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Motivations, Experiences, and Community Contributions of Young In-migrants in the Maitland Area, Nova Scotia

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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. Community consequences arising from in-migration, beyond job creation and entrepreneurship, were also explored. 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.

Keywords: rural communities, in-migration, young, Nova Scotia, wellbeing, motivation, community consequences

1.0 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, Mayer, & Morissette, 2000; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 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 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, Haartsen, & Strijker, 2012; Niedomysl & Amcoff, 2011), 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; Drozdowski, 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 (R erat, 2014).

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, Cromartie, & Arthun, 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 wellbeing, 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, Frere, West, & Wiseman, 2010; Hanavan & Cameron, 2012; Nova Scotia Community Services, 2008; The Aspen Institute, n.d.). The current paper uses a broad definition of wellbeing, consisting of the interrelated elements of sustainability, resiliency, prosperity and vibrancy (McIntosh et al., 2008; Kevany, Biggs, Ma, & MacMichael, *in press*). These four concepts span the environmental, social, economic, and cultural components of community wellbeing. 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, Short, & Stockdale, 2000; Kalantaridis, 2010; Nedomysl & Amcoff, 2011; Stockdale, 2006). The connections between a more holistic conceptualization of community wellbeing 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, a community 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 in their contributions to community wellbeing.

2.0 Methods and Methodology

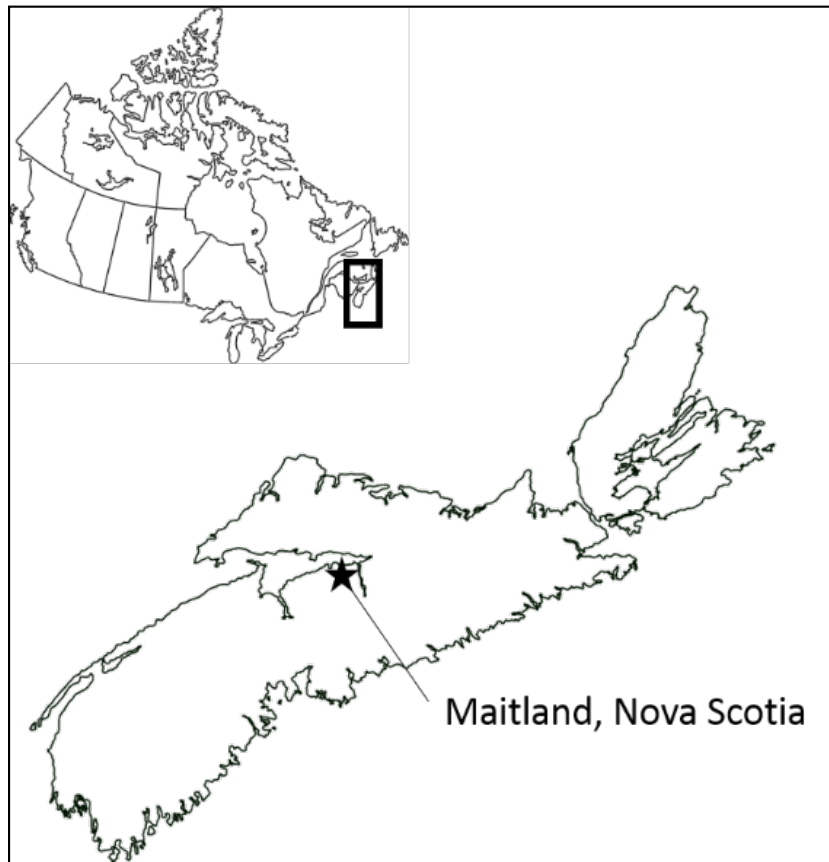
2.1 Case Study Site

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 (see Figure 1) is situated along the shore of the Minas Basin and Shubenacadie River and is approximately a 30-minute drive from Truro (2011 population 12,059) and one-hour drive from Halifax (402,400 in 2011) (Statistics Canada, 2012, 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, 2014a, 2014b).

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. During the course of this research, the Maitland elementary school was slated to undergo a provincial review process and invited by the province to submit a "hub school" proposal as a means to keep the school open. Despite submission of a community-school hub proposal, the school has subsequently been closed.

Figure 1: Map Showing Location of Maitland within Canada and Nova Scotia.



Source: www.worldatlas.com; label added by author.

2.2 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, *in press*) 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 (R erat, 2014).

Sources of data included two groups of participants, key informants and young immigrants, 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 20-29 was chosen to capture a wide range of in-migrants in a demographic that generally sees net out-migration (Rothwell, Bollman, Tremblay, & Marshall, 2002). 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. One-on-one 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. Four had grown up in the community and 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 as well. 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.

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.

2.3 Data Analysis

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 protect their anonymity. Transcriptions were coded to reveal themes and patterns. Transcriptions were coded using NVivo 10 software to reveal themes and patterns. Tables 1 and 2 show the basic coding structure. Three major areas: (1) motivations, (2) experiences, and (3) contributions, were constructed deductively based on the interview and focus group questions. Within each of these areas, themes were revealed inductively (see Table 1). In addition to themes that fit explicitly in one of these areas, there were a number of cross cutting themes (see 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.

2.31 Results

Discrete themes were revealed around motivations, experiences and contributions to community (see Table 1). Other themes emerged that pertained to or cut across all three areas of inquiry (see Table 2). Each is presented and discussed in detail in the following sections.

Table 1. *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 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

3.1 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.

3.1.1. 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. As Tracy, a young in-migrant noted, "you have to want a simpler life if you come out here. Because that's what you're getting". Bradley, a key informant, added "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".

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. This was exemplified by comments by both in-migrants and key informants. One participant noted, "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". Debbie, a key informant, added, "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 kind of things".

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

3.1.2 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, explaining that they "really were attracted to Maitland because it has a school and we were going to have a family." Chris, a key informant, agreed with this sentiment, adding, "it's a great place to come raise your family."

3.1.3 Physical Landscape and Amenities

The physical landscape was a contributing factor in the young migrants' decision 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.

3.1.4 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... 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. One participant passionately described this motivation, "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!"

Overall, the migrants were motivated to move to Maitland based on lifestyle factors over economic factors. 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 these rural communities are individuals' experiences once they have arrived and whether or not they will stay. Individual migrant experiences are examined in the following section.

3.2 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. Many echoed the sentiments of Kaitlyn, who noted, "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." For the most part, migrants did not feel they had many expectations.

3.2.1 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. Ellen described the ease of getting to know your neighbours; "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." Tracey added, "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."

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. Ellen summed this up with the comment, "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."

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. One noted, "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?"

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. Tracey explained this difference as, “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.”

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. As Ellen, a young in-migrant, noted: “But it came later, when I decided to be here long-term, pretty much, that you get more and more involved in other things.”

3.2.2 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. Tracey noted, “I don’t meet a lot of people who are, like, ‘I’m here to work’.... That’s a struggle.” Sarah added her thoughts on the social aspect of the community, “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.”

In particular, respondents mentioned the risk of losing the elementary school in Maitland. As one participant said, “you have a school like that closing, it becomes really difficult to be here.”

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 up venture...., I’m constantly flying by the seat of my pants and on the edge, making it work”

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. Ellen noted, “It needs to come in each individual’s head. And everybody feels it in themselves, too. Where do I want to be?”

Despite this, the young in-migrants felt overall that more young people could benefit from living in rural communities. The young women believed that living in a rural place had positive impacts on their emotional and physical wellbeing. Ellen summarized this sentiment, “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.”

3.2.3 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. Tracy, a young in-migrant noted:

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.

3.3 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 more 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 new ideas and energy to some degree. According to Debbie, "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." Mark added, "Oh they bring in fresh ideas, they bring energy, which we need lots of. They bring in, you know, just a whole youthful spirit." Kaitlyn added the perspective of the in-migrants, saying, "I think young people moving into the community brings energy. Like, even when you're not doing that much."

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. Bradley described this, saying, "It's hard to keep those core volunteers because a lot of them are interacting volunteers that work in all the other's ones. And with less people it becomes more work, and pretty soon you're at the stage where you burn out." This more structured element of contribution revealed linkages between contributions and 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. Olivia, a key informant, noted, "The younger people are quite active in the community because they chose the community." All of the young women mentioned their own personal involvement in multiple community organization and events.

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. Two key informants emphasized this point. As Debbie said, "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." Bradley also noted similar points, saying, "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?"

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, as she notes here:

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. Mary noted, "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."

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.

4.0 Discussion and Conclusions

This research adds, in an exploratory way, to the literature on rural and youth migration through examining the motivations, experiences, and community consequences of a small number of young people in-migrating to a community in rural Nova Scotia. Although the small sample size limits the conclusions that can be drawn, it represents almost the entire sample population in the case study community. Still, the results provide some interesting directions for future research.

It should also be noted that, while the focus in the research discussion was on young people more generally, the sampling method and time and other restrictions led to all of the migrants sharing their personal experience in the analysis being female. 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 in the community. 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 (the late 19th century) would out-migrate from Nova Scotia, and support the family farm back home as well as themselves, while young women in a later generation (in the 20th century) would, in the main, support themselves, and not be as likely to provide financial support for the family and family farm back home in Nova Scotia (and also were less likely to return home, as well).

The women in this case study did not explicitly frame their motivations, experiences, nor, for the most part, their contributions, as particular to being female 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, 2014; von Reichert et al., 2011). Individuals were not drawn by family ties to the area, pointing to potential greater complexity about the role of these factors in migrant motivation. Quality of life factors were the main motivator 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; Drozdowski, 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 revealed motivation as a key factor stimulating migration. However, it must be considered that desire must be combined with the capacity—through education level, economic stability, or social supports—to make a move. Although detailed socio-economic data was not captured for the participants, through the conversations held with participants it was clear that they were all well-educated and none referred to any poverty-related challenges influencing their initial move. Most of them also had strong ties with their family and could potentially rely on them for advice and support. This capacity, in fact, enabled the in-migrants in Maitland to make the choices they did.

For these individuals, migration did 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 into Maitland. 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, changes in life goals, etc.), and this can prompt another move, this time away from a community. This reality 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 research goals are to investigate the longer term impacts of in-migration and life course.

This research, while exploratory, demonstrates the potential to attract young people to rural communities based on factors related to 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). One of the participants in this research has already decided to leave because of the school closure in Maitland, exemplifying the importance of rural schools for the future vibrancy of communities in which they are located.

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 made the decision to leave based on difficulty finding local employment as well as the impending 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. This exploration of community consequences to in-migration identified further elements to consider as participants responded to open-ended questions about the impact of the participants and of young in-migrants generally. Young migrants have the potential to add to the economic and environmental sustainability of the Maitland area through their interest in organic

and small-scale farming practices, for example, and through an increased awareness of 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, 2011), economic factors were not major themes 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 wellbeing (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 to 'tough it out' in a rural place. Further research is needed to accurately show the impacts of young people on place.

As participants pointed out, life in a rural community is not for everyone; attraction strategies should likely be targeted to individuals whose aesthetic values (love of peace and quiet; appreciation of farming and natural landscapes; etc.) and/or whose interests align in some fashion with rural living. More research is needed to identify these groups, but potential targets might be individuals with interest in community neighbourliness, off-grid living, small-scale or organic farming, or nature-recreation/tourism. Building on the results of this case study, further research focused on young people, rural communities, and mobility could more definitively reveal the importance of key life-course and socio-economic factors in shaping the decisions and ability of youth to move into rural communities.

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