriel, 2002).

Return migration, a topic of research increasing in popularity (Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Rérat, 2013), has been identified as a potential source of repopulation in remote rural areas, particularly those with minimal new in-migration (von Reichert et al., 2011). Compared to out-migration, however, return migration has had relatively little research (Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Rérat, 2013) and this research often focuses on who is returning and why. Although the focus has been on out-migration, which contributes to community decline, Stockdale (2004) purports that it is "not the over-arching problem for the future of rural communities; instead it is the small numbers who return", and therefore, increased efforts to understand and encourage return migration are needed (p. 188). To help address this gap, this paper focuses on return migration.

Several key questions are explored within this paper. Why have some young people returned to their rural communities when the trend is toward the opposite? How has the process of leaving and returning impacted these individuals' personal growth, perceptions of the community, general experiences, relationships, and social networks? Are these young return migrants planning to stay in the community long term? From the perspective of the young return migrants and other community members, how do return migrants impact community well-being? What challenges arise for young return migrants trying to be involved or make a difference in the community? These questions are addressed using qualitative data from a case study in Liverpool, Nova Scotia. Before results and

analysis are presented, the theoretical and geographic contexts will be discussed to provide context for the interpretation of research findings.

5.3.1 Return Migrant Characteristics and Motivations

In order to return, there must first be an initial move away from the community. Out-migration rates are highest between 18 and 24 years of age as young people leave their parental home (Dupuy et al., 2000b; Rothwell et al., 2002a). After age 25, in-migration rates begin to increase, but these rates are not enough to make up for the population lost in the younger cohort. It has been found that the longer out-migrants are away from their original community, the less likely it is that they will return (Stockdale, 2002; von Reichert et al., 2011). A life course perspective can be used to explain changing perceptions of attractiveness of rural places to individuals (von Reichert, 2002). For example, return migration often coincides with young people having or deciding to have children. von Reichert (2002) also found that socioeconomic characteristics and motivations did not differ significantly between return and new migrants, while Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) found that return migrants were likely to be younger than new migrants. Not all return migrants, however, have the same characteristics and motivations (Newbold, 2001).

In the decision-making process, community and family ties can be a critical factor, with many return migrants citing family and social reasons as major decision criteria in their move (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Rérat, 2014). In Rérat's (2013) study of young graduates in Switzerland returning to their rural home region, he found that five factors were considered important in their return: closeness of friends and family, employment opportunities, the rural setting, a good environment for having a family, and general attachment to the area. In a comparison of motives of return and non-return migrants in Sweden, Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) found that return migrants were more likely to cite social reasons, such as being close to friends and family, as a motivating factor. The idea of 'home' is also a significant factor in returnee motivation (Haartsen & Thissen, 2013).

Recent research suggests that jobs, rather than being a key motivating factor, are what allow potential migrants to act on their true motivations (Rérat, 2013, 2014). That is, "the decision to return is more than simply a logical outcome of the labour market" (Rérat, 2013, p. 14). In some cases, individuals may wish to return home for social or familial reasons, but the limited labour market is seen as a constraint (Stockdale, 2002). Rather than any of these factors in isolation, migrants often

simultaneously consider a "family-lifestyle-jobs bundle" in migration decisions (von Reichert et al., 2011, p.42). In Maitland, Nova Scotia, migrants were found to be initially influenced by quality of life factors, while economic factors and access to services shaped decisions of whether to stay or leave the community in the long-term (Chapter 4). Overall, migration is a complex process that is influenced by multiple motivators (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012).

A common theory in the area of return migration is the failure hypothesis. This hypothesis attempts to explain return migration as an outcome of failure, possibly related to incomplete information about the destination on the part of the migrant, resulting, for example, in job loss or a negative social experience (DaVanzo, 1983; Farrell et al., 2012). The failure hypothesis is now seen as an oversimplification of motivations and individual migration decisions (DaVanzo, 1983; Farrell et al., 2012; Haartsen & Thissen, 2013). Repeat migration, that is, the subsequent moves after the initial move into or out of a community, can be planned from the outset of the initial move or can be unplanned in a long-term sense (DaVanzo, 1983). Haartsen and Thissen (2013) examined the failure hypothesis and found that it was accurate in some instances, but that 'transitional' was perhaps a more accurate framing to explain return migration. Newbold (2001) presents a typology of return migrants, which aligns with this framing. Young adult returns to the parental home were linked to 'a retreat to safety and security' in the case of failure, or as transitional accommodation between education and employment or between jobs (Newbold, 2001). In these cases, there may be an intention to only stay short term in the community. For example, Stockdale (2002) found that a significant proportion of migrants in rural Scotland returned home for some period of time before a secondary move away from the area and referred to these individuals as 'temporary returnees'. Countering the failure-success dichotomy, some researchers have highlighted the importance of seemingly unimportant or mundane life events (Horton & Kraftl, 2006). Repeat migration may be due to failure, but there are myriad other potential explanations that the migrants themselves might give and often moves may be attributed simply to 'the way life goes' (Valentine, 2003).

5.3.2 Post-Move Experiences

Migration is not a one-time event, even though many analyses treat it as such (DaVanzo, 1983; Farrell et al., 2012). The experiences of migrants, as well as their motivations in returning, can point to the likelihood of them staying long term. Research has identified several factors in the decision to stay or leave after migrating. People who own their homes are more likely to stay (DaVanzo, 1983),

whereas a job-education mismatch could be a reason to leave a peripheral area (Corbett, 2007; Iammarino & Marinelli, 2011).

Much of migration research focuses on motivations, thus ending with the move itself. The phenomenon of repeat migration is just one piece of evidence of the value in examining the process and experiences involved after the initial move is made. When qualifying the experiences of migrants after moving, one may find it useful to look at overall success in terms of objective economic measures, but perhaps more importantly also with regards to individuals' personal perceptions of the migration process. Employment can be key to a migrant's experience. In their research on employment strategies of return migrants in rural United States, von Reichert et al. (2011) found that return migrants often sacrifice career elements, such as a specific job or income level for the quality of life factors presented by their rural home. In some cases, work is seasonal or precarious, necessitating various strategies by individuals and households (von Reichert et al., 2011). This could influence both migrants' perceptions of the community and intentions to remain in the long-term.

During the decision-making process, the migrant will have chosen the receiving community for particular reasons, such as perceived economic, social, quality of life, and environmental opportunities. When post-migration experience does not match expectations, this can lead to unhappiness for both migrants and locals (DaVanzo, 1983; Stockdale et al., 2013; von Reichert, 2002). Therefore, previous experiences and knowledge of migrants can influence their experience in and ability to contribute to a new community.

The values of migrants have been found to greatly influence their perception of happiness or success. In their study of return migration in rural Ireland, Farrell et al. (2012) observed that migrants who were unsure about or felt they had no choice but to return, were more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. Whereas if their goals are consistent with a rural lifestyle, they will make more of an effort to make a life there and have a more positive experience (von Reichert et al., 2011). Return migrants in rural Ireland identified both positive (safety, community, family, peace and tranquility, friends) and negative (lack of services, availability of rural transport, and little change) aspects of returning to rural Ireland (Farrell et al., 2012). This is consistent with Haartsen and Thissen's (2013) finding that youth often have conflicting feelings about 'home'.

A feeling of belonging or being part of the community is important to migrants and can be conceptualized through components of social capital (i.e. trust, networks, and norms) (Falk &

Kilpatrick, 2000; Marshall & Foster, 2002; Stockdale, 2004; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Research in Australia revealed feelings of strong social connectedness among newcomers was positively associated with having children, perceived high levels of support from employer upon arrival, and a longer period of stay, while home ownership and level of English proficiency did not correlate with strong social connectedness (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008).

5.3.3 Community Contributions of Return Migrants

Return migration is of interest to rural scholars and policy makers because of its potential to positively impact rural and remote communities. Out-migration is considered beneficial to individuals as they gain education and broaden their experience (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Stockdale, 2006). If they then return, they bring with them increased human and social capital. Return migrants in Ireland claimed they had "gained substantial experience, strength of character and ability to deal with diverse populations and situations" and "felt that the experiences, skills and abilities they obtained abroad were invaluable once they returned" (Farrell et al., 2012, p.40). Indeed, Stockdale (2004) captured the importance of young people in rural settings by writing, "undoubtedly without the energy and enthusiasm of young adults little may be achieved" (p.187). While all in-migrants, newcomers and returnees bring new human capital, and incoming young people generally add to the diversity of a community (Milbourne, 2007), returnees have the potential added benefit of both new and old perspectives on the community and they have local social ties. Because of this, in-migration of returnees can bring a mix of social sustainability and new ideas and perspectives when compared to other in-migrants (Copust & Crabtree, 1996).

Quality social interactions and components of social capital that are supportive to migrants are important for both individual and social capital (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). As social capital is built, trust and belonging can add to the richness of conversation, and therefore to collective and individual learning (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000). Through this learning, both locals and incomers may be changed by migration, and change can happen at a community level as well (Marshall & Foster, 2002). Similar to the phenomenon of a large ethnic population attracting more immigrants of the same ethnicity (Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007), a large or growing youth population may contribute to higher levels of youth in-migration through established social networks.

Simply having increased young people returning does not insure holistic contributions beyond an increased tax base. A research project by the Center for Rural Entrepreneurism, which surveyed over

6,000 young adults Nebraska, Missouri, and Kansas, found that young people were not generally asked for their input on how rural communities might attract and retain more young people (Dabson et al., 2010). There may be potential then, to increase the contribution of young people, both in-migrants and those who have stayed, through the inclusion of their voices in community processes. More than just attraction then, support and retention are the ultimate goals of strategies to recruit young people, as greater long term benefits are felt by the destination community (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008).

5.4 Methodology

5.4.1 Geographic Context

Out-migration of rural youth has been of concern in Nova Scotia for more than 100 years (Brookes, 1975; Rothwell et al., 2002a; Thornton, 1984). Over the period from 1966 to 1996, the Atlantic Provinces experienced relatively low migration rates due to minimal rates of both in- and out-migration (Rothwell et al., 2002a). Youth were the most mobile and the 20-24 year old group showed the highest rates of out-migration (Rothwell et al., 2002b). These were followed by relatively high in-migration rates of individuals 25-29 (Rothwell et al., 2002b), but these were not enough to make up for the out-migration of the younger cohort. Youth out-migration was most pronounced in Atlantic Canada and was paired with stable urban youth populations, pointing to high levels of youth lost through inter-provincial migration (Tremblay, 2001). The out-migration of young people has continued as a challenge for rural communities in Nova Scotia (e.g. Bollman, Beshiri, & Clemenson, 2007; Lambert, 2005; One Nova Scotia, 2014).

The greatest population losses in Nova Scotia can be attributed to interprovincial flows (to Alberta for work in the oil sands, for example) and these losses are particularly evident in youth populations (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006). Population projections show overall population decreases, as well as significant decreases in the labour force (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006; One Nova Scotia, 2014). While these demographic trends will affect all of Nova Scotia, rural areas are expected to be more negatively impacted (Canmac Economic Ltd. et al., 2006). These historical differences, combined with the current high levels of aging and increasing draw to employment in other provinces, point to a topic of great concern for policy makers in Nova Scotia (One Nova Scotia, 2014). It is within this context that rural youth return migration is explored.

5.4.2 Study Area

This paper focuses on qualitative data from a case study in Liverpool, a rural community on the South Shore of Nova Scotia. Liverpool is approximately 140 kilometres from Halifax, the only city in mainland Nova Scotia. The case study area consists of the former town of Liverpool and includes participants from within the former town boundaries as well as the adjacent communities that use Liverpool as a service hub, most notably Brooklyn, which lies across the river from Liverpool and is home to the now closed site of the Bowater Mersey Paper Company mill.

Figure 5.1 Map showing location of Liverpool in Nova Scotia and Canada

Liverpool is the economic, political, and service hub of the Region of Queens Municipality. Historically, its main economic bases have been fishing and the lumber industries. For many years, a major employer in the region was the Bowater Mersey Paper Company. Due to a variety of factors including decreases in the global price of paper, the mill closed in 2014. At the time of its closure, it employed 320 people (Ware, 2014). This closure has been dominant in the public discourse around Liverpool for several years and its importance was reflected in the number of times the mill was referenced by participants. Tourism is also important to the region's economy. The area is adjacent to Kejimkujik National Park and National Historic Site as well as several ocean beaches, freshwater lakes and rivers. Liverpool's population as of 2011 was approximately 2660, down 3.8% from 2006 (Statistics Canada, 2012a). The table below shows the net-migration rates of the target age cohorts in Nova Scotia and Liverpool (Table 1). Out-migration in Liverpool was several times higher than the provincial rate from both 2001 to 2006 (7.5 times) and 2006 to 2011 (4.2 times). This pattern was also apparent in the youth population.

Table 5.1 Comparison between Provincial and Liverpool net-migration rates in target age cohorts and total population (Raw data from Province of Nova Scotia, 2014a, 2014b).

Age Cohort (year born)	Net migration from 2001-2006		Net-migration from 2006-2011	
	Nova Scotia	Liverpool	Nova Scotia	Liverpool
June 2, 1976 to June 1, 1981 (age 23-34 in 2011)	-9.9%	-10%	-1.9%	-14.8
June 2, 1981 to June 1, 1986 (age 25-29 in 2011)	-8.1%	-25.7%	-8.5%	-26.9%
June 2, 1986 to June 1, 1991 (age 20-24 in 2011)	-	-	-3.0%	-25%
Total Population	+0.6%	-4.5%	+0.9%	-3.8%

5.4.3 Recruitment and Data Collection

This research was conducted in unison with similar work on a case study of Maitland, Nova Scotia (Chapter 4). Recruitment and data collection followed the methodology, coding, and analysis processes that are detailed below. This research targeted two groups of participants: key informants and young return migrants (Chapter 4). Key informants included a local business owner, staff and elected officials of the municipality, and active volunteers. In this study, 'young return migrants' had moved into the rural community in the past two to seven years and were in their twenties at the time of the move (Chapter 4). In choosing this age range, this research was able to explore the processes within this in-migration, and also provide insight into youth experiences directly after completing post-secondary education (Rérat, 2013).

A community bridger was used to initiate the recruitment process (Kevany, Biggs, Ma, & MacMichael, *submitted*). As potential participants were identified by the community bridger and came forward from advertising efforts, further participants were found using snowball sampling. Four key informants were engaged through one-on-one interviews and five young return migrants participated in two small group interviews of two and three people. Four of the return migrants were women. One of these women was married and one lived with her partner. All other returnees were single. All of the returnees had moved back to Liverpool not long after finishing a degree or diploma and had been back for varying lengths of time.

A largely inductive coding analysis was applied to the transcribed interviews. Key themes were described under the three areas of inquiry: motivations, experiences, and contributions (Chapter 4). Various cross cutting themes were identified that intersected more than one of the key areas of inquiry. Connections between these cross-cutting themes and the major areas of inquiry were explored using node matrices built using NVivo 10 software.

5.5 Results

Key themes arose from the focus groups and interviews, particularly from the responses of the young return migrants. Key themes were identified looking at the decision to return, individual experiences of the return process, decisions regarding future migration, and the role and importance of young return migrants to the community. Each is presented and discussed in detail.

5.5.1 The Decision to Return

Return migrants were asked about their motivations in coming back to the Liverpool area. The primary theme arising was the idea of 'home'. Similar to findings by Haartsen & Thissen (2013), home was seen by participants as a safe and familiar place, particularly in transitional times: when looking to save money, between university and employment, or after losing a job. For the participants, the return 'home' was associated with their childhood home and parental support, rather than specific characteristics of the community of Liverpool. Some of these moves had been planned, like in the case of Nicole, who moved home after university to save money for travelling. Others, like Oliver, felt that they had no other options due to financial burdens. Oliver had moved away to school and then work. When his job in Western Canada did not work out, he came back to his mother's home. '*So… I already had the debt from the first time I went to school, and then I had the added debt from that one, so I had no money whatsoever…. So really,… I didn't know what else to do'.* Similarly, for Kaleigh, Liverpool represented a place to come home to, in her case after university when looking for a job. Her primary motivation in coming to Liverpool was not a particular job, although she did hope to find work as a teacher, but that she had a home to come back to while she looked: '*I had a place to come back to,… that's why I came back home'.*

In addition to these moves for economic stability and familiarity, there were also associations with moving 'home', motivated by proximity to friends and family, which have been commonly cited by

return migrants in other geographic contexts (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Rérat, 2013). These moves also had an 'unplanned' sense, in that these individuals did not leave Liverpool with the intention to move back permanently at a specific point in time. Circumstances, however, had worked out so that the move was seen as positive. Catherine wanted a rural lifestyle and valued the family connections she had in Liverpool, although would not have likely returned home so soon if not for her husband inheriting the family home.

> *We inherited my husband's house…. And we kind of really wanted that rural lifestyle I guess…. My family is all here…. We kind of moved back…, it wasn't all by choice, all at the same time.*

Laura, who also strongly valued her family connections in the area, was initially unsure how long she would stay. Her original return was necessitated by a bursary she had received to complete her nursing degree.

> *I had a bursary through the hospital, so that I had to do a two-year return of service, and then a sign on, so a third year. And I always thought that maybe when my three years was up I'd move away, but I'm still here, four years later.*

She commented that she would likely stay long-term as her boyfriend had bought a house, corroborating other research that showed homeownership greatly influenced the likelihood that individuals will stay in the community (DaVanzo, 1983).

Key informants also provided their perspectives on why a young person might return to Liverpool. A major theme described by key informants was having a family. For key informants, quality of life, availability of recreational facilities and quality of local schools in Liverpool were considered important. They acknowledged that, while young families may be attracted for those reasons, there also need to be economic opportunities for them to come and stay.

> *They appreciate the social and natural environment. And providing they have access to a stable income, they're pleased to be here. (Keith, Key Informant)*

> *Most times the reason they return is because of a conscious decision based on the fact that they're raising or they want to raise a family, they now appreciate what they left and all it has to offer in terms of being safe, and small, and friendly, and having all the facilities they need for their family. (Kayla, Key Informant)*

These potential motivators for young people identified by key informants contrasted with the participating return migrants, none of whom had children, and only one of whom mentioned rural lifestyle. These individuals were motivated by other factors, as discussed above. Only Catherine

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mentioned rural lifestyle as a reason she was content to come back and live in Liverpool. '*We kind of really wanted that rural lifestyle…. I like living rurally, I like the freedom that I have…. I didn't really like living the city as much as I thought I would.*'

5.5.2 Individual Experiences of the Return Process

All of the young in-migrants were returnees and therefore had lived outside the community for a period of time before returning. Being away was heralded by both the return migrants and key informants as a beneficial experience for personal growth in many dimensions. Many echoed the comments of Danielle, a key informant who had grown up in Liverpool, moved away for a decade, and since returned to raise her own children. '*Frankly, I think everybody should leave…it's always helpful if you've been anywhere else. It's all about perspective and appreciation*.'

According to Danielle, leaving was preferable to staying for the both the individual and the community. For individuals, they were able to gain experiences and education, meet new people, and broaden their perspectives. If they returned to the community, they brought fresh insights and appreciation. Danielle had been part of a group working to implement a farmers' market, and according to her, most of the opposition to the project came from individuals who had always lived in the community, while those from away or who had been away, were happy with the idea. The return migrants held similar viewpoints. Kaleigh, who returned after attending university in a neighbouring province, was happy with her decision to go away for school. '*When I went to university, I sort of found out who I was… more so than I would have if I'd stayed in this town…. god knows where I would be if I'd stayed.*' Oliver felt that it was not simply beneficial to go away after finishing high school, but that it was necessary for success: '*…it seems like if you wanted to go anywhere with your life, you needed to go away*'.

Although leaving and living elsewhere was considered positive by all participants, returning to and settling back into Liverpool had resulted in mixed experiences. Some participants did have positive experiences related to living in a small town and being close to family.

> *I'd say mine's positive. Like, I'm at the point, my cousins are all having babies, so it's the whole family life, everybody's back here. (Laura)*

> *To sum it up, basically, I don't think there's a day that goes by that I don't actually look around and think 'I'm so glad I'm here.' You know? (Catherine)*

Others felt that there were few career, recreational, and social opportunities for them in Liverpool.

> *Coming back here it's just like everything has stagnated for me. (Kaleigh)*

> *Romance options are next to nothing.... that's a tough one. (Oliver)*

> *It's just boring here. There's nothing really for me to do anyway. Like I say, when
> I lived in the city, there was so much more to do. (Nicole)*

Although all participants had spent at least most of their childhoods in Liverpool, coming back and living as young adults was a different experience and had changed their relationships with the town. The new experiences and perspectives they had gained from being away impacted their perceptions of various aspects of the rural community. Although all participants had family and some peers in the community, leaving had separated them. Catherine, who had come back earlier than others in her age group, felt that being away, while positively impacting her personal development, made it more difficult to form relationships, at least initially. *'I mean, if it did do anything, it made me feel more like an outsider when I got back. You know what I mean?'*

Both Kaleigh and Oliver commented on the quality of their relationships and networks since moving back.

> *I found that I had more of that community when I was in [university] than I do
> here. I just found a group [there] that I...connected with better. (Kaleigh)*

> *the people that I do hang out with, you almost hang out with them because they
> have the, they've gone away, they've come back, so you have that much in common
> with them. But,... almost none of your hobbies match, almost none of your
> interests match. You just hang out because you're a similar age. And that's not to
> say that you can't have very good conversations with them or do good things with
> them. (Oliver)*

In both focus groups, participants mentioned that they were now spending time with people that they only kind of knew or were not friends with in high school. Their social circles had changed, partially because they spent time with people who had left and returned and partially because there were not many people their age.

> *I didn't really make any new connections when I moved back home, but sort of
> altered existing connections. (Kaleigh)*

> *We've got a little core group of friends of people who have come back, versus
> people who have stayed the whole time. But when we throw parties and stuff, we
> always invite everybody in our age group that we know. (Catherine)*

One negative aspect of their changed social networks and relationships was that Kaleigh and Catherine felt they had to work to overcome the perception that they were still children. As the large majority of their years in the community had been as children, Kaleigh and Catherine felt that the community still viewed them as such. In the community events and organizations that these two were involved with, as well as in their careers, they have had to work hard to build a new identity based on their own character and abilities.

> *I get ignored for these group things, mostly because I still get viewed as a high schooler or as my mother's daughter. Everybody knows me through my mother. (Kaleigh)*

> *Yeah, I've had to make that separation very, very clear because my parents are very well known in the community and, in order to forge my own path, I've had to really work hard at cutting ties. I only use my married name. (Catherine)*

The return migrants and key informants described differences between young people who left the community and returned and those who stayed and started working in the area directly after completing high school. According to participants, the individuals who stayed had different lifestyles, desires, and values than those who left, and that 'stayers' are more likely to be 'settled down' at a younger age and have less formal education. Young return migrants identified potential tension between those who left and got an education and those who have been in the community the whole time. Kaleigh was quick to qualify that they did not judge those who had stayed, but were glad they were able to make the choice to go away.

> *A lot of people who stayed, settled. They wanted to stay with significant others, have families, whether or not they stayed or not is neither here nor there. Or they found a job right off the bat…. Not to say anything against people who did stay, I mean, that's their decision and a lot of them are quite happy with their decisions. It's just, I'm happy with who I am at this point. (Kaleigh)*

5.5.3 Decisions Regarding Future Migration

The young return migrants were mixed as to whether or not they planned to stay long term in the community. Three of the participants do not see Liverpool as the place they will be 'settling down' forever. They are looking for career opportunities, which they do not see in Liverpool.

> *It hasn't been awful, I haven't, … living here hasn't made me want to move away. It's just the opportunities aren't available here for what I want to do. So that's why I want to move away, basically. (Kaleigh)*

I've had a positive experience, but truthfully, I am looking to move on…. the reason is, … I don't see any way to go anywhere in my career here. (Oliver)

For those participants who felt they had little choice in moving, or saw it as a temporary stop, there were no plans to stay long term.

It's not where I want to stay for the rest of my life, but it's sort of a stopping point on the way, maybe. (Kaleigh)

Catherine and Laura, however, own houses and are in long-term relationships, and see long-term futures for themselves in Liverpool. The relative importance of family connections for individual migrants was revealed. Catherine and Laura stated that family was an important reason for them to stay in the area and a positive part of their experience. Nicole also had a lot of family in the area, but did not feel that was enough to make her stay. Oliver and Kaleigh had fewer family connections in Liverpool and felt that they could easily leave the community and make their home somewhere else.

But my entire family is scattered across the country. Like, I don't, … any place I am I can make home, basically. (Kaleigh)

I like living rurally, I like the freedom that I have…. I want to have kids here. I would prefer to stay here, in my own house, with my family, with my uncles. (Catherine)

5.5.4 Role and Importance of Young Return Migrants in the Community

Key informants were positive about the impacts of newcomers to the community. They identified increased diversity, energy, new perspectives, and positive impacts on the future of the community as key elements of in-migrant benefits. Some of these elements were particular to return migrants, while other comments referred to in-migration broadly.

Those who return, … as well as the new people coming in to the community, first timers in the community, tend to come full of enthusiasm, very positive; they breathe new life into the community. (Keith, Key Informant)

They bring a new perspective because they… if they've been here and then left and come back again… and they can help to share that perspective with their families, who've maybe never left, and their social circle that maybe they left behind that… I think they have a huge, a huge amount of potential. (Kayla, Key Informant)

I think people who have had other experiences and then come here…or come back here, they're excited. (Danielle, Key Informant)

While the discussion focused on young return migrants specifically, key informants viewed increased young people as a benefit to improved diversity of the population. The community generally saw more in-migration in the older population and, as in many rural communities in Nova Scotia, an increasing proportion of retired people.

> *I mean, every different person, every different age group, every different background, brings a unique possibility…. People my age are going to have different interests and they're going to add different benefits to the community they live in. (Colin, Key Informant)*

These benefits were attributed to any newcomer as each adds something unique. Impacts specific to young people were also identified.

> *…they bring the vigour of youth. They have a long time, not a short time, future…. if they have children, they are very focused on family and looking to make improvements in the community or strengthen what's already there. (Keith, Key Informant)*

> *You need the young people. They're the people who take jobs … and they're the people that are going to look after the retirement community as they age…. So it's a vital part of that cyclical motion, you know? You can't have all of one thing and not the other. (Danielle, Key Informant)*

The young return migrants themselves were asked about their own potential roles and impacts as returnees in the community. Their responses echoed the conversations with key informants, covering themes of diversity, new ideas and perspectives. Increased youth in-migration was seen as critical for the future sustainability of the community.

> *We do get new people moving in. They're usually middle-aged or older. And they bring in ideas that tend to be along the same lines as every other person's of that age group is in this community. And it's just where we've been exposed to university, we've gotten liberal educations, we've been exposed to more than we could have been in… if we'd stayed here our entire lives. And in some ways it is helping the community when we bring in these ideas. (Kaleigh)*

> *Yeah, if they want [rural communities] to survive down the road. Because what happens once all the seniors are gone? (Laura)*

> *Well, in the past we've been the ones keeping it… keeping them going. (Oliver)*

> *There is a role for young people I think. I think you're the prime example of what Liverpool needs. We need medical professionals, we need homecare workers, we need people to work in the nursing home. (Oliver)*

Catherine and Kaleigh felt that it was very important for young people to step up and be actively involved. This was beyond simply bringing more children or taxpayers but related to being an active part of community organizations and processes.

> *But, I do think it's important for young people to get involved in the political process, or involved with community. And a lot of things will die if we don't. (Catherine)*

> *And what made me want to do that, was that I felt like there were a lot of people, a lot of people were in the same plays over and over again, that sort of thing. But also, if I don't step up, who's going to do it next? You know, we can't have the same actors forever! We can't have the same directors forever. Someone needs to get in there and like… learn. (Catherine)*

> *Because otherwise everyone's going to leave all at once and nobody will be there to do it and then we'll have to figure it all out from scratch. (Kaleigh)*

The return migrants had varying levels of involvement in community events and organizations, and this impacted their sense of community.

> *So, I think that there is some push back against some of the… it's like the community's kind of dying but everybody's trying to really hard fight against it. I feel like I'm part of that. (Catherine)*

> *I find since I moved back home I'm less involved in the community outside of work. Just because a lot of my friends aren't here.… My interests don't really fall in with a lot of the community groups that are available in this community. (Kaleigh)*

> *I don't really sort of pay attention to that, I guess…. I just sort of stick to myself. (Nicole)*

> *I did a lot during high school. But once I moved back, like I said, I'm on four or five different committees, groups at work, the union involvement, and… I don't have time for anything outside of that. (Laura)*

Catherine was initially lonely and somewhat unsure about her decision to return to Liverpool, but by investing herself in community organizations, she began to feel a greater sense of community.

> *But my perspective started changing the more I got community involved. So, like, I,… one of the first things I did was I, tried out for two plays, got in both of them, and started interacting with people that way. I started joining committees. When there were community meetings and they needed opinions, I always gave them, because I felt like if I didn't do it then there wasn't a voice for young people. So that kind of has given me a sense of place in the community. (Catherine)*

The returnees identified several challenges to contributing actively. Kaleigh and Catherine felt that they were not taken seriously or listened to, both because of their age and due to the established perceptions of community members who knew them as children growing up in Liverpool. Others identified a lack of specific opportunities for volunteering that match their interests.

> *It just seems my opinion is not valued because of my age. I've been running into that quite a bit; we've been organizing this event this weekend and a couple people I'm working with have dismissed me quite often because of my youth. And I'm thinking… okay do you see anybody else who is willing to do this right now? (Kaleigh)*

> *This demographic actually is the smallest demographic, I think, in the community. We are, like, 20-35 year olds, there's hardly any of us here. So, we often get ignored. (Catherine)*

> *The one group, one of them that I'm involved in, I had a really hard time at first. I felt like I really was shoving my foot in the door as hard as I could. (Catherine)*

Through perseverance, Catherine had some success in having her voice heard.

> *It's just actually recently that it's been pretty receptive. I feel like it's because the group did some really big projects and they got a little burnt out and now they're kind of seeing it as a relief. They're like, 'oh she wants to do something. Well, we'll just let her do her thing and see what she wants to do and see what she wants to say. (Catherine)*

Key informants and return migrants saw young people moving in and back as having positive impacts on the community, as increasing diversity and bringing new ideas and perspectives from having lived away. Return migrants were mixed as to their individual involvement, role, and contribution.

5.6 Discussion

This research corroborates past findings that return migration is more complex than a success-failure dichotomy, yet some elements of that theory rang true as part of the motivations for individuals in Liverpool. Even participants whose motivations follow more closely to the failure hypothesis did not have experiences solely defined by this 'failure'. Oliver, for example, had returned when his chosen career did not work out and he felt he had no other options, but he had been fairly successful in finding good employment and creating a life in Liverpool. A 'retreat to safety and security' (Newbold, 2001) was not only evident for those migrants whose experience followed the failure

trajectory, but in some cases was planned from the outset. A transitional explanation of return migration was more clearly applicable. In the literature, this transition is related to a short term stay in the community, before moving on (Newbold, 2001; Stockdale, 2002), and while this was true for one participant who planned to leave as soon as she had saved enough money, others had moved for similar reasons, but had been back for over five years. Although these individuals expressed a desire to move, neither had made definite plans to go. These transitional moves, a potential temporary retreat to the safety and security of home, had resulted in at least some level of stability.

This research, like others before, demonstrates the importance of 'home' to the return migrant. Rather than a motivation solely to be close to family, the security and 'known' of the home was what brought many of these returnees back. Connection to the parental home was a greater motivator than connection the community itself. The role of the parent is shown here and it may be that parents who were more willing or able to support their children if they ran into financial difficulty are more likely to have children who return, although further research would be required to confirm this.

While time living away was described as positive by both returnees and key informants, exposure to other places presented returnees with a new understanding of what life could be like. For some, this solidified the value of a rural lifestyle, while for others, they missed the urban social opportunities and access to services once they returned. This reveals an inherent risk in a strategy that encourages youth to leave, with the hope that they will return once they have increased their personal human capital. Some will return, as they see value in rural living. Others, once exposed to other options, will not return or may not be satisfied with the rural lifestyle if they do. Leaving and then returning greatly adds to the personal development of migrants, but it may also lead to difficulties for individuals as their social relationships are disrupted, and when they return, they may feel like outsiders or that all their friends are gone. Compared to findings with young newcomers to rural communities (Chapter 4), returnees face the added barrier of resolving past or childhood relationships with the establishment of themselves as adults, and potential tensions between themselves and those in their cohort who had not left.

All participants agreed that leaving a rural community is beneficial for the individual who leaves and that there are potential benefits for the community. These community benefits are likely best realized if the individuals return. Although most of the participants were in jobs that were not directly related to their education, there were still some skills transferrable. More important, according to

participants, were the viewpoints and experiences they gained while away. Having experienced other places, returnees felt they were more likely to be accepting of other cultures and of changes to their home community.

The experience of the returnees was complex and difficult to summarize as either negative or positive. The returnees had overall positive associations with home and being around family, but were not happy with all aspects of the community, their social lives, and their careers. Personal value of family was a key factor in the experience and plans for the future of migrants. Those who had a lot of family in the area and valued being close to family cited this as a reason they were happy to stay in the area, even if that wasn't discussed as a reason they returned in the first place. Although all returnees had moved to come 'home', this did not necessarily indicate a strong value given to living near family. The returnees who felt more strongly that they were part of the community and who valued the rural lifestyle or living near family, had more positive associations with the community and were more likely to express a desire to stay in the community. Being close to family was cited as a reason to stay in the community now that they were there for some participants, but it was not stressed as a critical factor in their return. Other returnees were not motivated to stay because of the presence of family – whether because they had little family in the area, or they were not interested in a rural lifestyle.

Similar to findings in Chapter 4, the return migration process did not end with the move for these individuals, and while some were planning on staying, others had not fully consciously settled. The decision to stay was largely unconscious and had potentially occurred overtime, as less of a decision than a progression of various components of the lives of the participants. Laura, for example, had no plans to stay long term, or to leave, but had been there for two years longer than required by her job and was now feeling settled back into the community.

Stable employment was important for returnees, but only one returnee had moved back explicitly for a job. Others cited economic reasons, such as saving money, but initially employment was not a critical pull factor. Now that these returnees had time to get their feet under them and reflect, consideration of career was more central to their decision making. The perception that there were no jobs that met the training or the career trajectory of the returnees was a reason to leave the area, similar to the reaction of youth who had not yet left their rural communities (Corbett, 2007). The decision-making demonstrated by returnees, to leave, to return, and now looking again into the

future, supports the idea of a 'family-lifestyle-jobs' bundle described by von Reichert et al. (2011) and demonstrates that the relative importance of these factors can change over time.

The participation of the returnees in community events and organizations varied. Some were actively involved and felt it was important for young people to do so. Others were less involved due to work commitments and lack of interest or perceived opportunities. Some challenges were identified with getting involved and having ideas heard. The reasons returnees came back to the community, their long-term views, and their values and interests all impacted the extent to which they actively engaged in volunteer and other community processes. An active effort to engage these individuals, particularly those who feel less confident or sure about becoming involved, may be of benefit to rural communities. Although some participants cited initial difficulty in participating in community functions, as they felt they weren't being taken seriously, one participant's success pointed to the increased potential impact as trust is built between new and old members of community groups or organizations.

Transitional returnees may present an opportunity for rural communities. Many of these individuals did not come with a clear plan to leave again or to stay, and so, an active effort could enhance their retention potential. Community organizations could work to engage these individuals, building their connection to the community. Groups could facilitate young-adult-oriented social events and networking to increase perceived social and romantic opportunities. Directed actions such as these could sway returnees who were unsure about their future plans to stay, although as pointed out by key informants and returnees alike, career opportunities are as or more important to young returnees' perceptions of their future in a rural community. Overall this research points to the potential for both rural communities and young return migrants to benefit from increased efforts toward actively recruiting and retaining young returnees.

Chapter 6. Discussion and Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

The presence or absence of young people in a rural place is one indicator of the overall state of the community (Rothwell et al., 2002b). In Nova Scotia, as well as nationally and globally, many rural areas are experiencing net-out-migration of their young people (Gibson, 2008; Rothwell et al., 2002a; Stockdale, 2004) and this has prompted significant attention from academics and policy makers. The recently formed One Nova Scotia Coalition has made youth and international student retention a priority (One Nova Scotia Coalition, 2014). They cite weak economic growth as a causal factor in the loss of youth to other regions in Canada and state that the province needs "significantly higher rates of attraction/retention of inter-provincial and international immigrants to grow the population, increase the number of entrepreneurs, and renew the labour force" (One Nova Scotia Coalition, 2014). This challenge is greater in rural areas of Nova Scotia than urban ones. As rural areas make up 43% of the population, the state of rural communities is critical to the well-being of the province as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2011).

Rural youth out-migration as a phenomenon is fairly well understood, both in the literature and the Nova Scotian context. By focusing on in- and return migration, this research addressed a gap in the literature and contributes to a re-focusing of the discourse on youth in rural Nova Scotia. This research explored the motivations, experiences, and contributions to well-being of young people moving into two rural communities with the aim to better understand the small number of individuals who were going against the larger trend of out-migration; why they came, the implications for communities, and what more is needed from communities and governments to support and encourage individuals to settle and thrive in rural places.

This chapter provides an overview of the thesis and an integrated discussion of results from the two case studies. First, the methods and methodology and the research objectives they were designed to meet are briefly outlined. A brief comparison is then presented of the results from the two case studies discussed in Chapters 4 and 5. Next, key findings are discussed and related to the relevant literature. Subsequent sections describe the limitations, recommendations for policy makers, and potential directions for future research in the area of youth, migration, and community well-being. Finally, some concluding comments are offered about the motivations, experiences, and contributions of young people who have moved in or back into communities in rural Nova Scotia.

6.2 Summary of Methods and Research Objectives

A case study method was chosen in order to explore the processes associated with rural youth in- and return migration at the community level. To reflect the diversity of rural experiences, two case study communities were chosen: Maitland and Liverpool. Two groups of participants were identified in each case study area: key informants and young in-migrants. One-on-one interviews and small focus groups were the main method of data collection. By framing this research on the experiences of incoming young adults, in contrast to the more typical focus on those leaving, space was made for a different conversation. These methods were employed to meet the following research objectives and to answer the sub-questions:

1. Explore, through an appreciative lens, the motivations and experiences of young in-migrants (aged 20-29) in rural Nova Scotia.

    o Why have some young people returned or moved into rural communities in Nova Scotia?

    o What have been the experiences of these young people in settling in, fostering relationships, and making a livelihood?

2. Explore connections between youth in-migration and components of community well-being.

    o How do young people see themselves as contributing to the communities they have moved or returned to?

    o How are young people viewed as contributing by others?

6.3 Comparison – Maitland and Liverpool

Due to the design of this research and the participating young migrants, it was decided that a full comparative analysis of the case studies would not be appropriate. The similarities and differences in community and participant characteristics, combined with results that reveal both common and unique themes, is of interest, however. This section explores these differences, with the acknowledgment that the research design limits the conclusions that can be drawn. This analysis gives context to the key findings discussed in the next section and provides insight as to why some findings are only discussed in relation to one case study community.

Key similarities and differences in the case study areas, in terms of population, geography, and economic factors, are summarized in Table 6.1. The community of Maitland has a smaller and less dense population compared to Liverpool as well as fewer services and facilities within the immediate area. It is closer to Halifax than Liverpool, but the communities were equally close to the nearest small urban centre. Maitland is approximately 45 kilometres from Truro and Liverpool is the same distance from Bridgewater. Participants in Liverpool spoke less about being close to Bridgewater than those in Maitland spoke about Truro, as many services (large grocery stores, medical facilities, etc.) are available in Liverpool itself. Liverpool, once a town in its own right, maintains many of the services of a small town (downtown storefronts, large grocery stores, gas station, high school, recreation centre, etc.). Both communities are next to water and so have historical industries that relied on this access. Both have arts communities, and tourism is important to both local economies. Both communities experienced population decline between 2006 and 2011, but this decline was more pronounced in the Maitland area, which had rates of decline close to twice those of Liverpool.

Table 6.2 summarizes a comparison of research results, including participant characteristics and key themes overall and for each major area of inquiry. In Maitland, all young migrants were new to the community, having grown up outside of Nova Scotia. In Liverpool, however, all young migrant participants were returnees and spent all or most of their childhood in the community. von Reichert (2002) found that socioeconomic characteristics and motivations did not differ significantly between return and new migrants in the same community so the differences between returnees and new migrants in this study may be due to the differences in the destination community, rather than them being returnees or new migrants. Niedomysl and Amcoff (2011) found that return migrants were more likely to be younger and more likely to mention being near friends and family as a motivating factor. As this research had a defined age category, a conclusion about relative age cannot be drawn, however some of the returnees in Liverpool did cite being close to family as a positive aspect of being back in the community. As a motivating factor, however, returnees did not disclose being close to family explicitly, but rather coming 'home' to a place that was safe and secure.

In Maitland, the young women had very positive experiences overall, due to a strong sense of community and quality of life. There were elements of positive experiences expressed by Liverpool returnees, but their descriptions of their overall experiences were much more mixed. This disparity could be due to differences in migrant motivations. In Maitland, the in-migrants had come

specifically to that community, whereas in Liverpool, they had been motivated by a return 'home' rather than by characteristics of Liverpool.

The contributions of both groups, as described by themselves and key informants, were very similar. Key themes of energy, new ideas and perspectives, community sustainability, and diversity were prominent in each case community. All young women in Maitland described being actively involved in volunteer organizations and community events. Returnees in Liverpool varied more in their involvement. This could be related to the size of the communities, with the small size of Maitland facilitating involvement by all. Alternatively, or perhaps in addition, the difference in community involvement of individuals may be due to individual values and preferences. Some individuals in Liverpool felt there were no activities that matched their interest and were looking to someday leave the community.

Participants in both communities were excited to talk about needed as well as existing policies and practices to attract and retain youth in the area. This topic was one of the most prominent in each case study (See Figure 6.1 and 6.2); however, it was not explored in Chapters 4 and 5 as it was not explicitly related to the research objectives. The analysis of this node informs the recommendation section later in this chapter. Social capital was the other node with the most references, aside from main areas of inquiry. Social elements of the communities clearly influenced migrant's motivations, experiences, and contributions. Looking further down the list, however, ideas related to belonging and inclusion were mentioned more in Maitland. In Liverpool, both positive and negative elements of social capital were discussed. While most themes appeared at least to some extent in both case studies, agriculture and environment were not mentioned by Liverpool participants, and codes related to return migration (good to leave and differences between stayers and leavers) were only identified in the Liverpool case.

Figures 6.1 and 6.2 show the relative references for the top codes in each case study. More important than exact number are the relative differences within each table, as the differences in lengths of transcripts and references overall do not allow for direct quantitative comparison between case studies.

Table 6.1 Comparison of community characteristics between Maitland and Liverpool

	Maitland	Liverpool
Population size	762 (Maitland) 1107 (Noel/Walton)	2660
Geography	Coastal (Bay of Fundy and Shubenacadie River)	Coastal (Mersey River and Atlantic Ocean)
Service Level	Limited local services (elementary school)	Many local services (hospital, schools, grocery stores, etc.)
Traditional Industries	Ship building Agriculture	Forestry Fisheries Shipping and Trade
Key Modern Industries	Agriculture Tourism	Healthcare Tourism
Distance to nearest urban centre	45 km	45 km
Distance to Halifax	90 km	147 km
Net migration rates 2006-2011	-7.2% (Maitland) -9.5% (Noel)	-3.8%

Table 6.2 Comparison of results between Maitland and Liverpool

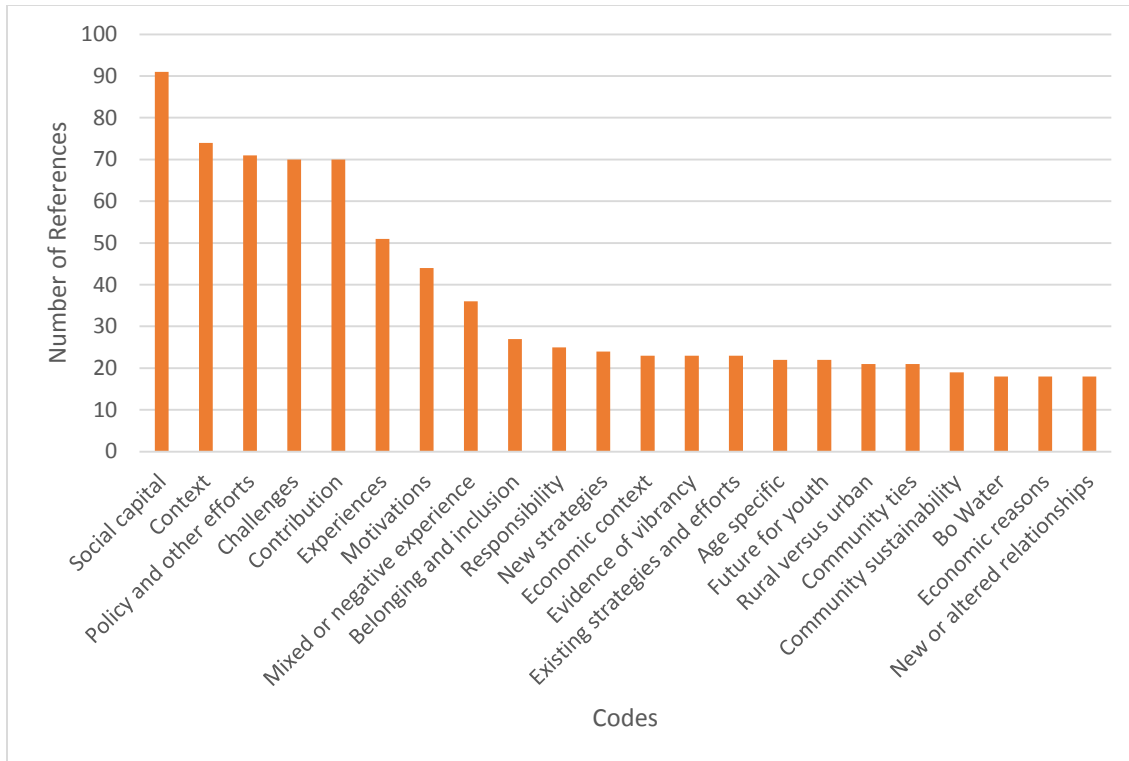|	Maitland	Liverpool
Number of participating young migrants	4	5
Young migrant characteristics	Newcomers	Returnees
Number of participating key informants	5	4
Top 5 codes (excluding Context, Motivations, Experiences, and Contributions)	1. Policy and other efforts 2. Social capital 3. Challenges 4. Belonging and inclusion 5. Existing strategies and efforts	1. Social capital 2. Policy and other efforts 3. Challenges 4. Mixed or negative experience 5. Belonging and inclusion
Motivations	Quality of life Life course Physical landscape Agriculture Real estate prices	Home Economic considerations
Experiences	Positive Sense of community and neighbourliness Quality of life Personal growth Intentionality	Mixed Being close to family Lack of career and social opportunities Changed and challenging social relationships
Contributions	Energy New ideas and perspectives Volunteer-base Community sustainability Diversity High levels of participation	Energy New ideas and perspectives Volunteer-base Community sustainability Diversity Varying levels of participation

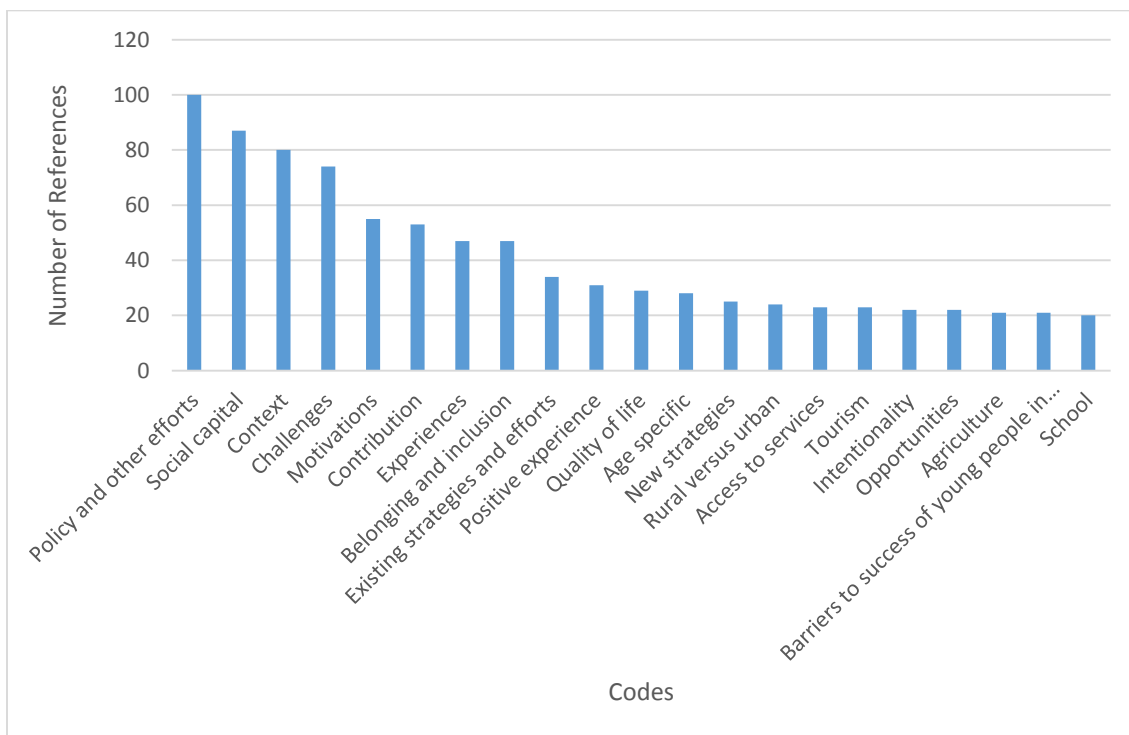**Figure 6.1 Top 22 codes from Liverpool interviews and focus groups by total references**

Figure 6.2 Top 21 codes from Maitland interviews and focus groups by total references

80

6.4 Key Findings and Links to the Literature

This study has eight key findings, some of which are specific to the case community, and others that are more generalizable and are based on the analysis of both cases. Below, in Table 6.3, is a summary of key findings. Following the summary, a more detailed discussion of each point is presented and results are discussed in relation to the relevant literature.

Table 6.3 Summary of key findings

Case Study/Scope	Key Findings
Maitland	1) Primary motivators were social or personal in nature, but economic factors did play a role in the initial decision as well as what migrants thought about their future in the community.
	2) Social elements of the community were key factors in the positive experiences of the young in-migrants in the Maitland area, but were not sufficient in all cases to ensure retention.
Liverpool	3) Return migration is more complex than a success-failure dichotomy; a transitional explanation of return migration is more clearly applicable;
	4) The security and familiarity provided by the parental home were what brought many of these returnees back, rather than a motivation to be close to family or characteristics of the community.
	5) The value placed on family by individuals was a key factor in the post-move experience and influenced plans for staying in or leaving the community.
	6) Time spent living away from the 'home' community is positive for individuals and the community, but it can also create tensions in returnees' perceptions and experiences of the community and in their social relationships.
Both Cases Combined	7) Migration does not end with the move and migrant or returnee perception of experiences post-move can influence whether they will stay long-term or leave sooner.
	8) Both newcomers and returnees are perceived as positively impacting community well-being. Young people moving into the community was seen as a major boost to vibrancy, through increased participation in community events, increased diversity in experiences and worldviews, and the introduction of new energy and ideas. The other key element of contribution is the importance of these individuals to the long-term sustainability of the community, through maintaining services and population base and replacing aging volunteers.

6.3.1 Discussion of Key Findings

6.3.1.1 Maitland

1) Primary motivators were social or personal in nature, but economic factors did play a role in the initial decision as well as how migrants thought about their future in the community.

The motivations of the young women in Maitland are similar to those of other in-migrants in previous research; although, in contrast to some research on rural migrant motivation, these individuals were not drawn by family ties to the area. Primary motivators were social or personal in nature, but economic factors did play a role, consistent with the findings of others (Bijker et al., 2012; Bruce, 2007; Rérat, 2013; von Reichert et al., 2011). Quality of life factors were the main motivators for migration, and in some cases this resulted in a trade-off of economic stability, similar to results from research in other parts of Canada, as well as the United Kingdom and Australia (i.e., Clemenson & Pitblado, 2007; Drozdzewski, 2008; Stockdale, 2006). Lifestyle elements, such as simplicity and sense of community, featured prominently in migrants' decision making. These included both pull factors of what they expected to experience in Maitland, as well as push factors that had sent them looking outside an urban environment. The potential for a slower pace of life and increased balance were seen as main benefits of a rural lifestyle when compared to an urban one. Factors that had attracted them originally remained significant in their feelings about the community now that they had been living there for some time.

 While employment was not the main reason for moving to the area, it was a factor in the experiences of individuals and their future decision-making about whether or not to stay long term in the community after they moved there. The low price of real estate was mentioned by several as a positive aspect of living in a rural area and this potentially increased the feasibility of such a move. Overall, the migrants were motivated to move to Maitland based on lifestyle factors over economic factors. Maitland participants showed that quality of life factors, including social capital, may not be sufficient for retention in all cases, a result that potentially contrasts with previous research about the importance of social networks to immigrant retention (Bruce, 2007; Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Both groups of participants recognized the necessity for anyone moving to or living in a rural place to be able to make a living.

2) Social elements of the community were the key factor in the positive experiences of the young in-migrants in the Maitland area, but were not sufficient in all cases to ensure retention.

Key elements influencing the positive experiences described by migrants in Maitland were the friendliness and neighbourliness of other residents, which contributed to a strong sense of community. Participants felt that they belonged, that the community was friendly, and that these factors had influenced their enjoyment in living there. Influencing this was the intentionality and the effort that they made to take part and meet people in the community. Although others in the community were generally welcoming and friendly, the young women felt that to develop relationships and become part of the community, an active effort on the part of the newcomer was required.

Forming meaningful connections with both other in-migrants and locals creates a sense of belonging for individuals and adds to the social capital held by the community as a whole (Falk & Kilpatrick, 2000; Marshall & Foster, 2002; Stockdale, MacLeod, & Philip, 2013). Social connectedness is a related concept, which grows as individuals join formal and informal groups and organizations within the community (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). Elements of social capital or social connectedness have been found to be important in the settling-in process (Stockdale, 2004) and a necessary factor in the decision to stay (Hanson & Barber, 2011). This research added to the understanding of the importance of social connectedness in the experience of migrants and also revealed that, while it may be a necessary factor in the decision to stay, it may not be sufficient in itself. Plans to stay or leave were based on a variety of aspects including experiences in the community, but also life course, long-term goals, changing service levels, and economic factors.

6.3.1.2 Liverpool

3) Return migration is more complex than a success-failure dichotomy. A transitional explanation of return migration was more clearly applicable.

This research contributed to the understanding of return migration as a complex process, beyond the success-failure dichotomy (Farrell et al., 2012; Haartsen & Thissen, 2013; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Noble, 2013). A 'retreat to safety and security' (Newbold, 2001) was not only evident for those migrants whose experience followed the failure trajectory, but in some cases was planned from

the outset. A transitional explanation of return migration was more clearly applicable. In the literature, this transition is related to a short term stay in the community, before moving on (Newbold, 2001; Stockdale, 2002), and while this was true for one participant who planned to leave as soon as she had saved enough money, others had moved for similar reasons, but had been back for over five years. Although some individuals expressed a desire to move, none had made definite plans to go. These transitional moves, a potential temporary retreat to the safety and security of home, had resulted in at least some level of stability. This demonstrated the potential for 'transitional' moves to become permanent moves and contribute to in-migration and community well-being over the long term.

4) The security and familiarity provided by the parental home were what brought many of these returnees back rather than a motivation to be close to family or due to characteristics of the community.

This research, like others before, demonstrates the importance of 'home' to the return migrant. Many researchers have found return migrants to be strongly motivated by proximity to family (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Rérat, 2013). While this factored into the experiences and the decision of whether to stay long-term, proximity to friends and family was not explicitly described as a reason to return by participants. Rather than a motivation solely to be close to family, the security and familiarity of the home were what brought many of these returnees back, similar to findings by Haartsen & Thissen (2013). For the participants, the return 'home' was associated with their childhood home and parental support, rather than specific characteristics of the community of Liverpool. Some of these moves had been planned, while others felt that they had no other options due to financial burdens. Although many of the moves were not planned, in that these individuals did not leave Liverpool with the intention to move back permanently at a specific point in time, circumstances had worked out so that the moves were seen as positive.

5) The value placed on family by individuals was a key factor in the post-move experience and influenced plans for staying in or leaving the community.

The relative importance of family connections for individual migrants was revealed through the focus groups. Migrants may not always be aware of the importance of social and family networks in the decisions that they had made, but the complexity of the decision making process can be revealed

through qualitative methodology (Stockdale, 2002). Those that stated that family was an important and positive part of their experience were planning to settle in the community long term. Those that either did not value being close to family or did not have much family in the area were looking to leave. This is important because, although my participants were not strongly motivated to return by the usual factors of being close to family, this value was still an important component of their experiences and plans to stay. This research corroborates the importance of family to return migration found by other researchers (Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Rérat, 2013; von Reichert, Cromartie, & Arthun, 2014), although the motivations described by migrants in the return process did not include family, and therefore show that the level of value placed on proximity to family is variable among returnees and that this may relate to the likelihood of returnee retention.

6) Time spent living away from the 'home' community is positive for individuals and the community, but it can also create tensions in returnees' perceptions and experiences of the community and in their social relationships.

All of the young in-migrants participating in the Liverpool focus groups were returnees and therefore had lived outside the community for a period of time before returning. Being away was described by return migrants and key informants as a beneficial experience for personal growth as well as a positive impact on the community. Out-migration is considered beneficial to individuals as they gain education and broaden their experience (Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Gibson, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Stockdale, 2006). If they then return, they bring with them increased human and social capital. Return migrants in Ireland claimed they had "gained substantial experience, strength of character and ability to deal with diverse populations and situations" and "felt that the experiences, skills and abilities they obtained abroad were invaluable once they returned" (Farrell et al., 2012, p.40). Indeed, Stockdale (2004) captured the importance of young people by writing "undoubtedly without the energy and enthusiasm of young adults little may be achieved" (p. 187).

Return migrants are most often motivated by social and family reasons (Bijker & Haartsen, 2012; Cuervo & Wyn, 2012; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011b; Rérat, 2013), but this research shows that these elements can also provide challenges or barriers to a positive experience once a migrant has returned. The development of character and expanded worldviews through leaving and then returning adds to the personal development of migrants, but may also contribute to difficulties for individuals as their social relationships are disrupted, and when they return they may feel like outsiders or that all their

friends are gone. Compared to findings with young newcomers to rural communities (Chapter 4), returnees face the added barrier of resolving past or childhood relationships with the establishment of themselves as adults. Although all participants had family and some peers in the community, leaving had separated them. In both focus groups, participants mentioned that they were now spending time with people that they only kind of knew or were not friends with in high school. Their social circles had changed, partially because they spent time with people who had left and returned and partially because there were not many people their age. Young return migrants identified potential tension between those who left and got an education and those who have been in the community the whole time. Kaleigh was quick to qualify that they did not judge those who had stayed, but were glad they were able to make the choice to go away.

While time living away was described as positive by all, exposure to other places presented returnees with a new understanding of what life could be like. For some, this solidified the value of a rural lifestyle, while others missed the urban social opportunities and access to services once they returned. Others, once exposed to other options, will not return or may not be satisfied with the rural lifestyle if they do. Similarly, von Reichert, Cromartie, and Arthun (2014) interviewed both rural returnees and out-migrants who had not returned, and found that the experience of urban amenities was a major factor in not returning. The values of migrants have been found to greatly influence their perception of happiness or success. In their study of return migration in rural Ireland, Farrell et al. (2012) observed that migrants who were unsure about or felt they had no choice but to return, were more likely to experience feelings of loneliness and isolation. Whereas if their goals were consistent with a rural lifestyle, they were more likely to make an effort to make a life there and have a more positive experience (von Reichert et al., 2011). The varying and conflicting levels of satisfaction of participating returnees in my research further corroborate these findings.

6.3.1.3 Both Case Studies

7) Migration does not end with the move and experiences post-move can influence whether a migrant will stay or leave long term.

This research adds to the understanding of what happens after the initial decision-making process is over and demonstrates that migration does not end with the move. Many researchers have focused on the initial move and the motivations behind it. Research that does examine post-move experiences is often focused on international migrants and the process of integration (Hanson & Barber, 2011;

Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). The participants' responses to challenges demonstrate that what happens in the destination community is still part of the domestic migration process. The general experiences of migrants and the challenges they face, combined with their personal values and goals, influence their vision for themselves and the community long term.

In the case of Maitland, all participants were happy with their decision to move to the area, but at least one has made the difficult choice to leave as a consequence of the challenges faced after the move. Despite initial motivating factors to come to a community, internal or external circumstances can change and this can prompt another move, this time away from the community. Similarly in Liverpool, the return migration process did not end with the move for these individuals, and while some were planning on staying, others had not fully consciously settled. The decision to stay was largely unconscious and had potentially occurred over time, as less of a decision than a progression of various components of the lives of the participants.

8) Both newcomers and returnees are perceived as positively impacting community well-being. Young people moving into the community was seen as a major boost to vibrancy, through increased participation in community events, increased diversity in experiences and worldviews, and the introduction of new energy and ideas. The other key element of contribution is the importance of these individuals to the long-term sustainability of the community, through maintaining services and population base and replacing aging volunteers.

This research did not seek to quantify the impact of young people moving into rural communities, but rather to explore the multi-dimensional contributions of these individuals to community well-being. Looking beyond the traditional focus of economic impact (Findlay, Short, & Stockdale, 2000; Kalantaridis, 2010; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011; Stockdale, 2006), participants were asked how they felt young people contributed to their community. Key informants and migrants in both case communities were positive about the impacts of young people moving to the community. They identified increased diversity, energy, new perspectives, and positive impacts on the future of the community as key elements of in-migrant benefits. Increased youth return and in-migration were seen as critical for the future sustainability of the community. Volunteer burnout and succession planning for community organizations were concerns among community members and it was generally acknowledged that more young people are needed to keep initiatives going.

6.5 Limitations

As with all research, this thesis has limitations that constrain the scope of the conclusions that can be drawn from the results and analysis. This section presents these limitations and the impact that they have on the outcomes of this research. Although the case studies were selected to be a sample of some of the diversity in the rural landscape and the depth of analysis made for some potential recommendations to be drawn, the results cannot be generalized to represent the motivations, experiences, and contributions of all young in- and return- migrants in rural Nova Scotia or elsewhere. As many common themes exist between these very different case studies, it can be proposed that these common themes are more broadly applicable. Those themes that are specific to the characteristics of the participants (e.g. return or in-migrants) or of the community in question are less reliable as to their generalizability.

6.5.1 Participant Data

Within the recruitment and data collection process, specific socio-economic and demographic information of the participants, other than age and gender, was not collected. This data would have pointed to some of the structural conditions (constraints and opportunities) that may have shaped the decisions participants were able or willing to make and the choices available to them. Although this research focused on the decisions made by individual migrants, it did not deeply discuss the impact of these structural conditions. For example, some individuals may be attracted to the quality of life provided in a rural area, but are not able to move their because they rely heavily on public transit due to financial or health constraints.

As the research objectives were focused on motivations of individual migrants, socio-economic data were not collected. Due to the small sample size, conclusions about causal relationships (e.g. between financial status and moving to a rural area) could not be made. Logically, it could be projected that having a higher financial status would allow individuals more choice. Stockdale and Catney (2012) found that individuals who owned cars were more likely to move to rural areas than those who did not and individuals with higher incomes levels were more likely to move overall (both in and out of rural communities). There are many people with high economic status, however, who do not choose to move to rural communities and so factors other than socio-economic status must be at play in the migration process.

6.5.2 Gender

In research, the semi-structured or open-ended interview is a two-way process that involves both the participant or interviewee and the researcher or interviewer. Characteristics of both parties can influence the flow of the interview, the actual content or responses, the way in which responses are given, and the way that the responses are interpreted. It is therefore important for researchers to critically examine their own participation in the research process. Gender has been a point of particular interest in understanding how the characteristics of the individuals impact the research conducted (Herod, 1993). Gender is considered an important factor in the research process and results (Herod, 1993; Padfield & Procter, 1996; Riessman, 1987) and this is not restricted to cases where the interviewer and interviewee are different genders as "gender relations not only still shape the social interactions between researcher and interviewee, but they also underpin the very context within which the interview takes place" (Herod, 1993, p.306).

Research has shown mixed results on the extent to which gender of the interviewee impacts research. Traditionally, there have been many assumptions, based on perhaps little evidence, about how gender impacts research (Herod, 1993; Padfield & Procter, 1996). Researchers have suggested that men may be more willing to confide in women as they see them as less threatening and that females are used to speaking with men in positions of power (Herod, 1993). Additionally, assertions about the differences in communication, both verbal and non-verbal, between men and women have been used to discuss the way in which researchers understand and interpret responses (Herod, 1993; Padfield & Procter, 1996). Padfield and Procter (1996) reflected on the differences in the interviews conducted with young women by each of the two researchers, one a man and the other a woman. Overall, the responses to questions from both interviewers were similar, but participants were more likely to volunteer additional information beyond the specific questions about one topic, personal experiences of abortion, to the female interviewer. In follow-up interviews, participants were mixed as to the significance of the gender of the interviewer. In principle, most participants felt it was not important, but qualified this based on their own experiences with both genders and with the personality of the specific interviewer (Padfield & Procter, 1996). This seems to indicate that gender can be important, but the level of importance depends on the individuals involved and the issues discussed (Herod, 1993; Padfield & Procter, 1996). As this research did not cover any strongly emotional or gendered optics, such as abortion, it is likely that the gender of the interviewer has little effect, although as all

interviews and focus groups were conducted by the same woman, it is impossible to conclusively prove this.

Additionally, the gender of the interviewer is only one factor shaping his or her worldview and lens. Economic class, race, the place and family structure in which they were brought up, education, and other experiences all shape the way a researcher might interpret a participants responses. As discussed in section 3.7, all researchers must be aware of their position within the research and while recognizing these, attempt to be rigorous and throughout their investigation and analysis.

Not only is the gender of the researcher of importance, the make-up of the participants also influences the data collected. Both case studies have a much greater proportion of female participants than males. This may be representative of reality in these communities, particularly in the Maitland area, but this cannot be known for sure. The small number of participants and the non-probabilistic sampling method used mean that the high number of female participants cannot be used as evidence to propose that females are more likely to return or move to a rural area. It can however, prompt a discussion on the potential reasons more women participated and how the gendered nature of the sample impacted the results. Further research would be required to determine if young women are returning or moving to rural areas in larger numbers than their male counterparts, and potential causes could relate to the changing rural economy, higher levels of education of women, or other factors (Brann-Barrett, 2010; Corbett, 2007; Silvey, 2006). Although the gender distribution may be somewhat representative of the demographic moving to rural communities, that is, perhaps more women are coming to or back to rural Nova Scotia, the low number of male participants means that the male experience is lacking from this research and this represents a limitation. The following is a discussion of the potential implications of this female dominated sample. It is important to note, however, that rural men and women as categories are constructions that gloss over the many other identity constructions that can shape sense of self, worldview, and experience (Corbett 2007). That is not to say that gender is not an important factor shaping these elements, simply that all differences between some men and some women cannot be attributed solely to gender.

Some research has shown that females are less outspoken when there are other male participants. In the one focus group with a male, he did speak more than the other two participants who were female. However, he was the last one to arrive at the focus group and arrives after the focus group had started. Prior to him getting there, the two women were not very outspoken even without a male there

and so I hesitate to draw conclusions about the impact of this male on the amount the women spoke. In the two other focus groups with more than one participant, all of the participants were female and they were also friends with one another. This made for a very comfortable environment, which could have been due to both their gender and pre-existing relationships.

One key informant in Maitland said that her husband was actually able to make friends in the community first because he joined male-dominated groups such as the fire station and "helped people with projects" whereas as she worked outside the community, it took longer for her to meet the other women. However, all of the young in-migrants in Maitland, who were women, felt that it was easy to become part of the community so long as one made an effort. There are several factors at play that could account for this difference including age, the amount of effort put in, and marital status – 3 out of 4 of the participants were single and so could not compare themselves to their partner. Traditionally, social capital was conceptualized as something strengthened largely by women, while men were responsible for the economic stability of the community (Corbett, 2007).

Traditional gender roles and mobility in rural communities are changing, largely due to the changes in the economic base. Historic labour in rural communities was highly gendered (Corbett, 2007). As mines closes, fisheries shrink or restructure, and the forestry industry faces challenges, rural dwellers must renegotiate gender roles to create successful strategies in the new economy. This causes tension between traditional gender roles and what is needed to succeed (Brann-Barrett, 2010). In the Liverpool focus group that included the male participant, there was significant discussion of the forestry industry, in particular the former Bowater Mersey Paper Company mill, which did not happen to the same extent in the other focus groups. Forestry, and other resource extraction industries are traditionally male-dominated work places. This participant's concern about its closure could be related to findings from research in Cape Breton that showed young rural males faced challenges reconciling the role of men as 'breadwinner' with the changing employment landscape in rural Nova Scotia (Brann-Barrett, 2010). This research found that historical conditions and traditional work still shape much of today's norms, which may add to the difficulties faced by young people, who cannot access those same employment opportunities and cultural structures (Brann-Barrett, 2010).

Based on Barnn-Barett's research, the fact that more women participated in this research could be due to a lower preoccupation with being a 'breadwinner' and having more interest in having

access to social structures and support. As the rural economies are changing away from traditional make-dominated industries, young people could see rural places less as male spaces and increasingly for the lifestyle amenities they can provide. Overall, the implications of the gendered nature of the research sample can be discussed looking at characteristics of both genders and also historical economic and social structures that exist within rural communities.

6.5.3 Using Focus Groups

Using focus groups added both benefits and limitations to the research. Participants were able to bounce ideas off one another, creating a generative form of conversation. They were able to connect and hear from others in the same demographic who may have had similar or slightly different experiences. On the other hand, a focus group did not allow me to dive deeply into each individual's narrative and instead provided a 'community-level' view of the areas of inquiry. It did not appear that participating in the focus group impacted individuals' willingness to share dissenting viewpoints or experiences. Participants spoke up when they had a conflicting experience to share and were supportive of one another in doing so.

6.6 Recommendations

This research, while adding to the academic literature, also provides opportunity for learning for the case study communities as well as rural places across Nova Scotia and more broadly. As noted above in the description of the limitations, some findings are more place-specific than others. Below are several broad recommendations for the case study communities based on the researcher's analysis as well as participants' ideas, which governments and organizations in other communities can look to and consider whether they might apply in that setting.

6.6.1 Maitland

This research shows the potential to attract more young people based on quality of life, but certain elements need to remain to meet service and economic imperatives. In the context of this case study, the loss of the Maitland school is a major blow to the community, and is the removal of a major leveraging item for attraction and retention of young people, particularly those with or looking to start families. The provincial government should view rural schools as an economic development issue, not merely an education issue to be left to the Department of Education and the school boards.

Potential opportunities for employment and attraction lie in the tourism industry and low real estate prices available in the area. Increased outreach may be necessary to increase awareness of these opportunities and lifestyle. Municipalities may be best suited to take the lead on this type of initiative, replacing work previously done by the Regional Development Agencies (RDAs). The new Regional Enterprise Networks may also be an important structure to support regional retention and attraction strategies. For international migration, this will also require significant effort at the provincial level to work with the federal government to increase allowable immigration numbers.

As participants pointed out, the rural lifestyle is not for everyone. This means that attraction strategies should be targeted to individuals with values or interests that might be in line with rural living. More research would be needed to further characterize and identify these groups, but potential targets might be individuals with interest in off-grid living or small-scale farming, or individuals who grew up in rural areas. Organizations, such as municipalities, could attend or have recruitment material available at young farmer conferences and other events that may attract such individuals. Building off this small-scale study, more research focused on in-migrants in particular contexts could be beneficial for policy makers, community organizations, and local governments looking to attract and retain young people.

- Attraction strategies should be targeted to individuals with values or interests aligned with rural living.

- If maintaining vibrant rural settings is a goal, then all efforts should be made to maintain the local school.

6.6.2 Liverpool

Transitional returnees may present an opportunity for rural communities. Many of these individuals did not come with a clear plan to leave again or to stay, and so an active effort could benefit their retention potential. Community organizations, which would ideally involve the municipal government as well as local business associations and other key groups, could work to engage these individuals, building their connection to the community. Groups could facilitate young adult-oriented social events and networking to increase perceived social and romantic opportunities. Some examples of this already exist, for example @PulsePictouCounty. Directed efforts such as these could sway returnees who were unsure about their future plans to stay, although as pointed out by

key informants and returnees alike, career opportunities are as or more important to young returnees' perceptions of their future in a rural community.

- Directed efforts should be made to engage those young people who are in the community to increase the likelihood that they will stay long term.

6.6.3 Participant Ideas for Policy and Practice

Participants were asked questions related to recommendations: what, if anything, is being done to attract and retain young people in the community; what should and could be done; and, whose responsibility is it? According to participants, the provincial government has a big role to play, but there needs to be buy-in and collaboration from the municipality and the broader community for any initiative to be successful. Major challenges identified by participants are a mismatch in responsibility and capacity and a lack of targeted programs or policy. Participants felt that the provincial government had the financial capacity, but that local institutions were ultimately responsible. The following is a summary of their ideas for attracting and retaining more young people in rural Nova Scotia.

- Attraction strategies needed to bring youth into or back into rural communities.
    - o Direct marketing campaigns – for example, focus recruitment efforts on individuals in cities who may be interested in an alternative and slower pace of life.
    - o Use commuting workforce as ambassadors for their community and the province to recruit their co-workers and friends to move from Alberta.
    - o Capitalize on quality of life and alternative lifestyle opportunities – understand what the community and the province has to offer that is different. For example, view lack of succession plans for farmers as an opportunity to recruit people interested in farming who may not have access to land where they currently live.
    - o Create a provincial youth strategy to support recruitment and retention efforts across Nova Scotia.
- Create more employment opportunities.
    - o Opportunities to build on specific sectors in each case study: tourism and healthcare in Liverpool, and tourism and farming in the Maitland area.
    - o Encourage telecommuting and online work.

- o Support entrepreneurs and apprenticeships through policy. For example, allow farming as a business under the Self Employment program for individuals on unemployment.
- Remove barriers to vibrancy and growth.
    - o Review and remove policy barriers that make it difficult to start and run businesses.
    - o Acknowledge the importance of seasonal work to Nova Scotia's economy, particularly tourism and farming.
    - o Keep rural schools open.
- Build on what is already here.
    - o Substantial knowledge and energy exists within communities. Rather than employing top-down, one-size-fits-all measures, work with communities to see what make sense in that place.

6.7 Direction for Future Research

A number of further research directions have been identified. First, conducting similar research in more small communities in Nova Scotia would help to generalize findings and create more robust recommendations for rural Nova Scotia. Similarly, finding a rural community with both new young people and young returnees would allow for a comparison between these two groups. This comparison would clarify whether the differences in motivations and experiences are due to differences in destination community characteristics or characteristics of the migrants themselves. Very few studies have been done directly comparing these two groups within the same rural community. Further research could also compare individuals who migrated as young people and have stayed long term (e.g. over 10 years) with those who migrated or returned to a rural community and subsequently left.

Finally, future studies could be used to determine characteristics of individuals who are most likely to move to and value a rural lifestyle. Preliminary discussions through this research point to potential elements such as individuals with interest in off-grid living or small-scale farming, or individuals who grew up in rural areas, but further targeted research is needed. Building off this small-scale study, more research focused on in-migrants in particular contexts could be beneficial for policy makers, community organizations, and local governments looking to attract and retain young people.

6.8 Concluding Comments

The purpose of this research was to explore the flip-side of a critical issue for rural communities in Nova Scotia. Youth out-migration, and more specifically the low rates of in- or return- migration, is a serious concern for rural places around the world and is caused by and contributes to a decline in various elements of community well-being. My research focused on young people who had returned to or moved into two rural communities in Nova Scotia. In each community, I spoke to these young people, as well as community leaders, about why young people do or might move to rural places, the challenges and opportunities that exist for them once they have arrived, and the importance of these individuals to these small communities. I found that the motivating factors for both return and in-migrants were complex and these same motivators influenced their experiences once they were living in the community. Quality of life and social elements, such as neighbourliness and the idea of home, were key in shaping both their reasons for coming and their overall perception of their experience. Economic challenges and lack of specific social activities or services were constraints for these individuals' outlooks on the possibility of staying long-term. Both newcomers and returnees are perceived as positively impacting community well-being, both through increased vibrancy and as critical elements of the long-term sustainability of the community. This research provides rural communities with insight on the motivations, experiences, and contributions of young newcomers to rural settings. It may also offer some rationale for strategic efforts to enhance the attraction and retention of youth.

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Appendix A: Focus Group Question Guide

This is meant as a guide to conversation. Sub-questions will be used as prompts or follow-up questions as needed. If participants have already touched on those elements, redundant questions will not be asked.

Opening:

Hi everyone, thank you for coming today to take part in this focus group. Before we get started, I want to go over the consent form and answer any questions that you might have. [Review consent form]. Now that you have all signed, I am going to turn on the tape recorder and introduce the rules of the circle. [Introduce rules of conversation from flip chart]. Also during the discussion, *name*, my research assistant for the day, will be recording the main ideas and themes that come up in conversation. If you have any comments – you think she missed something or misinterpreted something – just say so. Any questions?

OK, I asked you to bring something with you today that symbolized you, why you moved here, or what you do. We are going to use those objects to open and center our circle. So let's go around the circle. Introduce yourself and why you chose that object. When you are done, place it in the center of the table here. [Go through centerpiece exercise]. Thank you everyone for sharing, as you can now see, we are all connected and present in this circle. Now we can move into the questions, for the first question, let's just go around the circle, after that we can just answer popcorn style with whoever wishes to speak first. Remember, you don't have to answer all the questions. Feel free to comment or add to something someone else has said or insert your own experiences.

Motivations

1. What made you decided to move to Maitland/Liverpool?
   a. Have you lived in a rural place before?

Internal Perceptions

For this next question, I want you all to take a minute to reflect, as you might not have thought about this for a while. Feel free to use the post-it notes to jot down your thoughts… I will give you about two minutes and then we can share with the group.

2. What were your expectations or perceptions of the community before moving here?

    a. Now that you have been here for a few years, were those perceptions valid?

    b. How have your perceptions of the community changed since moving here?

Historical Experiences

3. What was the process of settling in like?

    a. What worked well for you in the moving and settling-in process? What was helpful in making you feel welcome?

    b. How has your life changed since moving to _____? How would you describe these changes?

Networks

4. Do you feel like part of the community?

    a. Have you made new connections within the community?

    b. Are they locals or other newcomers?

    c. Are you maintaining connections with those from your previous community? If so, how?

Contributions and Well-being

5. Can you make a meaningful contribution to the community? Is contributing to the community important to you?

6. Why or why not?

    a. Do you feel that you, as a young person, add to the well-being of the community? In what ways?

Reflection on past and future

7. How would you describe your overall experience living in this community? Negative, positive…

8. Do you plan on staying in the community in the long-term? Why or why not?

    a. Do you see a future here? For yourself? Your family?

9. Should more be done to attract, retain, and support young people in rural communities?

    a. Who should be involved in these efforts?

    b. How can rural communities best integrate and support young people?

That brings me to the end of my questions, and I'd like to give you all a chance to ask any questions of each other or me that you might have. Also, if you have any comments about what has been recorded on the chart paper, please share that now or we can chat after the focus group. So any questions or comments?

Thank you all for participating today and bringing your experiences and insights to our conversation. In the next few months, I will be writing up a summary report of what we learned here today and I will share that with all of you for your records and so that you can give feedback. If any of you have questions or ideas come up that you didn't think of today, feel free to give me a call or send an email. You all have my contact information already, and I have left some cards on the table by the snacks as well.

Appendix B: Interview Question Guide

Hi, _____. Thanks again for agreeing to participate. Before we get started, I want to go over the consent form and answer any questions that you might have. [Review consent form]. Ok, now that you have signed, I am going to turn on the tape recorder [Turn on recorder].

Introduction to participant and the community

1. Can you introduce yourself and your role in the community?
2. Can you tell me a little about Maitland/Liverpool? What is special about it?
3. How long have you lived in Maitland/Liverpool?
4. What is your connection or experience with young people in the community?

Community History and Practices

5. To your knowledge, has the community seen a large number of youth moving into the community over the years?
6. Do these young people stay?
7. Does the municipality/village have any formal or informal mechanisms for welcoming/involving young people? Or Does your organization so anything to attract and retain young people?
8. Do you believe they should? What could they be doing?

Perceptions and Contributions

9. What is the general sentiment in the community towards these new in-migrants?
10. What do you hear from young people about the community?
11. What do you think these young people could be bringing or adding to the community?
12. Do you think the arrival of new young people contributes positively to the well-being of your community?

Appendix C: Consent Letter for Focus Groups

Project Title: Redefining Rural: Understanding the Motivations and Experiences of Young Immigrants in Rural Nova Scotia.

Lead researcher:
Meggie MacMichael
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Dalhousie University
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Halifax, NS
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CONSENT FORM

Funding provided by: Graduate scholarships from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) and the Killam Family Foundation.

Introduction:

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Meggie MacMichael who is a student in the Masters of Environmental Studies program at Dalhousie University. Taking part in the research is up to you; it is entirely your choice. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience or discomfort that you might experience.

Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have any questions later, please contact the lead researcher.

Purpose and outline of the research study:

This research looks at the motivations and experiences of young people (20-29) who have recently moved to rural communities in Nova Scotia. Using two rural communities as case studies, this research will create a clearer picture of the current and potential well-being of rural

Nova Scotia. Group discussions with young people and one-on-one interviews with key community actors will inform the research.

Who can take part in the research study?

Two different groups of people can take part in this study. You must fit the characteristics of at least one group to participate. Group 1 is made up of young people who moved to the community 2 to 7 years ago. People who have moved from within Nova Scotia, other provinces, and foreign countries are all able to participate. This letter is for group 1. If you match the description of group 2, please contact Meggie MacMichael to get the group 2 letter.

Group 2 consists of 'key informants'. These are people who hold a formal or informal position within the community and/or have a deep knowledge and understanding of community history and practices. This could include, for example, municipal employees, council members, business owners, leaders of community groups or non-profits, and long-time volunteers.

How many people are taking part in the study?

Approximately 12 people in each community will be taking part in the study (24 total).

What you will be asked to do:

To help us understand the experiences and motivations of young people in your community we will ask you to take part in a focus group. The focus group will be 2 hours long. The time and place will be determined with those who are interested in participating. Please bring a small object that represents you, why you moved to the area, or your role in the community. During the focus group, you will be seated around a table with about 6 to 9 other people. The lead researcher will ask the group a number of questions and each person in the group may answer or comment. You are not required to answer every question. The focus group will be audio-recorded and a research assistant will take notes.

Possible benefits, risks and discomforts

While there are no anticipated direct personal benefits to you as a participant, some benefits that may arise are the opportunity to contribute to and gain from talking about a sense of community, creating connections, or sharing interesting ideas. These are possible but not guaranteed benefits.

Participating in the study might not benefit you, but we might learn things that will benefit others.

Participants should know that they will take part in a focus group where other members will hear, see, and comment on remarks made. In a focus group, anonymity cannot be protected and confidentiality is not guaranteed. While no discomfort is expected in a discussion about young people moving into and living in a rural community, you may want to decide if an open focus group may create any discomfort for you. Participation in this study is voluntary. As researchers, we will ask for but be unable to guarantee that all participants will respect confidentiality and respectfully guard the content shared during the focus group.

What you will receive for taking part:

You will not get any direct compensation for taking part. To make the focus group experience more enjoyable, food will be provided. To decrease any inconvenience, child/elder care will be provided, if the need is identified.

How your information will be protected:

Information that you provide to us will be kept private. In most cases, only the lead researcher and her supervisor, Dr. Kathleen Kevany, will have access to this information. Study results may be presented in class presentations, thesis and publishable articles, and as articles for Atlantic Canadian news media. When the results of the study are presented and published, we will make sure that no information that identifies you is included. We will give you a pseudonym and remove any other identifying information. This means that you will not be identified in any way in our reports. The people who work with your information have an obligation to keep all research information private. Also, we will use a participant number (not your name) in our written and computerized records so that the information we have about you contains no names. All your identifying information will be kept in a separate file, in a secure place. All electronic records will be kept secure in a password-protected, encrypted file on the lead researcher's personal computer.

If you decide to stop participating at any point during the study, you may do so. You may leave the focus group conversation at any time and you do not have to answer every question. Due to the nature of group conversation, however, we are unable to remove your remarks from the data collected in the focus group. Therefore, anything you say in the focus group will be recorded and included in data analysis.

How to obtain results:

We will provide you with a short description of group results when the study is finished. No individual results will be provided. You can obtain these results by including your contact information on the separate sheet provided.

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Meggie MacMichael at ████████ ██████████████ or Dr. Kathleen Kevany at ██████████████████████ at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study. If you are calling long distance, please call collect. We will also tell you if any new information comes up that could affect your decision to participate.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact the Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University ████████████████████████

Appendix D: Consent Letter for Interviews

Project Title: Rural redefined: Exploring the motivations, experiences, and contributions of young rural in-migrants in Nova Scotia

Lead researcher:
Meggie MacMichael
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CONSENT FORM

Introduction:

We invite you to take part in a research study being conducted by Meggie MacMichael, who is a student in the Master of Environmental Studies program at Dalhousie University. Taking part in the research is up to you; it is entirely your choice. Even if you do take part, you may leave the study for any reason up until your data is analyzed. The information below tells you about what is involved in the research, what you will be asked to do and about any benefit, risk, inconvenience or discomfort that you might experience.

Please ask as many questions as you like. If you have any questions later, please contact the lead researcher.

Purpose and outline of the research study:

This research looks at the motivations and experiences of young people (20-29 at time of move) who have recently moved to rural communities in Nova Scotia. Using two rural communities as case studies, this research will create a clearer picture of the current and potential well-being of

rural Nova Scotia. Group discussions with young people and one-on-one interviews with key community actors will inform the research.

Who can take part in the research study?

Two different groups of people can take part in this study. You must fit the characteristics of at least one group to participate. Group 1 is made up of young people aged 22-34 who moved to the community 2 to 5 years ago. People who have moved from within Nova Scotia, other provinces, and foreign countries are all able to participate.

Group 2 consists of 'key informants'. These are people who hold a formal or informal position within the community and/or have knowledge and understanding of community history and practices. This could include, for example, municipal employees, council members, business owners, leaders of community groups or non-profits, and long-time volunteers.   This letter is for group 2. If you meet the description of group 1, please contact Meggie MacMichael to get the group 1 letter.

How many people are taking part in the study?

Approximately 12 people in each community will be taking part in the study (24 total).

What you will be asked to do:

To help us understand the experiences and motivations of young people in your community we will ask you to take part in an interview. The interview will be conducted by the lead researcher and will take about 40 minutes. You may decide on the location of the interview, such as your office, a boardroom, or café. During the interview, the lead researcher will ask you a series of questions. You are not required to answer every question. With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded.

Possible benefits, risks and discomforts:

While there are no anticipated direct personal benefits to you as a participant, some benefits that may arise are the opportunity to contribute to and gain from talking about a sense of community, creating connections, or sharing interesting ideas. These are possible but not guaranteed benefits.

Participating in the study may not benefit you, but we might learn things that will benefit others. Participation in this study is voluntary.

What you will receive for taking part:

No compensation or assistance with expenses is provided for participation in this voluntary study.

How your information will be protected:

Information that you provide to us will be kept private. In most cases, only the lead researcher and her supervisor, Dr. Kathleen Kevany, will have access to this information. Study results may be presented in class presentations, thesis and publishable articles, and as articles for Atlantic Canadian news media. When the results of the study are presented and published, we will make sure that no information that identifies you is included. We will give you a pseudonym and remove any other identifying information. No identifying personal information will be revealed. The people who work with your information have an obligation to keep all research information private. Also, we will use a participant number (not your name) in our written and computerized records so that the information we have about you contains no names. All your identifying information will be kept in a separate file, in a secure place. All electronic records will be kept secure in a password-protected, encrypted file on the researcher's personal computer.

You are free to leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating at any point during the study, you can also decide whether you want any of the information that you have contributed up to that point to be removed or if you will allow us to use that information. You can also decide for up to two months if you want us to remove your data. After that time, it will become impossible for us to remove it because it will already be analyzed.

How to obtain results:

We will provide you with a short description of group results when the study is finished. No individual results will be provided. You can obtain these results by providing your contact information on the contact form.

Questions

We are happy to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have about your participation in this research study. Please contact Meggie MacMichael at ███████ ████████████ ca or Dr. Kathleen Kevany at ████████████████████ at any time with questions, comments, or concerns about the research study. If you are calling long distance, please call collect. We will also tell you if any new information comes up that could affect your decision to participate.

If you have any ethical concerns about your participation in this research, you may also contact the Director, Research Ethics, Dalhousie University at ███████████████████████

Appendix E: Codebook

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Access to services	Reference to the existence or lack of services (essential, recreational, entertainment) in rural places that make it easier/harder for young people to live there or that might attract a young person to the area.	33	
Agriculture	Reference to farming, agriculture, organic/local food	21	
Challenges	Difficulties in implementing policy, as well as challenges for individuals and communities (economic, social, political, environmental, etc.) broadly. Can be real challenges or perceived (Attitude). In general negative things that people have come up against or think about rural Nova Scotia. This node intersects with many other nodes	137	
Context	Comments that give context (social, political, economic, historical) to the discussion on young people in rural communities (various scales). Includes discussions of global trends (economic) that explain processes happening in the case study areas	266	
Contribution	Comments that relate to participants' (youth) real and potential contributions to their community (economic, social, or other). Contributions rely on both the young person (interest in participating, values, interests, etc.) and the host community (valuing new opinions, open to new committee members, supportive of new business, etc.).	274	
Credentials	Qualities, experience, roles, and characteristics of key informants that potentially demonstrate their knowledge or importance of their participation. Also includes their connection to young people (i.e. their perspective/ability to comment on the topic)	22	
Economic imperative	The idea that no matter what other motivating factors exist, jobs are necessary to keep someone in the community or to attract them there.	32	
Environment	Reference to the health of or factors influencing the health of the natural environment or the importance of the health of the environment to the individual or community.	13	

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Expectations	What participants (youth) expected about the community before moving in or returning. What people moving in to the community might expect (in terms of services, friendliness, activities, etc.).	13	
Experiences	General references to experiences of living in the community (for the young in-migrants).	167	
Future for youth	The outlook for young people in rural communities general and for this community. Not in an abstract way, but will they or will they not stay? What are those factors? Explicit with reference to young people (not just general comments about the future of the community). Does not include the impact of the youth on the future of the community. This node captures young participants' outlooks on their future in the community as well key as informants' thoughts on whether there is a future for young people there	51	
Good to leave	Benefits that arise from (at the community or individual level) when young people leave and have experiences outside of their home community or get education. At the community level, this is often in reference to what they could bring back in terms of perspectives, world views, skills, etc. At the individual level, it could be gaining skills, new perspectives, or general personal growth.	17	
Importance of rural communities	References to why it is important broadly for rural communities to be sustainable and vibrant.	1	
Intentionality	Evidence of intentionality in choice of place or in efforts to stay in that particular place long-term and to make a life in the community	72	
Interesting	Comments that are interesting but do not fit into an existing node	14	
Life course	Refers to specific time periods of someone's life that influences their motivations, values, or experiences. Excludes specific reference to the life event of 'having a family' and the factors which motivate migration in that case, which has its own node under motivations.	8	
Memorable quotations	Quotations that may be useful to include in papers/final thesis to illustrate points	62	

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Missed demographic	Focus on younger or older 'young people', demonstrating that there is a lack of understanding about or a limited number of young people in my age category (20-30).	6	
Motivations	Discussion of why the participant moved to the community or why they would stay there and descriptions of the decision-making process and the actors involved. Includes both real motivating factors as well as reflections on what might or should motivate people to move to the community or to rural areas in general.	169	
Not for everyone	Recognition that rural life is not for everyone and that depending on what people are looking for in life, they could be better or worse suited for living in a rural place. Reasons not to live in a rural place or desire to leave.	20	
Past experiences	Refers to experiences that someone had prior to moving to a rural area that may shape that decision or experience once they are there. (E.g. used to live in a rural place, have never lived in a rural place, came on vacation, loved agriculture, etc.). Also includes more generally how someone's past experiences may shape their willingness to move to a rural place or their experiences once they are there.	17	
Policy and other efforts	Policy or other activity that impacts young people (motivations, experiences) and rural communities generally. Ideas and opportunities for new policy, initiatives, or programs.	422	
Real estate	References to housing prices, housing availability, housing quality (size, style, upkeep) in these rural communities (often in comparison to urban places).	16	
Rural versus urban	Highlighting the differences between rural and urban places that are both real and perceived (emotional, quality of life, economics). Themes such as nosiness and support, access to services, and lifestyle.	45	
School	Reference to schools, education, teachers, etc. in the community. Key sub-themes are the importance of schools to the well-being of a community and the quality of schooling in small places.	36	
Seasonal work	References to work being seasonal in nature	9	

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Social capital	References to components or quality of social capital (networks, ties, relationships, welcoming, belonging, integration, support from community and individuals, etc.)	385	
Stayers and leavers	Discussion comparing people who have left and people who stayed in the community (Liverpool) or comparing people who are new with local people. Also references which group the participants identify with more, if either.	22	
Tourism	Reference to tourism in or around the community (opportunities and challenges)	30	
This generation	Context more generally about challenges and opportunities facing young people in this decade	8	Nodes\\Context
Social context	References to demographics or societal factors that give context	20	Nodes\\Context
Rural trends	References to 'typical' rural communities or 'typical' challenges that rural communities are facing at this time - both social and economic.	16	Nodes\\Context
Youth migration trends	Reference to trends within the community (young people moving in or not) as well as larger global trends that are impacting the migration and movement of young people	22	Nodes\\Context
Heritage	Reference to the heritage of the community and to the role that heritage plays in present day challenges and opportunities.	16	Nodes\\Context
Geographic context	Description of the physical location or attributes of the community	10	Nodes\\Context
Evidence of vibrancy	Events and activities, community spirit, arts community, etc. that demonstrate some level of vibrancy in the community	51	Nodes\\Context
Economic context	Availability of jobs, opportunity for economic development in the community and in rural Nova Scotia generally. Includes references to the general economic climate.	37	Nodes\\Context
Bo Water	References to the Bowater Mersey Paper Company (Liverpool only)	18	Nodes\\Context
Community sustainability	Reference to the future of the community itself and factors that will influence it (economic, social, environmental, etc.) Excludes reference to the future of individuals (young people). Often includes discussion or reference to broader trends that impact local sustainability or vibrancy (aging population, no employment, closing schools, etc.)	36	Nodes\\Context

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Events	Reference to events and activities that are available in the community	23	Nodes\\Context\Evidence of vibrancy
Out West	Referring to people moving or commuting to Western Canada to work	22	Nodes\\Context\Youth migration trends
Other	Additional elements of contribution not included in the other sub-nodes.	4	Nodes\\Contribution
Youth voice	Young people having a say or a voice in what happens in the community. Whether or not they try to speak up and whether or not they are listened to	16	Nodes\\Contribution
Energy	Reference to energy, vibrancy, or youthful spirit as key elements of what young people bring to a community when they move in.	16	Nodes\\Contribution
Diversity	Reference to the need for people with diverse backgrounds, ages, etc. for community well-being (sustainability, prosperity, vibrancy, and resiliency)	14	Nodes\\Contribution
Economic	Economic and demographic reasons that young people are important for a community to attract such as job creation, paying taxes, and consumer habits.	15	Nodes\\Contribution
Age specific	Areas of contribution that are particular to younger people. What young people do/may bring to a community that other demographics may not.	50	Nodes\\Contribution
Getting involved	Evidence of participants getting involved with community events or organizations.	24	Nodes\\Contribution
General positive	General agreement with the question of whether young people coming in contributes positively to community well-being	13	Nodes\\Contribution
Not involved	Comments that refute evidence or comments that young people always contribute positively or get involved in community life.	4	Nodes\\Contribution
New ideas and perspectives	Contributions by young people including new ideas, broader mind set, and new perspectives.	19	Nodes\\Contribution
Fracking	Reference to fracking (hydraulic fracturing)	4	Nodes\\Environment
Connection to nature	An enhanced connection to nature due to living in a rural area	3	Nodes\\Environment
Mixed or negative experience	Discussion about general or specific experiences after moving in/back that were mixed or negative (not 100% positive)	53	Nodes\\Experiences
Took time	Reference to the fact that it took time to settle in and become comfortable in the community	4	Nodes\\Experiences

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Positive experience	Discussion about general or specific experiences after moving in or back that were totally positive.	51	Nodes\\Experiences
Love life	Comments about the opportunities for starting romantic relationships in the community (all negative).	4	Nodes\\Experiences\Mixed or negative experience
Nothing for us	Negative experience wholly or partially due to a lack of services and activities for young people in the community. Also includes lack of opportunities for career advancement.	11	Nodes\\Experiences\Mixed or negative experience
Personal growth	Growth or development of the individual attributed to moving to or living in the rural community (as opposed to personal growth related to leaving the community).	10	Nodes\\Experiences\Positive experience
Leaving eventually	Young participants' comments showing that they are not planning on staying in the community, are wanting to leave the community, or are only coming back for a short time for a specific purpose before moving on. Overall, they do not see a long-term future for them there.	17	Nodes\\Future for youth
Active effort	Not always automatically welcomed; experience depends on the extent to which an individual tries to become part of the community. An active effort is needed.	22	Nodes\\Intentionality
Chose the community	Came to this community specifically. Not by chance, they want to be here (as opposed to another community). This may impact contributions or experiences.	12	Nodes\\Intentionality
Resilience	Strategies (often, but not always, economic in nature) that people employ to maintain rural lifestyle, make a living, or build community. In particular in the face of challenges.	7	Nodes\\Intentionality
Physical landscape	References to the lure of physical geography or beauty of the landscape.	12	Nodes\\Motivations
Other	References to motivating factors that don't fit in the other four sub-nodes but do not have a sub-node of their own	8	Nodes\\Motivations
Quality of life	Reference to positive aspects of rural lifestyle appreciated by participants, potential migrants, or in reference to certain aspects of the community and what it has to offer (lifestyle, safety, simplicity, slow pace, schools, rurality, good place to raise a family, services, infrastructure, natural amenities, positive relative to other places, particular offerings of a small or rural community)	46	Nodes\\Motivations
Economic reasons	Economic reasons (career, cost savings, saving money, employment opportunities, etc.) for moving to a rural place or to the community specifically.	27	Nodes\\Motivations

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Having a family	Reference to one's own family (children). Having a family as part of the life course, serving as a motivating factor for staying in or moving to a rural place.	17	Nodes\\Motivations
Simplicity	References to simplicity as a motivating factor for moving to and staying in the rural community.	3	Nodes\\Motivations\Quality of life
New strategies	Ideas for new policy or action (by any stakeholder) that could influence migration of young people (attract, retain, support, etc.). These ideas have not been implemented yet.	49	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Responsibility	Parties that should be or are involved in addressing rural/youth challenges and to what level they should be/are.	88	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Existing strategies and efforts	Reference to the current policy landscape and what actions are currently being taken to support, attract, and retain young people or to improve community well-being more broadly. These could be completed or things already in progress.	77	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Opportunities	Things that communities, municipalities, or the province could capitalize on to encourage economic development and in-migration. More broad than strategies.	26	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Action needed	The feeling or agreement that action is needed to improve community well-being by attracting and supporting young people. Both for the sake of the individuals but also for community sustainability.	16	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Attitude and political will	Reference to willingness (future and past) of leaders and communities to take positive action.	11	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Barriers to action and policy creation	Barriers to the creation of successful policy or activities that would help attract and retain young people in rural communities.	26	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Barriers to success of young people in rural areas	Barriers to young people moving in or to having success in rural places due to existing policy or lack thereof.	26	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts
Current lack of action or policy	Identification of a current lack of policy or action being taken to retain and attract young people (real or perceived).	25	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Existing strategies and efforts
Internet connectivity	The opportunity that Wi-Fi and high speed internet present to rural communities in terms of tourism, access to services, and job creation.	3	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Opportunities

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Government	Speculation that it may or may not be the government's responsibility to implement programs or policy to attract, retain, and support young people.	21	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Responsibility
Community level	Some or all of the responsibility is at the community level (individuals, businesses, community organizations).	14	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Responsibility
Capacity	Whether or not stakeholders have the resources or the ability to make the necessary changes/action	16	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Responsibility
Partnerships	Multiple stakeholders are needed to implement change	7	Nodes\\Policy and other efforts\Responsibility
Community ties	Community or family ties (specifically growing up in the area) of the young in-migrants and that impact on migration decisions, and experiences. Directly related to the community or area that they moved into, not rural places in general. Different than past experiences as those might be ties to the community resulting in interactions other than growing up there (e.g. vacation, friends, growing up in a rural place more generally)	29	Nodes\\Social capital
Community	Comments that give some understanding of what community is and what the boundaries are in this context.	22	Nodes\\Social capital
Belonging and inclusion	References to feelings of closeness, good relationships with neighbours, feelings of belonging, sense of community, and support from neighbours. Generally 'positive' aspects or experiences of social capital.	131	Nodes\\Social capital
Active effort	Not always automatically welcomed, depends on the extent to which an individual tries to become part of the community (social capital)	21	Nodes\\Social capital
Effect of being from away on social capital	Impact of being from away or of being away for a while on networks and relationships	24	Nodes\\Social capital
Formal	References to more formal instances of social capital (volunteers and community organizations) existing in the community,	25	Nodes\\Social capital
New or altered relationships	For young people who have moved back, what their social networks look like. Are they with people they grew up with or have they made new friends?	18	Nodes\\Social capital
Negative aspects of social capital	References to loneliness, people being in your business, or everyone assuming things about you.	25	Nodes\\Social capital

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Friendly	Explicit reference to people in the community being friendly	7	Nodes\\Social capital\Belonging and inclusion
Know everyone	Reference to everyone knowing everyone. Descriptions of the case study area as a small community where people know each other.	9	Nodes\\Social capital\Belonging and inclusion
Other	These are references that do not fit into the other sub nodes of belonging and inclusion and do not fit into new categories. This sub node acts as a receptacle for these references so I don't forget they are there.	19	Nodes\\Social capital\Belonging and inclusion
Sense of community	References to feeling part of a community and to being interconnected to other members of the community. A sense of responsibility and care towards or from other members of the community. Reference to relationships being deep or strong in the community (perhaps compared to urban places). Being invited into people's homes and lives.	28	Nodes\\Social capital\Belonging and inclusion
Welcoming	Response to question about whether the community is welcoming Quality of the people and their support/welcome upon moving to the community and settling in (negative or positive).	22	Nodes\\Social capital\Belonging and inclusion
Home	Child code of community ties. Explicit references to home.	7	Nodes\\Social capital\Community ties
Volunteer burnout	References to volunteers being tired and worn out or not having enough volunteers to sustain community activities now or in the future.	11	Nodes\\Social capital\Formal
Pre-conceptions	The difficultly of establishing a reputation as an adult after having grown up in the community. For example, still seen as a child or as 'mother's daughter'.	3	Nodes\\Social capital\Negative aspects of social capital
Nosy	Reference to the negative side of everyone in the community knowing your business or wanting to know your business. Not everyone wants to be part of the community in a way that would require them to share these details of their lives.	5	Nodes\\Social capital\Negative aspects of social capital
Loneliness	Feelings of loneliness experienced by participants after moving to the community	4	Nodes\\Social capital\Negative aspects of social capital

Name	Description	No.	Parent Node Name
Exclusionary	Reference to being excluded from a certain group, unwelcome, left out for various reasons (age, being from away, nothing in common, long standing relationships, etc.). Either purposeful or accidental exclusion.	13	Nodes\\Social capital\Negative aspects of social capital
Difference	Discussion of differences between people who stayed and people who left. Also differences between new and local people.	10	Nodes\\Stayers and leavers