

**POST-GRADUATION SETTLEMENT CHOICES OF INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE  
STUDENTS ATTENDING MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND: A  
MIXED METHODS STUDY**

by

© Hua Que

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## **ABSTRACT**

International students, as an ideal source of skilled workers, are vital to the development of Newfoundland and Labrador. This study aimed to investigate the trend in these students' post-graduation settlement plan, as well as the factors in their settlement decision. The findings of the study reveal that some aspects of life in Newfoundland and Labrador appeal to international students, including closeness to nature, clean atmosphere, and a gentle pace of life. Though they extol the advantages of living in Newfoundland and Labrador, few of them decide to settle permanently here. Other factors such as the lack of meaningful connections, the lack of supports for accompanying spouses of international students, the lack of career opportunities in sectors other than oil and gas, and the lack of city amenities may push them to leave. Therefore, general policies are needed to improve these areas in order to make Newfoundland and Labrador more attractive to international students.

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## Table of Contents

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	iii
Chapter One – Introduction .....	1
1.1 Growth in the Number of International Students in Canada .....	2
1.2 Importance of International Students.....	4
1.3 Transition from International Students to Permanent Residents .....	6
1.4 Distribution of Immigrants in Canada .....	8
1.5 Retention of Immigrants in Atlantic Canada .....	9
1.6 Retention of International Students in Atlantic Canada .....	10
1.7 Research Problem .....	12
Chapter Two – Literature Review .....	15
2.1 Economic Determinants of Relocation .....	16
2.1.1 Lack of job opportunities for immigrants .....	16
2.1.2 Lack of job opportunities for immigrants’ spouses .....	18
2.1.3 Underemployment .....	19
2.1.4 Pursuit of further career growth.....	21
2.1.5 Local residences’ lack of confidence in local economy .....	21

2.2	Non-economic Determinants of Relocation .....	22
2.2.1	Weak connections to the host city .....	23
2.2.2	Superficial friendliness of local communities .....	26
2.2.3	Lower level of quality of life .....	30
2.3	Advantages of Living in Smaller Canadian Cities.....	32
2.4	Factors Shaping the Settlement Decision among International Students in Atlantic Canada .....	34
Chapter Three – Methodology .....		37
3.1	The Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design .....	37
3.2	Data Collection .....	38
3.2.1	Quantitative online survey .....	38
3.2.2	Qualitative case study .....	40
3.3	Data Analysis .....	43
3.3.1	Quantitative online survey .....	43
3.3.2	Qualitative case study .....	44
3.4	Researcher’s role in qualitative research .....	44
Chapter Four – Results .....		47
4.1	Quantitative Survey .....	47
4.2	Qualitative Interview .....	50
4.2.1	Attractions of Canada .....	51
4.2.2	Attractions of MUN.....	52
4.2.3	Attractions of St. John’s .....	54

4.2.4	Post-graduation settlement plan.....	54
4.2.5	Reasons for relocation .....	57
4.2.5.1	Concern over employment .....	58
4.2.5.2	Spouses’ dissatisfaction and uncertainty.....	62
4.2.5.3	Lack of networks .....	64
4.2.5.4	Doubts about locals’ friendliness .....	66
4.2.5.5	Discrimination .....	67
4.2.5.6	Inefficient public transportation .....	69
4.2.5.7	Winter Inconveniences .....	71
4.2.6	Advantages of living in St. John’s.....	72
4.2.7	Reasons for retention .....	74
4.2.7.1	Secure a major-related part-time job .....	74
4.2.7.2	Confidence in the local economic development.....	75
4.2.7.3	Spouse’s satisfaction with life .....	75
4.2.7.4	Close friendships with international students.....	75
4.2.7.5	Friendliness of local residents .....	76
Chapter Five – Discussion .....		77
5.1	Building Meaningful Connections .....	77
5.2	Supporting Spouses of International Students .....	81
5.3	Balancing Economic Development and Creating Career Opportunities .....	85
5.4	Improving City Amenities .....	87
5.5	Study Strengths and Limitations .....	88

5.5.1	Strengths .....	88
5.5.2	Limitations .....	89
5.6	Implications for Further Research .....	90
	References .....	92
	Appendix: Online Survey for International Graduate Students .....	106

## **Chapter One – Introduction**

There is an old Chinese saying that goes: “While water flows downstream in nature, humans strive to move up in the world”. This idiom, to some extent, explains the trend in geographic mobility of human being – people tend to move to places with prosperity and opportunity. During my two-year time in St. John’s and my graduate studies at Memorial University of Newfoundland (Memorial University or MUN in short thereafter), I saw many international students graduating and leaving this province. At the same time, I have been told by many current international students that they planned to move to other Canadian cities once they graduate.

I clearly remembered that once when I asked one of my friends whether she would stay in St. John’s after graduation, she replied “there is no job, why stay here?” Her tone was firm and definite, lingering in my mind for a long time. Another MUN international student interviewed by Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC] also expressed her concern over employment in this city. “The job thing is really important to me, and I haven’t found a full-time job yet, so that’s the problem” (2013).

Relocation seems to be a trend among MUN international students, and lack of employment opportunities appears to be a compelling factor. Perceiving this trend, I became curious about this phenomenon, longing to know what are the determinants for international students’ post-graduation location choice and to what extent do these determinants influence international students’ settlement decision. Considering international graduate students are more likely to end their education life and to start their career life after earning a Master’s degree

compared to international undergraduate students who may plan to pursue graduate studies, finding a place to work and live is a more pressing problem for many of the international graduate students. Thus, this study will concentrate on international graduate students.

In this chapter, I first introduce some basic information on international students in Canada including their population, their importance to the Canadian economy and society, their transition from temporary residents to permanent residents. Then, considering the mobility of international students may have something in common with the mobility of immigrants, I include the information on distribution of immigrants in Canada and the retention of immigrants in Atlantic Canada. Last, I present current studies on retention rates of international students across the Atlantic provinces. My purpose to provide the information in the beginning of my thesis is to enhance the understanding of factors contributing to international students' settlement choice as described later in the thesis.

## **1.1 Growth in the Number of International Students in Canada**

The number of international students coming to Canada for education has been growing in the past decade. In 2012, Canada welcomed 104,810 international students, signaling an increase of 51% from 2003. This is a record number in the past ten years (Citizenship and Immigration Canada [CIC], 2013). Over the same time period, the number of international students who came to Atlantic Canada increased by 48% reaching 5,342 from 3,612, almost in line with the national growth rate. With specific regard to Newfoundland and Labrador (Newfoundland in short thereafter), the entry of international students grew from 335 in 2003 to 643 in 2012, registering a 92% increase. Of the 643 international students who came to

Newfoundland, 484 came to its capital city St. John's while 159 went to other cities in Newfoundland. While a large increase is evident in Newfoundland, it must be pointed out that the strong growth rate began with a small base number, and Newfoundland took only 0.6% of all the international students to Canada in 2012, being the second least in the country.

The number is expected to continue to grow as the Government of Canada is hoping to attract more international students. The federal government released a new plan called Canada's International Education Strategy in January 2014 (Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Canada, 2014). The main purpose is to double the number of international students and academic researchers to more than 450,000 by 2022.

Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador, as the only university in this province, plays a key role in attracting international students to Newfoundland. The number of international students at MUN has also been increasing in the past ten years. In 2003, only 523 international students were enrolled at MUN (Thorne, 2004), while 1,694 were the international students registered in 2012 (Flower, 2013). In accordance with the federal government's plan, attracting international students is also part of MUN's mission. "Memorial welcomes students and scholars from all over the world and contributes knowledge and shares expertise locally, nationally, and internationally" (Centre for Institutional Analysis and Planning, 2011, p. 2). Despite the growth in number, however, international students represent a small proportion of all the students on MUN campuses. For instance, in 2012, international students only accounted for 0.9% of the total enrollment at MUN.

## **1.2 Importance of International Students**

International students are critical to Canada's economic prosperity. They spend more than eight billion Canadian dollars annually in Canada. With respect to Newfoundland, it is estimated that each international student contributes from ten thousand to twenty thousand annually to the local economy through house rental, food, clothing, and entertainment. In addition, international students attract visitors from their home countries, among which their parents, who oftentimes come to visit during their children's studies (Department of Human Resources, Labor and Employment, 2005a).

In addition to substantial economic benefits, international students offer many social benefits as well, enriching Canadian society with their own cultures. More importantly, international students represent an ideal source of future skilled labor, since they are comparatively well prepared for the Canadian labor market than other categories of newcomers considering their Canadian educational credentials, proficiency in English or French, and familiarity with Canadian culture.

Considering the demography of Newfoundland, international students, as a potential immigration pool, are of greater importance to this province. On the one hand, international students could help increase the population in Newfoundland. The population in this province has been declining from 580,109 on July 1, 1992 to 526,702 on July 1, 2013 (Newfoundland & Labrador Statistics Agency, 2013a), due to a number of factors such as a history of out-migration, aging population, and low fertility rate. According to Newfoundland & Labrador Statistics Agency (2013b), almost every year the interprovincial out-migration population was larger than

the interprovincial in-migration population. More importantly, the majority of those who left the province were young people aged between 15 and 34. Besides, the population of Newfoundland is aging at a fast rate. According to 2011 Census data, the median age in Newfoundland was 44 years which was older than the median age of Canada at 40.6 years. In 2011, the percentage of seniors in Newfoundland was 15.8%, but this percentage is expected to reach 31% by 2036. Further, Newfoundland has a comparatively low fertility rate. Each year between 2007 and 2011, the fertility rate in Newfoundland was lower than the Canadian average, being among lowest in the whole country (Statistics Canada, 2013a).

As mentioned above, international students could help to increase population in Newfoundland. These young people, on the other hand, often help diversify the local culture. One of the characteristics of the population in Newfoundland is the lack of diversity in ethnicity. According to 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada, 2013b) only as few as 1.8% of the population of Newfoundland are immigrants, compared with the 20.6% for the whole country. In terms of visible minority, only 1.4% of the population in Newfoundland could be considered as visible minority, compared with the 19% of the whole country. Among non-immigrants in Newfoundland, 92.8% are born in this province, higher than the Canadian average of 85%. Concerning their ethnic origins, 57% of people in this province reported to be of British Isles descent, 49% are of Canada origins, 6% are from French descent, and 1% Asian, 0.3% African, 0.1% Latin, Central and South American, and 0.1% Caribbean origin. In comparison, the ethnic origins are more diversified across Canada: about 35% British Isles, 32% Canadian, 15% French origins, 15% Asian, 2% African, 2% of Latin, Central and South American, and 2% Caribbean origins. Regarding religion, it was reported that as high as 93% of Newfoundland population are

Christian while other religion groups account for only a small proportion, while the figure for the whole country was 67% Christian and 33% other religions. In terms of mother tongue, according to the 2011 Census data among those respondents who gave single responses, only 1.7% reported having a mother tongue in a non-official language, while 19.8% of population in Canada as a whole identified a mother tongue other than English or French (Statistics Canada, 2012).

### **1.3 Transition from International Students to Permanent Residents**

Currently, international students can transition from temporary to permanent residence mainly through two programs. One is Canadian Experience Class (CEC) at the federal level, and the other one is Provincial Nominee Programs (PNP) at the provincial level. To be eligible to apply to stay in Canada permanently under the two programs, international students first need to apply for a work permit under the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program (PGWPP). Most international students who have graduated from a post-secondary institution could obtain the three-year post-graduation work permit (CIC, 2008). This is a type of open work permit which does not require a job offer before application. With this work permit, international students are allowed to work in Canada to gain valuable Canadian work experience.

Under the Canadian Experience Class, international students can apply for permanent residence as long as they have a minimum of one-year Canadian skilled work experience. According to Canada's National Occupational Classification (NOC), skilled work experience refers to an occupation in managerial positions (level 0), professional positions (level A), or technical positions (level B). It needs to point out that in order to accumulate the skilled work

experience, international students do not have to work in the skilled occupations in their field of study only (CIC, 2014).

Almost all of Canadian provinces have Provincial Nominee Program which has different criteria from province to province regarding job offer and work experience. For example, international students graduated from a Masters program at an eligible publicly funded university in Ontario can apply to be a permanent resident in Ontario under its Pilot International Masters Graduate Stream without a job offer or work experience (Opportunities Ontario, 2009.). In British Columbia, international students with a degree or diploma can apply under the category of International Graduate, for which work experience is not required but a job offer for a position at levels 0, A or B is needed. Students with a Master's degree in natural, applied or health sciences, can apply through the category of International Post-Graduate, and neither a job offer nor work experience is required (B.C. Provincial Nominee Program, n.d.). The Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial Nominee Program (NLPNP in short thereafter) also has its special program for international students which called NLPNP International Graduate Category. This category does not have application requirements in work experience, but it has more strict requirements in job offer compared to Ontario and British Columbia nominee programs for international students. Through NLPNP, international student applicants not only need to have a job offer from a Newfoundland employer, but also need to make sure the job is in their field of study or a related field of education (Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism [OIM], 2009). From 2007 to 2013, NLPNP International Graduate Category has nominated 254 international graduates and 175 out of them have become permanent residents (S. A. Bhuiyan, personal communication, November 25, 2013).

## **1.4 Distribution of Immigrants in Canada**

In Canada, a large number of immigrants sought settlement in the three largest metropolitan cities: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver, while a small proportion of immigrants chose to settle in Atlantic Canada. According to Facts and Figures (CIC, 2013), in 2012, 30% of the total entry of immigrants settled in Toronto, 18.1% flocked into Montreal, and 11.4% went to Vancouver. However, the four Atlantic provinces only received 2.5% of immigrants in total.

Although Atlantic Canada attracted the least number of immigrants compared to the rest of Canada, the attraction rate has slightly increased in the past ten years. In the year of 2003, 2004, and 2005, only 1.5 % of Canada's immigrants went to Atlantic Canada. After 2005, the proportion increased to more than 2 %. However, a slight decrease characterized the last three years, from 2.8 % in 2010 to 2.6 % in 2011 and to 2.5% in 2012. Within the four Atlantic provinces, Newfoundland attracted the least number of immigrants in 2012 with 731, only accounting for 0.3 % of the total of new immigrants in Canada.

The imbalanced geographic distribution of immigrants across Canada has received attention. Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2001) conducted a study on how to achieve a more even distribution of immigrants throughout the country. It was pointed out that “the provincial nominee program is a step towards greater dispersal of immigrants, as the provinces aim to match skilled immigrants with specific job openings and, with involvement of local organizations, in smaller cities and towns” (p. 56). Beginning with New Brunswick in 1999, all four Atlantic provinces signed agreements with the Government of Canada and implemented Provincial Nominee Programs. In the same year, Newfoundland as well started its Provincial

Nominee Programs. In March 2007, Newfoundland launched its first provincial immigration strategy: Diversity ~ Opportunity and Growth (OIM, 2007). In the following month, the Office of Immigration and Multiculturalism was established mainly to implement the immigration strategy and to administer provincial nominee programs.

## **1.5 Retention of Immigrants in Atlantic Canada**

Figuring out the retention rate of immigrants is by no means easy due to the difficulties in tracking the mobility of immigrants. Only a few studies have calculated the immigrant retention rate in Atlantic Canada. One is Goss Gilroy Inc.'s study (2005) which calculated the retention rate in each Canadian province from 1991 to 2001 based on two numbers: the total number of annual entry of immigrants from 1991 to 2001 and the number of immigrants in 2001 who immigrated to Canada in the same period of time. The retention rates in four Atlantic provinces were comparatively lower than the rest of Canada (with exception to the province of Saskatchewan): 36% in Newfoundland, 40% in Nova Scotia, 51% in Prince Edward Island, and 62% in New Brunswick. Thus, Newfoundland, during that period, had the lowest retention rate which was far below Canadian average at 82%.

Okonny-Myers (2010) also conducted a study on the interprovincial mobility of immigrants who landed in Canada from 2000 to 2006 based on data extracted from the Longitudinal Immigration Database (IMDB). The IMDB tracks the interprovincial mobility of immigrants through taxation records. It showed that in comparison to the rest of Canada, Atlantic provinces had the lower retention rates of immigrants who landed in this region from 2000 to 2006: 43% in Newfoundland, 54% in Prince Edward Island, 68% in Nova Scotia, and 60% in

New Brunswick respectively. Newfoundland had the lowest retention rate across Canada, as only 43% of immigrants who originally destined for this province from 2000 to 2006 filed their tax returns still in this province in 2006 tax year.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2011) conducted another research study on the retention of provincial nominees who landed from 2000 to 2008 also based on IMDB data. Findings from such research indicated that Atlantic provinces experienced a higher proportion of outflow of nominees. The retention rates of nominations in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick were 22.9%, 36.6%, 68.4%, and 68.1% respectively. Newfoundland, again, had the lowest retention rate of immigrants who were nominated by this province from 2000 to 2008. Only 55 out of 240 nominees still resided in this province in 2008. These available data on the retention of immigrants in Newfoundland suggests that Newfoundland has been facing great challenges in its efforts to retain immigrants in this province.

## **1.6 Retention of International Students in Atlantic Canada**

Statistics showed that most international students enrolled in Atlantic universities had the intention to apply for permanent residence. During the fall term of 2008 to 2009, Siddiq, Holterman, Nethercote, Sinclair, and White (2009) surveyed international students attending Nova Scotia universities and found that 339 students of the 663 survey respondents expressed their intention to apply for permanent residence in Canada after graduation. In 2013, Chira, Barber, and Belkhodja (2013) found 16 out of the 35 international students studying in the Atlantic Provinces decided to immigrate to Canada. These two studies showed a large number of

international students wished to stay in Canada upon completing their current programs; however, the number did not necessarily mean that these young people had the intention to permanently reside in the province of their studies, and that they might decide to move to other parts of Canada.

Chira, Barber, and Belkhodja (2013) found that only eight international students out of the 35 planned to stay in Atlantic Canada, while 17 wished to move to a bigger city in Canada, six decided to move back to home country, and the other four wanted to move to a third country. That is to say, more than half of the participants would leave Atlantic Canada. Within the 35 students, eight students were studying in Newfoundland, and they found that only two of them intended to stay in this province after they graduate, four decided to leave for other big cities in Canada, one decided to return to their home country, and the last one planned to go to a third country.

In terms of interprovincial transition of international students to permanent residents, Huystee (2011) pointed out that “Atlantic Provinces generate most of their own ‘foreign student to permanent resident’ transition” (p. 9). The data between 2003 and 2009 showed that in four Atlantic provinces more than three quarters of permanent residents who transitioned from foreign student status were from the same province except Prince Edward Island. In particular, the majority of foreign students who made the transition to permanent residents in Newfoundland came from within this province. In 2009, there were 59 foreign students who transitioned to permanent residents in Newfoundland, and among them, 54 were studying there previously, hence accounting for 92 %.

## 1.7 Research Problem

International students, as an ideal source of skilled workers, are vital to the development of Newfoundland. However, Newfoundland-educated international students rarely remain in this province. Instead, they would rather settle in other metropolitan cities in Canada.

The problem of the low retention of international students in this province has drawn attention from the provincial government. Several government departments have raised the importance of keeping these young people in this province. For example, the Department of Human Resources, Labor and Employment (2005a, p. 14) stated that “it is important that government work in partnership with educational institutions, particularly Memorial University, to explore ways to encourage graduates to remain in the province.” This department (2005b) also emphasized the importance of the attraction and retention of international students in Newfoundland in the report of consultations on a provincial immigration strategy, saying that “the strategy should include attracting more international students to study in the province and encouraging graduates to stay” (p. 5). In addition, “to increase retention of post-secondary international students upon graduation from our institutions” was set as one of the goals in the provincial immigration strategy (OIM, 2007, p. 19). For this purpose, the provincial government intends to help “ease transition from student to permanent resident” and to “provide linkages between graduates and local labor market” (p. 19).

Previous research has mainly focused on the mobility of immigrants in Newfoundland. For example, Burnaby, Whelan, and Rivera (2009) included temporary foreign workers in their study and found out that employment was the most important factor determining whether

newcomers would seek long-term settlement in this province. Akberi (2009) indicated that more and more immigrants to Newfoundland were from non-western European countries and they were more likely to move to Alberta, British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec. The reasons for their moving included the concentration of co-ethnic population in those provinces, better employment opportunities in large cities, and labor market barriers encountered by immigrants in Atlantic provinces ranging from language difficulty to discrimination. The author recommended that future research to systematically investigate these reasons were needed.

There are only a few studies paying attention to the settlement choices of international students in Newfoundland. For instance, Gien and Law (2009) conducted a study on attraction and retention of newcomers and international students to Newfoundland. They found that 52% of international students participated in their study planned to leave this province, while only 13% intended to settle there permanently. “Job opportunities and distance from the rest of Canada, better quality of life and better salary” (p. 23) were the primary reasons for them to leave. Also, Basky, Mathews, Edwards, and Rourke (2007) conducted a study on retention of provisionally licensed international medical graduates (IMGs) in Newfoundland. They found that a large number of graduates of MUN’s medical school left the province, half of whom left the province after about 39 months. The authors pointed out the importance to find out the reasons why MUN international medical graduates choose to leave, and they recommended that Newfoundland and Labrador should optimize its strategies to attract and keep MUN medical graduates in this province.

By exploring the determinants of post-graduation settlement choice, the government policy makers, the immigration service providers, the university, and the community can identify

the trend or trends in MUN international graduate students' post-graduation settlement choice and identify factors influencing their settlement decision. Building on the findings, they could work together to meet these young people's expectations for a settlement place, and to make them feel better supported during their post-graduation period and perhaps convince them to choose Newfoundland as the destination of settlement.

The research addressed the following questions:

1. Where do international students intend to live after graduation?
2. What are the factors influencing those who plan to leave Newfoundland?
3. What are the factors influencing those who plan to stay in Newfoundland?

The remainder of this thesis is composed of five parts. In the first, I will present literature review and the objectives of the study. Then, I will present the methodology I adopted for my research. In the third part, I will detail the data by describing the results of the quantitative survey and presenting the findings of the qualitative interviews. The fourth part is an in-depth discussion of the results. In the conclusion, I will offer limitations of this study and provide recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter Two – Literature Review**

Although the existing literature may not directly address the factors influencing international students' post-graduation destination choices, there are a number of studies on determinants of interprovincial movement of immigrants' within Canada. No matter immigrants' interprovincial migration or international students' post-graduation migration, the key is human mobility. To some extent, international students may share similarities with immigrants in terms of settlement determinants, thus, it is of value to look at the existing research on immigrants' movement across Canada. In addition, considering St. John's is a smaller city in comparison to major metropolises, when compared to larger Canadian metropolitan cities, I chose to look at literature on mobility of immigrants in smaller Canadian cities. Moreover, because Newfoundland is one of the Atlantic provinces in Canada, I focused on literature investigating issue of migration of immigrants in Atlantic region.

This chapter comprises four parts. I will start from reviewing literature investigating the economic determinants of immigrants and international students' settlement choices, with a focus on the factors that caused them to leave their initial destination, among which are fewer job opportunities for immigrants and their spouses, unpromising employment opportunities in certain fields, underemployment, limited space for career growth, local residences' lack of confidence in local economy. In the second part of this section, I will look at literature on non-economic determinants of immigrants and international students' settlement decisions. These determinants include weak social ties, superficial friendliness of local communities, and lower level of quality of life in smaller cities. In the third part, I will examine the literature on the perceived advantages of living in smaller centers in order to shed light on the potential factors that could contribute to

the retention of international students in smaller cities. Finally, in particular, I will summarize the factors shaping the settlement decision among international students in Atlantic Canada based on the few existing studies. It is worth mentioning that the literature has exerted significant influence on my design of both quantitative survey and qualitative interview questions.

## **2.1 Economic Determinants of Relocation**

### **2.1.1 Lack of job opportunities for immigrants**

In most cases, immigrants are in pursuit of job opportunities in cities with dynamic economic growth, and are less likely to remain in the smaller regions lacking employment opportunities (CIC, 2001). It was considered that cities with a small population and urban size had less dynamic economic growth and could provide fewer employment opportunities and lower salaries (Chui, 2003). In Newfoundland, although unemployment rates declined in recent years, they remained the highest in Canada. In December 2013, the Newfoundland unemployment rate was 12.3%, which was much higher than the average unemployment rate across Canada at 6.9% (Statistics Canada, 2013b). This suggests that the labor market in this province is grim.

Krahan, Dewling, and Abu-Laban (2005) indicated that the retention rate was positively associated with city size and job opportunities. In their study on mobility of refugee immigrants in seven Alberta cities, they found that Calgary and Edmonton as second-tier cities with comparatively large population had higher retention rates, whereas, five other third-tier cities with much smaller population had lower retention rates. Some of those who left moved to

Calgary or Edmonton and some others chose to go to Toronto and Vancouver because they believed that employment opportunities were much better in these bigger cities.

In reality, some immigrants appreciate the lifestyle in smaller cities; however, they feel compelled to move to bigger cities just because they are unable to find a job in the smaller city where they lived. This is reflected in Palermo's study (2012). Some immigrant participants mentioned that Halifax was a great place to live, but they left because they had to since they couldn't secure a job there.

With respect to international students, Arthur and Flynn (2011) indicated that better career prospects than in their home country was a key factor that keep them in Canada after graduation. Some students believed that their career prospect in their fields of study was more prospective or promising in Canada than in their home country. Others preferred the legal safety and security of the working conditions in Canada. However, at the same time, international students were in great fear of not being able to secure a job, and the fear was the primary barrier to their staying in Canada. Therefore, the authors suggested that campus programs specifically designed to helping international students transition from school to employment and to permanent immigration are acutely needed.

For international students in Newfoundland, employment would be a primary incentive for them to make this province their permanent home (Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, 2008). However, these young people might face harsh employment prospects in Newfoundland. Although there is no data directly indicating the employment rate and unemployment rate of international students, 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada,

2013b) contained the data on the employment situation of immigrants, which could shed light on how the labor market may look like for international graduates. According to the survey, the unemployment rate of immigrants aged 25 to 34 with bachelor degree or above was 9.6% in Newfoundland, which was the highest in the 10 Canadian provinces. In St. John's, in particular, the unemployment rate of the same group of immigrant youth was 10.8%, which was two percentage points higher than the national unemployment rate of 8.8%.

### **2.1.2 Lack of job opportunities for immigrants' spouses**

Not only immigrants' employment opportunities, but also their spouses' job opportunities decided whether or not immigrants will leave a place (Goss Gilroy Inc., 2005). For example, the inadequate employment opportunities for their spouses was the major concern of provincial licensed international medical graduates (PLIMG) who were practicing in Newfoundland, and this concern pushed them to move to other urban cities (Vardy, Ryan, & Audas, 2008). Meanwhile, the authors pointed out that those physicians whose spouse had good employment opportunities in Newfoundland were more likely to remain in this province. The similar results were revealed in Goss Gilroy Inc.'s research (2005). The study found that if PLIMG and their spouses failed in finding employment related to their fields in Newfoundland, they would move out of the province, as an immigrant couple who left the province said “if we could both work in the province we would be back. There is a certain stress to living in the big city compared to St. John's” (p. 26).

### **2.1.3 Underemployment**

“Employment is not necessarily the issue contributing to out-migration but rather underemployment associated with lower wages,” said Ramos and Yoshida (2011, p. 14). They found that immigrants in Atlantic Canada who had a job but with lower wages were more likely to move elsewhere. Those who earned the lowest and those who have been highly educated were more likely to leave Atlantic Canada. 33% of immigrants who had university or professional education left, while only 23% of those who did not have high education credentials moved out of the region. For these reasons, the authors warned Atlantic provincial policy makers that “the region is losing some of its most talented immigrants” (p.14), and thus it was important for the provincial government to develop an immigration system which aims to attract and integrate highly educated and skilled workers.

In Atlantic cities like Halifax, immigrants were found encountering employment problems in terms of low salary and working in positions for which they were overqualified (Palermo, 2012). In that case, although some immigrants viewed Halifax as a great place to live, they still had to leave for other cities where they thought they could find adequate employment. In particular, female visible immigrants were faced with severe employment difficulties as most of them were only able to find entry-level positions, for which they were overqualified in terms of education and experience (Flint, 2007).

In Newfoundland, underemployment also negatively affects retention of immigrants. The study conducted by Goss Gilroy Inc. (2005) on retention and integration of all classes of immigrants and international students in Newfoundland revealed that employment was the single

most important factor influencing whether or not immigrants intended to stay in this province. Further, the study pointed out that “if jobs were available that were consistent with immigrants’ education and experience, most would remain here” (p. 25). However, some immigrants in Newfoundland were mostly employed in the service industry which did not require high level of education and skills. With a lower level of wages earned, their quality of life suffered, even compared to that of their home country, at times making it difficult for them to get well established in Canada.

After graduation, international students are not just satisfied with finding an average job in restaurants or in supermarkets, but they wish to secure a job in their field of education. Darchen and Tremblay (2010) conducted a study exploring the factors influencing the post-graduation location choice of Canadian students enrolled in science and technology programs at the bachelor, Master, and PhD level. They found that quality of work had the major influence on retention of students when compared to the quality of the urban lifestyle. They referred quality of work to “work which is stimulating and which corresponds to the academic background of the student and to his or her career objectives” (p. 228). Thus, the urban lifestyle was not the main criteria influencing students’ location choice, but the relevant career opportunities were the key determinants. In their study, one student participant said ““I will not sacrifice my career aspirations so that I can stay in the city; my interest for my work is more important than being surrounded by people”” (p. 229). University graduates will not attach great importance to criteria related to the quality of place until they secure a decent job and get settled in a place. Although their study only focused on Canadian university students, its results may also be applicable to international students.

#### **2.1.4 Pursuit of further career growth**

Smaller cities appear to be a stepping stone towards immigrants' career advancement. Basky, Mathews, Edwards, and Rourke (2007) included graduates of medical programs outside Canada, graduates of MUN's medical school, and graduates of other Canadian medical schools in their study. They indicated that Newfoundland "serves as an entry point for IMGs who go on to set up practice elsewhere in Canada" ("What Do We Think," para. 1) for the fact that all these three groups of internal medical graduates left this province after 25 months on average for other places in Canada. The same results were revealed in Vardy, Ryan, and Audas's study (2008). They found that the primary reason for provincial licensed international medical graduates to practice in Newfoundland was to become fully licensed.

#### **2.1.5 Local residences' lack of confidence in local economy**

Pessimistic attitudes to local economy prospects among provincial officials and local residents in smaller cities had negative impact on retention of immigrants (Hanson & Barber, 2011). The authors conducted a study on attraction and retention of immigrants in Miramichi which is a small community in New Brunswick. A few interviewees in their study said that some immigrants in Miraichi were discouraged by the fact that the council placed no importance to fixing the roads, and some immigrants lived there were shocked when provincial immigration representatives asked the reason why they chose to come to this city rather than other cities in Canada. Therefore, the authors pointed out that it was necessary to turn over these negative community attitudes, and they suggested that the provincial government and local residents should work together positively to convince immigrants to have a firm belief in the future of this

city. With respect to Newfoundland, it was somewhat stereotyped as a place with little to offer immigrants (Department of Human Resources, Labor and Employment, 2005b). Many stakeholders also mentioned that “immigrants wouldn’t wish to settle here when our own population is leaving” (p. 4).

In sum, less than adequate employment opportunities is a major reason for immigrants to leave the place where they initially settled. That is to say, increasing job opportunities has positive influence on retention of immigrants. As indicated in a tool box on attracting and retaining immigrants to smaller Canadian cities (National Working Group on Small Centre Strategies, 2007):

The retention of newcomers always depends on interrelated factors like the opportunity for career or educational advancement, or the complexities arising from family and community ties. But of the transplanting is to take root, suitable and acceptable employment comes first, and as soon as possible. (p. 35)

Accordingly, the tool box recommended that local communities should widely spread the job opportunities on the employment websites and encourage immigrants to be self-employed.

## **2.2 Non-economic Determinants of Relocation**

Not only economic determinants but also non-economic influences including social networks, family ties, and welcoming community affected immigrants’ interprovincial migration (Ramos & Yoshida, 2011). Hanson and Barber (2011) indicated that “while employment is important in trying to attract and retain immigrants to non-urban areas, clearly quality of life aspects remain critical to immigrants’ settlement decisions and, more specifically, to the issue of retention of immigrants in small cities” (p. 19). Derwing and Krahn (2008) contended that quality of life such as welcoming community and good climate were equally important factors

that influenced immigrants' decision to stay in a city than work opportunities, and education resources.

Krahan, Dewling, and Abu-Laban (2005) classified connections with family and friends elsewhere as pull factors, and regarded dissatisfaction with the local community as the push factor including local residents' hostility, experience of discrimination, small community size, inconvenience of living in small cities, and cold climate. In the following subsections, I will review the literature related to these non-economic factors in order to have a full view of the reasons for immigrants and international students' interprovincial redistribution.

### **2.2.1 Weak connections to the host city**

Connectedness to local community played a crucial role in long term retention of immigrants (Wulff & Dharmalingam, 2008). A number of factors were found influencing the extent to which immigrants connected to a place. Duration of stay in the host city was one of the factors. Social networks improved and grew with time (Roth, Seidel, Ma, & Lo, 2012). The longer the immigrants have stayed in a place, the stronger social connectedness they would build in the community and the more likely that they would remain in that place. Immigrants were more likely to leave their initial destination shortly after their arrival (CIC, 2001). Furthermore, in Cater, Pandey, and Townsend's (2010) study on attraction, integration and retention of immigrants in Manitoba, they found that the longer provincial nominees lived in that province, the more likely that they would support family to move there.

Another factor was in how many organizations do immigrants have partaken. Ramos and Yoshida (2011) assessed connections by the number of different types of organizations joined by

immigrants, and they found that movers were involved in less than the groups or organizations participated by stayers by half. In particular, Pearce (2008) contended that immigrants' close ties to their neighbors were positively associated with their attachment to Canada. "One possible explanation for this may be that immigrants see their neighbors as a sample of the entire Canadian population and link their feelings toward their immediate community to their feelings for the wider society" (p. 23). Those who had strong neighborhood connections would have more chances to participate in various neighborhood activities, and thus would develop a sense of attachment to Canada accordingly. Also, Wulff and Dharmalingam (2008) indicated that living with their children in the host city was one of the factors that had a positive influence on immigrants' social ties to community because of the access to various neighborhood activities through the children's school activities.

However, immigrants rarely succeed in developing close ties in social networking. On the one side, this is due to immigrant's inactiveness in reaching out to local community. It was found that immigrants were more likely to interact with people from the same ethnic background and such co-ethnic connections negatively affected immigrants' participation in mainstream activities and the consequent development of attachment to the host city through their life there (Uslaner & Conley, 2003). Furthermore, because of immigrants' inclination to cluster with co-ethnic people, they wished to move to a city with large co-ethnic population. More specifically, the concentration of co-ethnic population attracted immigrants from Asia and the Caribbean but not the immigrants from the U.S., the U. K. and western, northern and Eastern Europe (CIC, 2001). In his study, for example, Edmonston (2005) indicated that due to the small co-ethnic population in Atlantic provinces, immigrants there tended to leave for provinces with large co-ethnic

population like Ontario and British Columbia. In addition, Ramos and Yoshida (2011) found that immigrants with extended family in other cities in Canada were more likely to move out of Atlantic Canada and thus they suggested policy makers should take the importance of family ties into consideration and develop policies to attract immigrant families. However, Hou (2007) had a different viewpoint that the size of preexisting ethnic communities alone did not necessarily motivate immigrants to move from their initial locations to the cities with large co-ethnic population, while the availability of amenities and opportunities play a major role in immigrants' settlement decision. Furthermore, he found that the concentration of preexisting immigrant community tended to "reduce rather than increase the likelihood of choosing a location" (p. 698).

On the other hand, the local community, to some extent, may be exclusive to immigrants. For example, in Kronstal and Grant's (2011) study on retention of newcomers in Halifax, both civic officials and settlement workers who participated in the study described Halifax as a conservative city which excluded newcomers from joining social, economic and political networks. Due to newcomers' failure in building connections with local community, they couldn't develop a sense of belonging to Halifax, but a sense of foreignness was generated and their decision to leave was made afterwards.

Those who had difficulties in building personal and social connections would have further difficulties in finding employment. Because networks helped immigrants have access to hidden job opportunities (Goss Gilroy Inc., 2005), the lack of social networks would be a barrier to finding a job. The authors pointed out that it was necessary to increase immigrants' awareness of the importance of networks. Some international students also recommended that career service

providers should help to build networks and employment contacts for students (Nunes & Arthur, 2004).

Actively involving immigrants in various activities has been proved to be one of the ways to connect them with local communities. As Livingston, Tirone, Smith, and Miller (2008) indicated, sports and recreation activities were positively associated with newcomers' sense of belonging to a community, and "without invitations specially aimed at attracting newcomers to sport-related opportunities, some newcomers may feel excluded" (p. 122). Therefore, in order to forge strong social connectedness among immigrants, Wulff and Dharmalingam (2008) suggested that local communities should encourage immigrants to participate in community activities and local community residents should provide immigrants with assistance because the more assistance immigrants received from local community, the more attachment they might have to that place.

### **2.2.2 Superficial friendliness of local communities**

It is generally believed that people who live in small towns are more friendly to immigrants than people in large cities (Stone & Hulse, 2007); however, the friendliness of local people in smaller Atlantic cities might be questionable. Ramos and Yoshida (2011) revealed that there was a disjunction between Atlantic Canadians' friendliness to immigrants and their presumed friendliness, as 29% of recent immigrants to Atlantic Canada had experienced discrimination. Furthermore, they indicated that those who have been discriminated are 5% more likely to move than those who have not. The experience of being discriminated negatively further affected immigrants' participation in mainstream sports and coaching. What is worse, no

strategies for addressing issues of discrimination were available in existing policy documents (Livingston, Tirone, Smith, & Miller, 2008).

The same situation was also reflected in Kronstal and Grant's (2011) study on retention of newcomers in Halifax. They found that "the community is superficially friendly but somewhat difficult for newcomers to penetrate at a deeper level" (p. 6). One settlement worker who participated in their study said that "people here are friendly but never want to be your friend" (p. 7). Therefore, it was suggested that the provincial policy makers should make practical efforts to create and maintain welcoming community (Ramos & Yoshida, 2011).

Flint (2007) conducted a study of recent immigrants to Colchester County, a rural region close to Halifax, and he indicated that immigrants from an extremely different cultural background were more likely to feel less welcomed by local community in a rural region. Most of the participants thought that "Colchester County residents had certainly been 'friendly', but not really 'welcoming'" (p. 10). He also found that visible immigrants from non-English speaking countries were more likely to encounter difficulties in finding employment in Canada because of their foreign accents and their ethnic traits. In terms of becoming a welcoming community, he suggested that not only the local residents should open their arms and make friends with immigrants, but also all the region's political, economic, legal, educational, and health institutions should provide immigrants with practical and useful assistance such as employment service, driver's license guidance, English classes, and schools for children. All these supports are indeed accessible to immigrants in large urban centers.

Goss Gilroy Inc. (2005) indicated that immigrants might encounter labor market discrimination in Newfoundland for the fact that Newfoundland employers seemed to prefer employees who were from this province and who had Canadian work experience. As a result, some immigrants with post-secondary education background have not even received a phone call for a job interview. Immigrant respondents in their study mentioned that Newfoundland, to certain extent, was welcoming. However, “many also observed that the broader community is not all that aware of immigration or connected with immigrants” (p. 36). They pointed out that Newfoundland has been employing “a low key approach to promoting awareness of immigration and multiculturalism in the province” (p. 37), and they thought such low key approach was not effective to promote the awareness of immigration and multiculturalism in the broader community, and they suggested “a more active and visible approach to building a welcoming community” (p. 37). Furthermore, some post-secondary local students expected immigrants to have certain qualities before they came to Canada (Baker & Bittner, 2013). Almost half of the respondents thought it was important for immigrants to have a good education background, and again almost half of these local young people thought it was important for immigrants to have attained a certain level of English or French proficiency. A government representative interviewed in Clark’s study (2009) indicated that she has heard some immigrants saying “on the surface Newfoundlanders are very welcoming but that it is difficult to make friends here” (p. 40). Palermo (2012) found that immigrants did not feel welcome by the local communities because they are often faced with barriers to taking part in planning processes such as updating amendments, deciding development applications, and other issues related to civic life. Some of them were not aware that they had the right to get involved in the public meetings, and others might not have a car to attend meetings. Thus, the author suggested that the local communities

should actively encourage immigrants to participate in these planning processes so as to build a welcoming society.

In addition, Derwing and Krahn (2008) proposed several recommendations for Edmonton as a smaller city to retain newcomers in terms of making it a more welcoming city. For example, they suggested “the city should develop an antiracism campaign that focuses on all Edmontonians – Aboriginal people, immigrants, and Canadian-born” (p.200), “the city should ensure its own employees receive cultural sensitivity training for anyone who comes into contact with members of the public” (p.199), and that “the city should develop a social marketing campaign to improve public awareness of the benefits of immigrant” (p.199).

International students often experience subtle discrimination by domestic students in the form of ignorance and isolation. According to Hanover Research’s (2004) study on international students in the United States, it revealed that international students often felt they were considered ignorant by their American peers, and they found American students lacked the awareness of cultural differences. Such isolation from American domestic students negatively affected international students’ integration into the new environment. Therefore, they suggested that educational institutions should educate American domestic students on how to interact and form friendships with international students.

The insider/outsider divide is rather subtle in St. John’s, which decreases the attractiveness of this city (Lepawsky, Phan, & Greenwood, 2010). The locals have a term CFA (come from away) to refer to anyone who was not born and raised in Newfoundland. A participant in their study indicated that she thought St. John’s was an insular community and its

people were somewhat suspicious because she had been always asked about who her father was and where she was born. Another interviewee said “there’s a CFA problem. I’m one of them. Many academics who come here from elsewhere in Canada or elsewhere, find that the only people they end up hanging around with are other CFA’s, whether Canadian or not” (p. 341-342).

### **2.2.3 Lower level of quality of life**

Immigrants also have worries about their quality of life. Krahan, Dewling, and Abu-Laban’s study (2005) found in their study that about one in five responses to the question about why refugee immigrants left Alberta cities were related to quality of life such as the small city size and cold weather. One participant who left Edmonton to Toronto said “Sick of small-town living. Toronto is where everything is happening”. Another participant who moved from Calgary to Ontario said “It was too cold. I escaped from winter”. In Derwing and Krahn’s further study (2008) with a broader range of immigrant participants, they also found that 37% of all answers to what were the biggest problems they were faced with were related to quality of life such as poor public transportation and a difficult climate.

Inefficient public transportation causes inconvenience to immigrants’ daily life and affects their quality of life (Derwing & Krahn, 2008). They pointed out that the inaccessibility to efficient public transportation hindered immigrants from going around the city to participate in activities, to engage in the community, or to connect to social networks. Therefore, the investment in improving public transportation was a necessity. In Palermo’s (2012) study, some immigrants living in Halifax complained about the inefficient public transportation system such

as the absence of bus stops in some areas, poor bus stop shelters without seats, poor bus route design, long waiting times, a high cost for short trips, lack of maps and route information at the bus stops, and unpunctuality of the bus. The inconvenience caused by bus became more severe during the winter as one participant in his study mentioned that her decision to buy a car was spurred by her miserable experience of once waiting for the bus in a cold winter day when the bus did not come on time. Due to the unpunctuality of bus service she had to buy a car to add convenience to her life.

In St. John's, the disappointment at local public transportation could be also heard from immigrants. Some of them not only complained about the public transportation, but also complained about the high cost of insurance for owning a car compared with rates paid by locally-experienced drivers, and difficulties of seeking loans or mortgages with foreign credit history (Burnaby, Whelan, & Rivera, 2009). In particular, travelling within the city was much more difficult during the winter. Unfamiliarity with the transit system and its schedule were also issues affecting some immigrants, which constrained their navigation around the city (Clark, 2009). Gien and Law (2009) also pointed out that the transportation problem was one of the major difficulties faced by immigrants and international students in this city. As they argued,

Newcomers and international students depended largely on local city buses for their daily transportation and found that both the bus schedule and routes are inadequate and inconvenient. For them, the only alternative to bus use is walking which is very difficult in the winter due to the poor state of the sidewalks and very windy, cold, slushy weather (p. 33).

They recommended the municipal government should improve the transportation schedules, bus shelters, side-walk conditions to help make newcomers' daily life more convenient in winter.

In addition to poor public transportation, unavailability of cultural foods is another issue faced by immigrants in their daily life. Some immigrants found it challenging to find the place to buy their ethnic food (Clark, 2009). In a study conducted by the Food Security Network of Newfoundland and Labrador (2009), a number of immigrants participated in the study indicated that it was difficult to find their ethnic foods in Newfoundland and the price was not reasonable. However, the participants indicated that they would like to remain there if they had easy access to their ethnic foods.

Lack of leisure activities is also a factor that makes immigrants feel tired of life in small cities. For example, some immigrants complained that they were bored with their life in Halifax as the city was lacking entertainment and activities for children and they would like to move to vibrant cities that can provide them and their families with high quality of life (Palermo, 2012). Some immigrants wanted to go to a busy community where they could find a lot of fun. Therefore, they recommended that the government should organize all kinds of social and cultural activities to make the life in small cities more colorful.

### **2.3 Advantages of Living in Smaller Canadian Cities**

Despite these barriers to retention, smaller cities also have many strengths. Hanson and Barber (2011) pointed out that friendliness of local people in general, together with natural environment, low key life style, safe environment, and low cost of living were positive aspects of life in a small city like Miramichi, and thus the provincial government could promote this city by emphasizing these aspects and by targeting immigrant families who were more likely to prefer the lifestyle of small communities and build their families there. Similarly, Grant and Buckwold

(2011) indicated that smaller cities have their advantages such as “a more hospitable and accessible environment”, the “relatively small size of the city makes it an ideal place for meeting people”, and “the lower profile of the city means that although there may be fewer opportunities, they face less competition for them” (p.8). Immigrants in Colchester County mentioned several good aspects of living in rural region (Flint, 2007). For example, they enjoyed the natural environment and the outdoor activities. Some appreciated the safety, serenity, less pollution, and the slow pace of life. Because of these characteristics, immigrants with children, in particular, considered the region as a decent place for their children to grow up.

With respect to the advantages of Newfoundland, the same themes as safety, friendliness, clean air, natural environment, a welcoming community were revealed in several existing research (Burke, 2008; Burnaby, Whelan, & Rivera, 2009; Clark, 2009; Goss Gilroy Inc, 2005). Burke (2008) indicated that this province has its own strengths to be a desirable destination. For example, a number of immigrant entrepreneurs were happy with their decision to make their new home in Newfoundland. They appreciated the safe and secure environment which they thought to be a perfect place to raise a family. Some found the local people to be friendly and welcoming, and thus it was relatively easy for them to integrate into the local community. In addition, after studying and living in this province for a period of time, many international students who came from large cities came to enjoy the slower paced life, the safety, friendly local residents, the nature environment, and the clean air and water. Burnaby, Whelan, and Rivera (2009) pointed out that Newfoundland has its advantages in terms of “the friendly demeanor of the resident population” (p. 17). All of the temporary foreign workers interviewed in their study expressed having received help from friends, employers, colleagues, community associations, cultural and

religious organizations. Immigrants felt welcome because Newfoundlanders were “very polite, friendly, and approachable” (p.39). In addition, Goss Gilroy Inc. (2005) pointed out that “the relatively small size of the immigrant population also creates more opportunity for immersion in language and the culture of the province” (p, 52). Some international students interviewed in their study indicated that they believed Newfoundland to be a good place to practice English and learn local culture because of the small number of immigrants there.

#### **2.4 Factors Shaping the Settlement Decision among International Students in Atlantic Canada**

Chira, Barber, and Belkhodja (2013) found a number of factors that shaped the settlement decision among international students in Atlantic Canada. Firstly, they found that international students in Atlantic Canada, who were accompanied by family or who were waiting for family to join them, would probably settle in the province of their studies. In particular, international students who lived together with spouses and their young children appreciated the quiet and safe social environment in Atlantic Canada which they thought was good to their children’s growth. Thus they were more likely to stay. Secondly, the degree of the integration of their accompanying family members determined students’ settlement plan. For those whose spouse had successfully integrated into the local labor market in the province of their studies, they were more likely to settle there. Whereas, for those whose family members failed to adjust to a smaller city, would probably leave Atlantic Canada and seek settlement in big cities where they could socialize and find employment within their own ethnic community. Thirdly, they found that the longer the students lived in a place, the more likely they were to seek settlement there. As stated previously, 8 out of 35 international students in their study intended to stay in the province of

their studies. More specifically, eight of these students had been in Atlantic Canada for more than three years. On the contrary, 12 of 17 international students who intended to move to big cities in Canada had been in Atlantic Canada for less than three years. Fourth, international students thought cross-cultural friendships were positively associated with their sense of belonging to a place and their settlement decision, however, they found it was hard for them to make Canadian friends and they were concerned with such social disconnection with local students.

More importantly, Chira, Barber, and Belkhodja (2013) pointed out that employment was of even greater significance in Atlantic international students' settlement plan than students in other Canadian provinces, because international students who studied in Atlantic provinces tended to be more conscious of financial issues. Generally speaking, most international students' choice to study in Atlantic Canada was due to the fact that they were from average family and they were only able to afford the relatively lower tuition fee at universities in the Atlantic provinces and the lower cost of living in the Atlantic region. Thus, they were eager to find a good job after graduation to ease financial stress and hence they were more likely to find employment in other provinces where more job opportunities were accessible and salaries were higher. To make things worse, international students in Atlantic Canada encountered employment difficulties, such as lack of networks to help them find employment, and they were discouraged by the discrimination against their race and accent they had experienced in the workplace.

In sum, the factors influencing immigrants' interprovincial migration found in the current literature suggest seven themes: insufficient employment opportunities for international students and their spouses, underemployment, pursuit of further career growth, local residents' lack of confidence in the local economy, weak connections to the host city, superficial friendliness of

local residents, and lower level of quality of life. The first four are regarded as economic factors pushing immigrants to move out of their host city, and the latter three are considered as non-economic factors driving immigrants to leave. Economic factors are viewed as the key determinants of immigrants' interprovincial relocation; however, the non-economic factors cannot be overlooked for their impact on immigrants' settlement decisions. In addition, the advantages of living in small Canadian cities have been examined. These mainly include a natural environment ideal for living, hospitality of local residents generally, and less competition. Further, factors shaping the settlement decisions among international students in Atlantic Canada have been summarized based on the available literature. It is found that international students are more likely to stay in the Atlantic provinces if they have accompanying families with them, if their family members are well integrated into local community, or if they have been living there for a long period of time. Moreover, it is found that employment opportunities are much more important to these students' post-graduation location choice due to their relatively poor economic condition compared to international students in big urban centers in Canada.

In spite of the above, research on post-graduation migration for international students in Newfoundland is lacking. As indicated in the report of consultations on a provincial immigration strategy (Department of Human Resources, Labor and Employment, 2005b), "more research needs to be done to determine why people stay or why they leave" (p. 5). Further research on incentives motivating international students to stay in Newfoundland was also recommended (Leslie Harris Centre of Regional Policy and Development, 2008).

The research methodology I employed will be elaborated in the next chapter.

## **Chapter Three – Methodology**

In this chapter, I first present the rationale for the mixed methods research design I used to conduct this study. Then, I explain the methods of data collection in quantitative phase and in qualitative phase respectively. Last, I explain the methods of data analysis, in two phases, in detail.

### **3.1 The Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design**

In this study, I not only intended to know the current trend in international students' post-graduation location choice, but also aimed to know the factors influencing them to make such a settlement plan. Therefore, a mixed methods research design was used, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, in order to “provide a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself” (Creswell, 2012, p. 535).

Denscombe (2008) pointed out that the purposes for researchers to use mixed methods were to “improve the accuracy of their data”, “to produce a more complete picture” (p. 272). Greene (2005) contended that mixed methods research could generate “important understandings and discernments through the juxtaposition of different lenses, perspectives, and stances” (p. 208). Further, Day, Sammons, and Gu (2008) indicated that “the mixed-methods researcher is able to provide a more holistic, more nuanced, and more synergistic picture” (p. 341) of complex realities than any single research approaches.

In particular, an explanatory sequential mixed methods design was used in this study, consisting of collecting quantitative data in the first phase and collecting qualitative data in the second phase. “The rationale for this approach is that the quantitative data and results provide a

general picture of the research problem, while more analysis, specifically through qualitative data collection, is needed to refine, extend, or explain the general picture” (Creswell, 2012, p. 542).

In the first quantitative phase, survey research was used because it enables investigators to “use information gathered from the survey to generalize findings from a drawn sample back to a population” (Bartlett, Kotrlik, & Higgins, 2001, p. 43). In particular, online questionnaire was employed considering the increased use of the internet among student population. In the subsequent qualitative phase, I made use of case study because this approach “provides a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 289). One-on-one interviews were employed because the preconceptions, perceptions and beliefs of social actors in educational settings form an inescapably important part of the backdrop of social interaction” (Scott & Usher 1996, p. 115).

## **3.2 Data Collection**

### **3.2.1 Quantitative online survey**

This phase included three steps. First, I designed the survey questionnaires for international graduate students on their post-graduation settlement choices (see Appendix). The questionnaire contained seven questions in the form of single choice and multiple choice. These seven questions were related to demographic information including students’ gender, age, and home country. Educational background was also included in the questionnaire such as their enrollment year and their programs. The questionnaire also explored students’ post-graduation settlement plan in terms of whether to apply for permanent resident or not, their location choice,

and the factors influencing their location choice. The factors were classified into two categories in general concerning quality of work and quality of life.

Second, I decided to use a web-based survey. I checked several software programs available for designing, collecting, and analyzing survey data, and finally chose Survey Monkey as a tool to survey research participants because it is relatively easy to create and its basic plan, including 10 questions and 100 responses per survey is free of charge. The survey consisted of three pages. On page one, there is a consent form with an “agree” button as a way for the participants to indicate their consent to take part in the survey. A "disagree" button and an "exit this survey" button are also available on the first page to enable participants to withdraw from and end participation. On page two, there are seven questions. Considering participants might change their mind and wanted to drop out, an “exit this survey” button is also designed on this page. The final page is a Thank You page.

Last, I sought help from International Student Advising Office (ISA) at MUN to request them to send a recruitment letter with the online survey link inserted via their weekly email to all international graduate students at MUN. As I mentioned previously, in this study I concentrated on international graduate students’ settlement decision as to where to live upon graduation since most of them are more pressured to enter the labor market to start their professional life in comparison to international undergraduate students who may continue pursuing an advanced degree. As it often happens, the response rate was fairly low after the email being sent in September. Therefore, I requested ISA to send an email to their mailing list for three more times in the following three months, and finally I collected 58 responses in total.

### 3.2.2 Qualitative case study

My original plan was to choose interview participants based on the results of the quantitative survey. Those who sent me emails and expressed their willingness to participate in further interviews would be the potential interviewees. I aimed to recruit five international students at Master's level, from five different countries, and in five different programs in order to understand settlement choices of international students from different fields of education. However, only a few students contacted me and I was only able to locate one interviewee from them because the other international students who approached me were either at bachelor's or at PhD level. Therefore, I started to recruit interviewees among my acquaintances whom I knew from workshops or other social events. First I briefly introduced my research to the students I approached to during the recess of workshops or after the social events. Then I showed them the recruiting email sent by ISA and requested them to response to me if they would like to participate in the study. After a few days, I received several positive responses. Eventually, another four interviewees were located according to their nationality and discipline. Code names *SA*, *SB*, *SC*, *SD*, and *SE* were assigned to protect their identities considering the relatively small number of international students at MUN. In addition, considering there are very few international students from the same ethnic background as *SA* in her program, I indicated the area she came from instead of specifically indicating her home country to protect her identity. Similarly for *SB* and *SD*, I also used this way to protect confidentiality.

*SA* is a student from South Europe enrolled in the Master of Gender Studies in the Faculty of Arts. She and her common-law partner came to St. John's together in the August of 2012. Before they came to Canada, they were working in Australia. Her partner applied for

spousal open work permit after he landed there. By the time I interviewed her, she had been living in St. John's for one year and five months.

SB is from West Asia majoring in Master of Education. She came to St. John's in the May of 2013. Before that, she stayed in Toronto for three weeks with her aunt's family who has been living there for over 20 years. She did not have any relatives in St. John's. At the time of the study, she had been living and studying in St. John's for half a year.

SC came to St. John's in the September of 2011 from Bangladesh, majoring in master of Oil and Gas Engineering. In the following year, she was reunited with her husband who was enrolled as a graduate student in Computer Engineering at MUN. When I interviewed her, she had been living there for more than two years and she has decided to pursue doctoral study with her current supervisor at MUN.

SD came to St. John's in July of 2012 from another country in South Asia. Before that, he had been taking a course on Chartered Professional Accountants in Regina from January 2011 to May 2012. After completing this course, he started his graduate study at MUN in the program of Master of Business Administration. He has been living in St. John's for one and a half years by the time I interviewed him.

SE is a Chinese student who came in January 2012. His major is Masters of Science in Computer Science. Seven months later, his wife was also enrolled in the same program at MUN. He had been in St. John's for almost two years when I interviewed him.

Table 1 below provides an overview of their demographic information as previously introduced.

Table 1 *Demographic Information of the Five International Students*

Code Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Marital Status	Duration in St. John's	Graduate Program
SA	Female	South Europe	Living with common-law partner in St. John's	1 year & 5 months	Gender Studies
SB	Female	West Asia	Single	6 months	Education
SC	Female	Bangladesh	Living with husband in St. John's	More than 2 years	Oil and Gas Engineering
SD	Male	South Asia	Girlfriend back home	1 year & 6 months	MBA
SE	Male	China	Living with wife in St. John's	Almost two years	Computer Science

The open-ended interview questions were employed to “identify any comments people might have that are beyond the responses to the closed-ended questions” (Creswell, 2012, p. 220). These questions were classified into three categories: post-graduation settlement plan, economic factors influencing their settlement plan concerning employment, and non-economic factors related to quality of life. Interview questions were sent to participants several days before the interview to give them some time to go through these questions and to prepare for the interview. The one-on-one interview was conducted at a time convenient to the participant, at a vacant meeting room in the education building at MUN with prior confirmation from the department secretary. Before starting the interview, I informed the participant again that their identity will be protected by using a code name, they have right to withdraw from the study at any time, and they have right to refuse to answer the questions which they would feel uncomfortable. Each interview was audio-recorded and lasted for approximately one hour.

Initial preparation of the data for analysis included organizing and transcribing data. The MP3 recordings of five interviews were saved in my computer into five file folders separately. Folder names were assigned according to the codes I gave to these participants. After having

organized the recorded data in my computer, I started to personally transcribe the interviews, and saved the transcripts in word documents. I read through the transcripts, highlighting my questions and participants' answers in two different colors to distinguish clearly between speakers. I tried to transcribe each interview right after it happened when my memory of the interactions fresh and in case I decided to send follow-up emails requesting further clarifications or elaboration on some points. In fact, several new questions and unresolved issues did emerge during transcription, and I typed my further questions in the margins of the transcripts next to the related areas. Then, I attached the transcripts to the follow-up emails and sent them to the participant concerned. All the participants actively responded to my emails, and their email responses were added into the transcripts in preparation for further data analysis. At the same time, the participants had a chance to go through the transcripts to make sure that all the information reflected their thoughts accurately.

### **3.3 Data Analysis**

#### **3.3.1 Quantitative online survey**

Survey Monkey provides real-time analysis with bar charts and data tables in a clean format. It must be pointed out that there were data missing in the database because several participants skipped some questions. In order to accurately interpret the results, I eliminated participants with missing scores from the data analysis and included only participants who completed the survey. The elimination may reduce the total number of participants for data analysis (Creswell, 2012).

### **3.3.2 Qualitative case study**

Description and interpretation were used in the analysis of qualitative interview data. Description was used to “build a portrait of individuals or events” (Creswell, 2012, p. 247), while interpretation enables me to “transcend factual data and cautious analyses and begin to probe into what is to be made of them” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 36).

The analysis of interview data was conducted in three steps. First, I explored the data by reading the transcripts for several times in order to have a general sense of the interview data. During this period, I wrote memos in short phrases in the margins of the transcripts such as “original settlement plan”, “current settlement plan”, “impression of St. John’s”, “employment difficulties”, “experience of discrimination”, and so on.

In the further coding process, I picked one transcript, and divided it into several text segments based on my general sense of the interview data. Then, I carefully coded each segment. Next, I reviewed all the codes, grouped similar ones, and eliminated redundant ones, so as to reduce a list of codes to a manageable number around 30. In subsequent analyses, similar codes answering my research questions were aggregated, irrelevant codes were eliminated, and finally themes were generated. I tried to collapse the themes into a small number of seven, supported with detailed and rich information. In the same way, I analyzed the other four interview data one by one.

### **3.4 Researcher’s role in qualitative research**

In qualitative research, “the researcher will always have an impact upon the research they are conducting and will always approach their subject with existing assumptions, biases and

ideas” (Curtis & Pettigrew, 2010, p. 59). They further indicated that “rather than seek to deny their inevitable biases, interpretivism suggests a researcher should attempt to critically reflect on these and make them clear” (p. 59).

As an international student, I have been asked by many people whether I will stay in Newfoundland when I completed my graduate program. I remembered clearly once at a career fair, a local employer asked me if I would stay in Newfoundland after graduation. I said yes. He further asked why. I said because I was familiar with the city of St. John’s and I did not want to take the extra time and energy to adjust to a new Canadian city. I felt that he did not believe that I would stay in this province. In fact, at that time, I had never thought about moving to other places.

As time goes by, I frequently heard some of Chinese international students talking about moving to Toronto, Vancouver, Calgary, and other big Canadian cities. At first, I could not understand why they had such settlement plans, because I thought that if they were pursuing big city life, they could just go back to China. Skyscrapers could be found everywhere in both first-tier and second-tier cities in China. However, after finding out that this province has the lowest employment rate, I came to understand why they wanted to leave.

Early this year, I had experienced a big change in my overseas life. I finally reunited with my husband after living alone in St. John’s for two years. He came on a spouse open work permit. Previously, he had worked in China for seven years for a big software company, starting as a general staff employee and being promoted to a project manager position. Although he lost his professional identity because he gave up that job and he is currently unemployed, he is happy

with his life with me in Canada. He appreciates the clean air, the natural environment, and the serenity. However, after the initial freshness, he has started to feel that the city lacks economic vibrancy because he does not see many factories, big companies, office towers, or even department stores. When I asked him whether it is a decent place for us to start our own family, he said we could not live in a place without jobs and he thought big cities could offer us more professional jobs. As I will continue my doctoral study at MUN for another four years, our personal settlement plan could be laid aside for a while. However, I have come to feel that my settlement plan will be greatly influenced by my husband's decision.

Considering my everyday experiences, I have the following assumptions and personal bias. First, I assume that only a few international students will seek long-term settlement in Newfoundland. Second, I think lack of employment opportunities is a primary reason. Third, spouses have an influence on international student partners' settlement plan.

## Chapter Four – Results

In this chapter, the findings of this study are presented. The results of the quantitative survey data will be introduced in the first part. The results of the qualitative case study will be presented in the second part.

### 4.1 Quantitative Survey

I received 58 responses to the online survey. However, some students did not respond to all the questions. Seven students skipped the first question on their gender; eight students skipped the second questions on their ethnic background; 12 students skipped the third question on their enrollment year; seven students skipped the fourth question on their program information; eight students skipped the fifth question on whether or not they intend to apply for permanent residence; seven students skipped the sixth question on their post-graduation location of choice; eight students skipped the last question on the factors influencing their settlement choice (See Table 2).

Table 2 *On-line Survey Response Rate*

Questions	Number of responses	Number of no response	Response rate
Q1: Gender	51	7	88%
Q2: Ethnic	50	8	86%
Q3: Enrollment year	46	12	79%
Q4: Program	51	7	88%
Q5: Application for permanent residence	50	8	86%
Q6: Post-graduation location choice	51	7	88%
Q7: Factors	50	8	86%

Among the 51 respondents to the questions of gender, 47% were male and 53% were females. Among the respondents to the question regarding ethnic background, the majority were from Asia (70%), while others were from Europe (12%), Latin America/Caribbean (6%), Sub-Saharan Africa (6%), and United States (6%). I did not receive responses from students whose home country is located in Middle East, North Africa, nor Pacific Oceania (See Table 3).

Table 3 *Ethnic Background*

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Asia	35	70%
Europe	6	12%
Latin America / Caribbean	3	6%
Middle East and North Africa	0	0%
Pacific Oceania	0	0%
Sub-Saharan Africa	3	6%
United States	3	6%
Total	50	100%

Nearly half of the participants who responded were enrolled in 2011 Fall (43.48%) and 26.09% enrolled in 2012 Fall. They were clustered around four programs: Engineering and Applied Science (31.37%), Science (19.61%), Arts (13.73%), and Business Administration (13.73%) (See Table 4).

Table 4 *Academic Program*

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Engineering and Applied Science	16	31.37%
Science	10	19.61%
Arts	7	13.73%
Business Administration	7	13.73%
Education	4	7.84%
Graduate Studies – Interdisciplinary	4	7.84%
Nursing	1	1.96%
Unspecified/Other	1	1.96%
Medicine	1	1.96%
Music	0	0%

Marine Institute	0	0%
Pharmacy	0	0%
Human Kinetics and Recreation	0	0%
Social Work	0	0%
Total	51	100%

A higher percentage of the participants indicated they planned to apply for permanent residence in Canada after graduation (88%), while 12% didn't have this intention. When asked about the place they intended to live after graduation, 27.45% decided to live in Newfoundland permanently, with 23.53% wished to stay in St. John's and 3.92% planned to live in St. John's for some time and then move to another city in Newfoundland. 41.17% intended to live in St. John's for a period of time and then move to other cities in Canada, while 21.57% planned to leave St. John's as soon as they graduate for other Canadian cities and 9.8% decided to go back to home country as soon as they graduate (See Table 5).

Table 5 *Post-graduation Location Choices*

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
... to live in St. John's permanently	12	23.53%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to another city in NL	2	3.92%
subtotal	14	27.45%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to Toronto	4	7.84%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to Montreal	0	0%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to Vancouver	1	1.96%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to Calgary	6	11.76%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to other city in Canada	10	19.61%
subtotal	21	41.17%
... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to home country	0	0%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to Toronto	1	1.96%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to Montreal	0	0%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to Vancouver	1	1.96%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to Calgary	2	3.92%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to other city in Canada	7	13.73%

	subtotal	11	21.57%
... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go back to home country		5	9.8%
	total	51	100%

The last multiple choice question asked students to indicate the factors influencing their post-graduation settlement plan. The first three factors considered by students were better job opportunities in their fields of education (84%), better salary (50%), and the quality of the urban environment (36%). I sorted students' responses in descending order in Table 6.

Table 6 *Factors Influencing Post-graduation Settlement Choice*

Answer Choices	Responses	Percentage
Better job opportunities in my field of education	42	84%
Better salary	25	50%
The quality of the urban environment	18	36%
Lower cost of living (lower tax)	17	34%
To be close to family and friends	17	34%
Better climate/weather	17	34%
The diversity of cultural and social activities	17	34%
Better work conditions	17	34%
Better public transport system	15	30%
The quality of the small city environment	14	28%
Better social welfare and health care system	13	26%
Higher level of ethnic and cultural diversity	13	26%
Welcoming local communities	13	26%
The diversity of restaurants	12	24%
Higher level of safety	10	20%
Better business climate	8	16%
The diversity of the nightlife	7	14%
Lower housing price	7	14%
More people there are from my home country	6	12%
Better religious conditions (more temples / mosques)	2	4%

## 4.2 Qualitative Interview

In this section, I present the findings from the data I gathered through the interviews with the five international students. First of all, I provide information on attractions of Canada, MUN,

and the city of St. John's to them. Then, I present their original and current settlement plans. Original settlement plan refers to the plan they had when they decided to study in Canada or the plan they had shortly after they came to MUN. Current settlement plan refers to the plan they had in their mind when I interviewed them.

#### **4.2.1 Attractions of Canada**

The reasons for pursuing graduate studies in Canada varied among the five international students, including safe social environment, high quality of living, and favorable immigration policy towards international students.

Safety was one of the reasons that mentioned by all the five students. SA chose to study in Canada because it is a "safe place" which "never enters wars." SB "always wanna to come to Canada" because of its "good reputation as a safe place in the world." SD chose Canada due to its "safe environment, low crime." Similarly, "security" in Canada was attractive to SE. In particular, safety appealed to SC greatly. She thought Canada was an ideal place for her and her husband to build up their family because of its safe environment. As a student from Bangladesh where the political situation is unstable, she appreciated the safe social environment in Canada, which she thought was important for their kids. "We are thinking for our kids, Canada is a safe place for the kids to grow up." She hoped their kids could live a happy life as most of the children in Canada.

In addition to safety, SD was also attracted by the high quality of living in Canada. First of all, he believed the economic development in Canada "presents many opportunities for professionals to make a good living, very decent living." Secondly, he appreciated the

well-protected natural environment like “good quality of air, water” which makes Canada a great place to live.

Favorable immigration policy towards international students was another reason for SA to choose to study in Canada. At the time when SA thought about studying abroad, she was living and working in Australia. Although Australia is also a popular destination for international students, she still wished to come to Canada for education because she found out that most international students in Canada are eligible to apply for three-year post-graduation work permit, while “getting a working visa is really difficult in Australia. It welcomes you to come to study, but no possibility to stay there after graduation.”

#### **4.2.2 Attractions of MUN**

The students I interviewed chose to study at MUN because of its low tuition fees, good academic reputation, and overlap with professor’s research interests. Low tuition fees were a primary reason for most of these students to choose MUN. When SA and SB planned to come to Canada for education, MUN was not among their dream universities. SA wished to go to universities in Vancouver because she had friends there and Vancouver was the first city that came to her mind when she talked about Canada. SB wished to attend universities in Toronto because she had relatives there who could take care of her. However, the high tuition fees charged by these universities forced them to look for more affordable options. SB said, “As an international student, you always looking for lower prices, so I searched, the cheapest university in Canada, so I ended up with Memorial, so I apply for it, and then I got it.” Similar to SA and SB, SD especially sought low tuition fees because he wanted to apply for an MBA program

which generally entails high tuition fees. Once he found out that the MBA program at MUN charged the lowest tuition fee in North America, he made up his mind to come here without funding because “the tuition is low, it is as good as getting funding, because MBA program usually costs close to 25,000 a year, but here just like 5,000 a year.”

In addition to low tuition costs, the reputation of MUN also drew some of them to study there. SA stressed that she not only sought inexpensive tuition fee, but also paid attention to the quality of education. She said,

Because I thought it's two years in my life in a place I never been before, maybe I should check the quality of education I am going to get, and it rank one of the top five universities in Canada.

Similarly, the key reasons for SD to come to MUN were “the low tuition, and also it is not a bad school at all in terms of the reputation.”

Being interested in professors' research areas was another factor attracting them to study at MUN. Common research interest was the key reason for SC to choose MUN, as she said, “I found my supervisor's research interests actually matched my interest, and I contacted him.”

Whereas, different from SA, SB, and SD, low tuition was not the reason for her to study at MUN.

At the time when she decided to study overseas, she had only considered applying for universities which could provide her with scholarship because she was not able to afford the costs on her own. Thus, whether tuition was high or low made no difference to her, as long as it could be covered by the scholarship she received. Also, SE met with his supervisor in China before he came to MUN at a lecture held by his undergraduate university. This professor encouraged him to study at MUN because their research interests overlapped.

### **4.2.3 Attractions of St. John's**

The city of St. John's also attracted these students to study there. Although none of them had heard of this city before they applied for MUN, most of them had tried to gather information about the city after they applied by searching on the internet or contacting their friends who were studying there. Only SE had not searched any information about this city before he came, as he said, "I didn't check anything. I just flew to St. John's and focus on my study."

Most of them were attracted to the well-protected natural environment provided by this city. SA, SB, and SD were excited to see the pictures of the tourist attractions and historic sites there like the Cabot Tower and the Signal Hill. "I was thinking I gonna walk there every day, I love it, I was in love with the nature of St. John's," SB said.

SC and her families felt relieved when they heard that St. John's was a safe place. Before she came there, her parents and husband's primary concern was her safety because she had never travelled abroad before and she was going to live alone for a certain period of time. In order to know more about the city, SC had tried to collect information from her Bangladesh friends who were studying at MUN. To her relief, all of her friends told her that this was a very safe place.

### **4.2.4 Post-graduation settlement plan**

All the five international students had the intention to apply for permanent resident status in the near future and apply for Canadian citizenship afterwards. Some of them stuck to the original settlement plan. For others, their specific settlement plans evolved with time.

SA had a definite goal of staying in Canada when she chose to come to Canada for education. However, settlement disagreements between her and her partner arose after they had been living in St. John's for several months. At that time, her partner pushed her to go back to Australia, for he was unsatisfied with his life here.

When I interviewed her, she had made an agreement with her partner to move to Halifax together after she graduated that fall. She described her decision as a middle way. "I don't want to go back to Australia, and he doesn't want to stay here, it's a compromise." SA herself wanted to stay for another while: "in two years, I am really attached to this city, I don't mind to stay, so many people I know, I got used to the city." However, she acknowledged that she would "sooner or later get really tired of living on an island." When they considered relocation, they always thought about settling in Atlantic Canada for its well-protected natural environment, and never thought about moving to Vancouver or Toronto because "life in big cities is really tired".

In the very beginning, compared with Toronto, SB was very disappointed with the city of St. John's due to its harsh weather and its small size, thus she was desperate to leave. As she said,

When I came to St. John's, the first day, it was raining, cloudy, and windy, it was like very different from Toronto. Have seen Toronto, I got the feeling that this is a very small city, so I was very disappointed.

At the time when I interviewed her, she planned to stay for about one year and probably move to larger Canadian cities afterwards in pursuit of career development. The change from being desperate to leave to being willing to stay for a period of time was attributed to the efforts she made in the past six months. In order to overcome the initial disappointment, she made every effort to change her attitudes to think positively. She had been pushing herself to get involved in

communities, aiming to know the local culture, to connect with people, and to get accustomed to life here. She even changed her hobby to hiking she knew that local people are fond of this outdoor activity. Finally, she became “kind of liking here.”

Originally, SC’s plan was to complete her graduate studies while waiting to reunite with her husband who had been trying to apply to MUN. If her husband had successfully gained admission to MUN, she planned to stay in St. John’s until her husband’s completion of his graduate studies; otherwise, she would go back to her home country to join her family. Fortunately, her husband was accepted to the program of Computer Engineering at MUN in 2013.

Currently, the problem of where to start her family depended on where she and her husband could find satisfactory jobs and where her husband would like to settle. Employment prospects and influence of her husband aside, she herself “like this city very much.” However, she said if she could not find a job in Newfoundland, she could not stay. The same was true with her husband, “he has to find something that is good for him, a job.” She felt obligated to follow her husband, “if at any points he thinks he doesn’t want to live here, and he wants to go to another place, then I have to go, just to be with my family.”

When SD first came to St. John’s for study, he had not thought about where to live once he finished his graduate program, and he just focused on his study. After living here for one and a half years, he planned to stay in St. John’s after graduation until he could find a professional job somewhere in Canada. Similar to SC, he would also stay here if he could land a meaningful job locally, which he described as “an ideal thing.” However, he thought the chance for him to

secure a professional job here was slight and he would only be able to find a coffee shop job to make ends meet. He would have to move away once he found a professional job in a big city like Toronto or Vancouver where labor markets were more vibrant.

Similar to SD, SE did not have a blueprint of his post-graduation life while he simply focused on his study. At the time of interview, he intended to live in St. John's with his wife for a quite long period. He said, "I may consider moving to another city after ten years later, but now I have no idea to move."

#### **4.2.5 Reasons for relocation**

Among these students, four are likely to relocate to somewhere else in Canada sooner or later. SA had a specific settlement destination in her mind: Halifax. SB, SC, and SD did not have a specific destination in their minds when I interviewed them, but they thought they would probably move to Canadian metropolitan areas.

Their reasons for relocation have much in common among the four students. Employment concerns is one of the themes that emerged from my study and that concur with the results from many other studies. I explore the influence of this factor on each participant in depth. Meanwhile, this study is not just limited to exploration of this factor. Other themes that lead to international students' relocation come out of this study also worth attention, such as influence of spouses, lack of networks, somewhat superficial friendliness of local people, discrimination, lack of transportation, and winter inconveniences.

#### **4.2.5.1 Concern over employment**

The four students were not optimistic about their future employment in Newfoundland. Some of them thought the local economy was not vibrant due to the fact that there were a small number of companies and businesses. Others thought the economic boom in oil and gas sector would not increase the need of workforce in their fields. The student who majored in the booming area of natural gas was also concerned that the economic boom would bring very few employment opportunities to new graduates.

One of the primary reasons for SA agreed to move to Halifax with her partner was that she found the employment opportunities related to her education were much more in Halifax. She was hoping to work at universities to provide services for international students. Due to the fact that there are five universities in Halifax, while St. John's only has one, she thought it would be easier for her to find a satisfactory job in Halifax, as she said "so I have five times more chances there than if I stay here." Besides, she was "scared" when she looked at the employment opportunity on the recruitment website of CareerBeacon, because many available job opportunities related to education or services for international students were outside Newfoundland. Thus, she did not want to "struggle too much" and she decided to leave.

In addition, she thought the economic boom in oil and gas sector could not create employment opportunities in her field of education. As she said,

It's ridiculous what they are saying at the moment, next five or seven years, there would be thousands, yes, maybe, which sectors? It's maybe nothing I am doing, I am not working in that sectors, it doesn't apply to me.

Besides, it seemed that she did not have confidence in this booming, as she said “it follows the natural trends, maybe 10 to 15 years, what happen when the petrol is left, and you haven’t invested in anything else.”

SB was not optimistic about her employment opportunities and her further career development in St. John’s either. Her specialization is workplace literacy, and she wished to work in human resources management position. However, she thought she would not have many employment options in that area in this city due to its small number of companies. “The only job I can get here would be in university. For other cities, there might be better opportunities”, she said.

Furthermore, she thought the job opportunities available in Newfoundland could provide her with little room to grow. She described herself as the kind of person who was not just satisfied with having a job but also in pursuit of constant career growth: “I like to grow in my job, and I like to change jobs, like couple of years, I think that’s the way you can grow, and experience different thing”. However, she saw a lot of people here staying in their positions for years without any career advancement. She said,

Toronto, because the city is, the population is more, so I feel like you will get better opportunities for growth, like if you get a job, you probably have better opportunity of growth if you are kind of that person.

Nonetheless, considering the severe competitiveness in those metropolitan areas, she would like to stay in St. John’s for a while rather than leaving for big cities as soon as she graduates. During that period, she thought she could accumulate some Canadian work experience to help her to secure a better job in big cities. Therefore, St. John’s, to a large extent, is seen as a stepping stone towards her career development.

Similar to SA, SB did not think she would benefit from the economic boom. “The economy is booming because of the oil and gas, and more people are coming for investment, but I found it is difficult for foreigners to do business.” As she previously worked as a language teacher, she had thought about opening a language school to teach different languages. However, she thought it was impossible because the university has already provided those courses, which are enough to meet the small demand for language learning in Newfoundland. In addition, she thought it was unlikely for her to start other businesses because the local market was dominated by big brands. As she said,

If I want to open an Asian grocery store, something that is there in any major city in Canada or anywhere else, I might not be successful because major brands like Sobeys and Dominion can easily supply those items when they realize there is demand. . . . Because the market is small, so as a small business, you can't coexist with the big brands.

SD believed he would have better employment opportunities in big urban centers as well. He wished to work in the finance industry which is generally located in metropolitan areas such as Toronto and Vancouver. In these large cities, he thought he would have more opportunities to work as a consultant in a financial firm. He said,

The labor market is limited here, just because the fact that they are not very many people in this province, like ten thousand, but place like Toronto, there are two million people, so obviously the economy is better, and options are many.

SD thought that the economy in this province was less vibrant, saying “since fishing declined, there had not been anything that has actually replaced it in terms of contribution to the economy”. In addition, based on the knowledge he had in business and finance, he believed that it would take several years for people to truly benefit from the economic boom.

The thing is going to be lot of that booming is based on offshore oil and gas, and from what I read it's probably be another four to five years to the time when the fruits of oil wealth finally show, and five years would be a long time.

SD thought the outmigration of local residents also wavered international students' belief in local economy. As he said,

People from Newfoundland are more willing to move out of here to work in Alberta's oil sands. International students see and hear a lot of that and deduce that there probably isn't a whole lot of economic activity here. If local people move to find jobs, what hope must there be for international students?

SA, SB and SD all assumed that students who majored in engineering programs would have brighter employment opportunities than themselves. SA said, "It's just my bias, maybe those who graduate from oil and gas engineer, they seem to be more privileged." SB mentioned, "If you want to get another job related to education, I think it's very hard, and sometimes feel like if I had done engineering or science, it would be better." SD said, "I am sure the people who work in oil and gas industry, engineering, they probably have a lot of opportunities here."

Although SC is majoring in Oil and Gas which was generally thought to be a promising program, she was still concerned with her future employment opportunities in Newfoundland. She thought employment opportunities for new engineering graduates would be better elsewhere in Canada. As she said,

I think options are quite limited here. Other places have more options, better salary and better position that matches your interests. For other places in Canada, it's not very hard for the engineer students to find a job. Not St. John's. I don't see many opportunities for engineering recently graduate students here.

Besides, she found many local employers requiring rich work experience.

I know people think it is easy for us to find a job, but it's not, most of the job advertisements for St. John's, they require 10 or 15 years of work experience. I will not have as much of experience as they need upon graduation.

Another reason that made SC think her employment opportunities would be better elsewhere in Canada was that she has seen many of her friends finding jobs elsewhere.

My friends are also graduating. I can see how much trouble they are getting to find their job here, so almost all of my friends are leaving because they don't get a job here. Some of them went to Alberta, some go to Calgary.

However, having witnessed the struggles that her friends had gone through when they were looking for jobs, she was pessimistic about her own job-hunting in St. John's.

#### **4.2.5.2 Spouses' dissatisfaction and uncertainty**

The two female students, SA and SC, are living with their partners in St. John's and their partners had influence on their post-graduation settlement decision. SA's decision of moving to Halifax upon graduation was largely due to her partner's dissatisfaction with his current life in St. John's and his preference for the lifestyle provided in Halifax. For SC, up till the moment I interviewed her, she has not decided where to settle simply because her husband has not finished his graduate program and has not made any decision as to where to live after he graduates.

The unhappiness of SA's partner mainly comes from the inaccessibility to sea activities in St. John's. He used to be an active person who was passionate about surfing in Australia. However, during his life in St. John's, he became inactive just because sea activities are not available here. Whereas, in Halifax, he would have the possibility to enjoy the life he likes. Therefore, when his company offered him a position in Halifax, he accepted it without hesitation.

In addition, SA's partner went through a difficult time in the first few months after he came to St. John's, which bred his unhappiness with life here. In the first three months, he had been busy with preparing documents to apply for open work permit. In the following four months,

he had been waiting for the application result. During that period of time, he was depressed, frustrated, and isolated. When he first came to Canada, his English was not fluent. Although he worked in Australia before, he worked for a company where he didn't need to use English. Due to his limited language skills, he couldn't go anywhere alone. SA had tried to find free English class for him; however, she found that there was no English class free to her partner as a spouse of an international student. He needs to pay for English class but the fee was too expensive for them to afford. In fact, her partner really wanted to attend English class to improve his language skills. "The first month was really hard, especially for the ESL class, there was nothing, but sometimes you really want to learn, you really want to improve, write and read, and he found really isolated." On top of the language problem, their financial pressure and housing issue made him feel more depressed and this negative emotion caused him to lose interests in any social activities.

SC's original and current settlement plans were both influenced by her husband. As previously mentioned, originally, she had planned to return to her home country if her husband failed in the application for graduate program at MUN. Currently, she aimed to finish all her PhD courses and experiments by the time her husband finishes his graduate program so that she would have the liberty to go with him if he wishes to relocate to other places. She said "I don't know what my husband really wants to do, if he is not happy here, he wants to leave, obviously I have to leave."

#### 4.2.5.3 Lack of networks

Most of the four students' social networks were limited to other international students or host culture students they met through working on the same projects. All of them were fully aware of the importance of networking to securing a job; however, neither of them has built up career or professional networks successfully. SA has not actively built career networks with Newfoundland employers due to her decision to relocate. SC attributed her failure to expand professional networks to her introverted personality. SB and SD both have tried to network with Newfoundland companies at job fairs; however, neither of them has developed meaningful networks on these occasions.

Although SA has successfully expanded her social circles through various activities, she was aware that the low-profile of St. John's might make some international students ill-informed of these activities, not to mention networking with people. She found that there were many "cheap" activities people could join in this city, for example, voluntary works and outdoor sports. However, she thought the main "barrier" was that "it is not a city that shouts you" and people needed to actively explore the existing activities to get involved. If people never tried to connect themselves with this city, they might think there was nothing and they would be "completely cut off". "It's not like New York where the city you could see what's going on ... but here, it's really up to you to open yourself and to connect with people." In terms of career networks, her response was zero, mainly because she has already decided to settle in Halifax.

Unlike SA, SB found building up contacts was frustrating there. She was fully aware that "networking is most important thing for you to get a job", and she has been trying hard to reach

out to people through various activities and volunteer work. However, she has not expanded her networks successfully through these activities. She mainly mingled with people from other countries because she found that it was “very very very very difficult to get friends with the locals.” She even found it difficult for her to make friends with her local classmates. “Once I came to the class and said hi, they just looked at me, they did not want to get contact”, she described. Another time, one of her classmates told her that they should celebrate their last class, but after she told him her ideas, she never received any reply from that classmate. Thus, most of her friends were international students because she thought they had a lot of things in common.

SB also hoped there would be more access to professional information on all fields of education. However, she had just been to a few career fairs because she heard from some international students that “they are useless.” Once, she went to a career exposition, but she found “nothing was very helpful.” She said, “the career fairs and expositions were mostly in engineering, science, but for education, nothing.” Thus, she wished more fairs and expositions would be organized providing opportunities for students to make initial contact with employers from all fields.

SC told me she did not have any professional contact except for her supervisors and co-workers working on the same research project. She had attended several information sessions organized by several energy companies which introduced the qualities they were looking for and the opportunities they were providing. However, she just “tried to get the feel like what are the chances”, but has not established further contact with these companies. She explained,

I am introverted because I am very friendly with people I know, but if I go out of that, I feel really uncomfortable. I don't go to people unless I really have to. I don't have very good networks, I just don't want to go to people unless I have to do it.

She made friends with several local students through working on the same projects.

SD was also aware that networking is important in finding jobs. As he said,

I guess a large part of getting a job would be networking with right people, because as the 20% of the job are advertised, and other 80% is like hidden, so you have to have a lot of professional contacts, I think that is one of the key things for you to get a job.

Attending job fairs was the primary way for him to meet employers in his areas. He has attended all the fairs he knew, but he did not think he has established meaningful contacts with professional communities through speaking with employers at the fairs. Same as SA, he has some local friends but none of them could be regarded as best friends.

#### **4.2.5.4 Doubts about locals' friendliness**

The student split in their views regarding local people's reception of newcomers. Two of the four students who had the intention to move away thought the local residents in Newfoundland were friendly but keeping a certain distance with them. SA felt insulted by some Newfoundlanders' excessive curiosity about her ethnic origin. SB felt some Newfoundlanders were excessively polite to newcomers in public places which would create a psychological distance.

SA thought local residents are friendly in general, but some of them are "too too too curious". She was tired of the questions like "where are you from?" and "do you like St. John's?" She complained,

I am not at a police station, you are not police officer, why you ask me so many questions, I just want to take the bus, buy things. For now, it's ok, I am a student, but if I plan to stay here ... I expect to be accepted, I don't expect to be 'others' all the time.

SB felt that most local residents would meet people from other countries in a friendly manner, but they are distant. "They are friendly, but the way they approach you is very different from the way we do it, they want to be very respectful, but they don't want to get involved." Even, she thought some local residents would still consider visible immigrants who have gained Canadian citizenship as foreigners. She said,

I feel like over here, even if you are not white but still you are a Canadian, you are considered a foreigner. That might not be true, though. That's just how I see things now. Because when they see me and talk to me, they asked me where I am from because of course my accent. I might be a citizen!

She felt like "an outsider" when she was at some public places like walking on the street, shopping in the grocery store, or hiking in the park. However, she saw a different picture during her short stay in Toronto where people with different skin color from different countries could be seen everywhere. "In Toronto, I didn't realize who is Canadian originally and who is not, but here, it really stands out."

#### **4.2.5.5 Discrimination**

Among the four students, three of them told me that they had been treated unfairly due to their identity of a foreigner. SA felt being discriminated because some Newfoundlanders tended to associate some negative issues of a foreign country with its people and some Newfoundlanders would judge a person by his or her accent. SB and SC found that some local people work in the restaurants or shops ignored them or treated them unfairly on purpose.

SA acknowledged that she had experienced discrimination a couple of times. Once, a business owner wanted to have a conversation with her about a crime organization in her home country. She said, “it was really sad, I don’t know if he notices this is a criminal organization”. In addition, she told us that her partner experienced much more language-based discrimination because of his low level language proficiency. “If you speak with heavy accent, people here would lose their patience.”

SB has also had been treated unfairly for several times in local western restaurants and clinics because of her obvious identity as a foreigner. Once, she went to a Canadian restaurant with a Chinese girl and an Indian girl, and they felt ignored by the server because she served the local customers who came after them first. Besides, they did not feel welcome because the server did not smile or talk to them, but she had a really nice conversation with local customers. The same thing happened in another local restaurant. She was also treated unfriendly by a doctor when she had a pain in her ears. The doctor insisted on using medical terms during their conversation though she told her that she was an international student and could not understand such terms.

She wasn’t very communicative, and she wouldn’t look at you, she just typed or googled something, after five minutes, she told me I don’t know what’s wrong with you, just go and take a CT scan ... so that was the worst experience.

Besides, she heard from some of her friends that they were scared of the local teenagers who attacked them verbally, yelling “what the f\*\*\* are you browns doing here?”

SC also had an unpleasant experience at a cell phone shop when a server deliberately asked her to wait in line for a much longer time. She said,

I kind of had the impression that she only did this to me, because she knew I am not from here, I am an international ... She told me that she doesn't want to talk to me anymore ... she said she will hand me to another person.

#### **4.2.5.6 Inefficient public transportation**

None of the four students owned a car due to the maintenance and the insurance costs. Therefore, they had to rely on the bus service to get around. They had lots of complaints. Among the main issues were high bus fare rates, low frequency of buses, circuitous bus routes, unpunctuality, few long-distance buses connecting the cities in this province, and lack of means to connect the province with mainland Canada.

The efficiency of public transportation was a primary factor that SA takes into consideration when deciding which place to live. She was not satisfied with the bus service in St. John's and it was an important reason for her not to seek long-term settlement here. "It is a place where you will get lost if you do not have a car", she complained. Both SA and her partner prefer to live in a place where they can count on public transportation rather than private cars because they don't have a plan to buy a car recently due to their financial concerns.

SA found the public transportation in Newfoundland was inefficient in several areas. First, she complained the intervals between buses are too long on weekdays and even worse on weekends. If she missed the bus, she would have to wait another 30 minutes or even one hour. Walking would be faster. Second, she found the design of bus routes is unreasonable. The buses often snake around in "S" routes and it may take half an hour or one hour to get to a destination which is actually very close. She often walked to grocery stores with a backpack because she would like to shop at her own pace without rushing to catch the bus. Third, she thought the bus fare was expensive for short rides.

It's expensive, I don't understand why they do, like, if I take route 15 from my place to university, it takes seven minutes, I pay the same as I take route 2 or route 10 around the city for an hour, how comes?

In fact, she did not expect the bus service to be free for students, and she just hoped it could be a little bit cheaper or the charge could be set according to mileage.

2.25 for a single ride is just too much. If I take a bus for one hour, I could understand, the petrol you use, the risks the drive take, and insurance things, but for me, seven minutes, so why should I pay the same.

Moreover, the unpunctuality of the bus was another problem. "It drives me insane when the service come late or sometimes even comes early", she complained.

In addition, SA thought the public transportation across the island was inefficient, which disconnects St. John's with the rest of the island. "The island is beautiful, but you cannot visit other parts of the island, that's really bad", she said. Last summer, she planned to travel around the island and she desperately tried to find the public transportation she could take. However, she found the only bus across the island drops passengers in the middle of highway where no cab or shuttle services are available to take them to the tourist attractions. Therefore, she had no choice but to rent a car which cost her 800 dollars for the five-day trip. She thought it would be more convenient if there are shuttles to connect people to places they want to visit especially during the summer. Further, she thought that Newfoundland lacks transportation to connect it to the mainland Canada. "I need to know I can take a bus, take train to visit Quebec, instead of flying all the time, it costs a lot", she said. While in Halifax, she could visit other provinces by train, which is more economical.

Similar to SA, the other three students also complained about the quality of bus service. They found the bus fare was too expensive for students and the intervals were too long. SB said,

I think it is expensive if you take only two stops. I think for the money we pay, there should be more frequent buses. You have to wait one hour on weekends, half an hour during the weekday, if you miss the bus, you are doomed. I had a very bad experience.

SC said,

The bus seemed very costly to me. That time I was trying to save money as much as I can so that I can help my husband to come here. It would be better if buses are more frequent. Also some times the bus takes very long time as it tries to follow routes that cover many roads.

SD also said, “where I was before, an unlimited ride (a monthly pass) costs about 45 dollars, here is close to 80 dollars, so I wish it could be cheaper and ran frequently, not like half an hour interval, like 15 minutes.”

#### **4.2.5.7 Winter Inconveniences**

Due to the inefficient public transportation, most of them had to walk. Among them, two female students told me that it was very difficult for them to walk in winter due to the terrible sidewalk condition. They described walking in winter as “very dangerous” and “really struggling”.

The distance between SA’s home to the university is about 30 minutes on foot, but she had to walk more than one hour in snow days because she had to climb up and down the snow banks on the sidewalks.

I don’t feel comfortable, it’s tiring. Winter is long here, five months a year at least. In winter, it is so dangerous, because the snow pile up, but pushing the snow close to the pavement, sometimes you have to climb.

Besides, she thought walking in winter was much more dangerous for people with special needs.

“I don’t have particular physical disability. What if a person in wheelchair, what if you are old,

pregnant? If I were pregnant, I slipped sometimes. If I were pregnant, I don't think I can climb mountains of snow.”

SC had the same experience. Because of the high bus fare, she chose to walk to university in her first winter semester, which took her half an hour each day. She found the winter was “really really struggling” because “they didn't clean snow on sideways.” This points out the problem with city service.

#### **4.2.6 Advantages of living in St. John's**

Although the four students plan to move to big cities sooner or later, they also mentioned some advantages of living in St. John's. Without the influence of her partner, SA would rather stay for a short period of time than leaving upon completion of her program. For SB, SC, and SD, without taking employment prospects into consideration, they would have been willing to settle in St. John's for a long period of time. The beautiful natural environment, friendliness of most local residents in this province, and combined characteristics of rural and urban life were attractive to them.

SB appreciated the well-protected natural environment in this city. She said, “I appreciate the nature, and the fact that it's not polluted compare to my own city.” Hiking in the natural environment is an ideal way for her to relax. “Hiking is something I do pretty much here now, I was in love with the nature of St. John's.”

Although SC was once treated unfairly in a local shop, she still thought Newfoundland is a decent place for living with families because people are nice and friendly in general. “I love this city very much, if I find a good job here, I don't see any problem to live here.” Several

months before I interviewed her, she went to Montreal to attend a conference. When I asked her to choose between St. John's and Montreal, she said she likes St. John's better because she found local people in Montreal were not as friendly as residents in Newfoundland.

I don't think people in Montreal are friendly, I didn't find the people same, they are more formal, because it's a big city, people here will try to talk to you, give you smile, they are very friendly, but I don't think in big cities things will like that, that's why I like St. John's.

SA thought St. John's is a city where you can have access to natural scenery and local attractions. SA said,

It's a nice and intriguing city, it's getting more metropolitan, I live downtown, nice café, nice restaurants, the museum, the Rooms ... from where I live, if I walk 20 minutes, I am very close to Quidi Vidi Lake and Quidi Vidi Village, and it is wonderful combination of nature and service you might access the city.

If her husband were also satisfied with the life in St. John's, she would like to stay because "this place is really lovely."

SD wanted to live in a place combined with the colorfulness of city life and serenity of country life. He thought the good aspects of city life was its vibrant culture which could enable him to go to different ethnic restaurants, cultural shows, and to have access to different communities. At the same time, he acknowledged that "the headache life style" in the city would drive him to move away and he would aspire for the pristine environment in the countryside. Thus, St. John's was attractive to him in terms of its combination of small town feel and urban center atmosphere.

I think St. John's is one of the places where you ideally want to bring up your family. I think the quality of life here. It has the best combination of small town feel and big city; it's like somewhere in between. It's big without being too impersonal like Toronto for

example. People stop by to talk to you if you ask them a few questions. They answer you without being too impatient. It's nice, friendly feel.

#### **4.2.7 Reasons for retention**

Among these students, SE is the only interviewee who expressed his intention to seek long-term settlement in St. John's. His success in obtaining a major-related part-time job not only built his confidence in his future employment in this province but also increased his confidence in the development of local economy. In addition, his wife's satisfaction with life in St. John's, the close friendship with other international students, and reception of Newfoundlanders were all the factors that made him decide to stay.

##### **4.2.7.1 Secure a major-related part-time job**

SE thought the limited number of job opportunities did not mean that people cannot find jobs. "Without trying, how do we know we cannot find a job in St. John's?" At the same time, he did not think he will have better employment opportunities in big cities because "competition is intense". More importantly, he has already secured an off-campus job as a web developer for a local association. He was very happy with this job because it was related to what he was learning at the university. "That job is in my research area, and I can create some fantastic website to the users. I can gain a sense of achievement in that position." Because he has already found a satisfactory part-time job, he was optimistic about his future full-time employment opportunities here. "I haven't graduated, but I have already got a good job."

#### **4.2.7.2 Confidence in the local economic development**

SE also acknowledged the fact that the employment opportunities were much fewer in St. John's; however, he was confident of the great potential of this city. From his point of view, he thought a developing city offers more opportunities than a developed city.

I strongly trust a truth that any cities or provinces will try to make them better in the future. If a place is developed. That means the space for improving itself is less. But on the other hand, if a place is developing, that means the space for improving itself is higher. We can get more chance.

He believed that the trend in economic development of St. John's is irreversible. "St. John's will grow, after ten years, who can say St. John's is not the important city in Canada? That's why I plan to live in St. John's."

#### **4.2.7.3 Spouse's satisfaction with life**

Both SE and his wife were MUN student, majoring in the same program. His wife also enjoyed her life in St. John's. Her supervisor treated her well and she has been working hard on projects. She appreciated the serenity and natural environment in this city. They both preferred the quiet country life and disliked the fast pace and severe competition in large cities. "We don't have enough energy to meet the busy living environment." They have made a plan to build their home and have children in Newfoundland.

#### **4.2.7.4 Close friendships with international students**

SE had made friends with several international students he met after he came to St. John's. When he first arrived, he had been invited by several international students to join some activities such as playing soccer and watching movie, which made him feel being welcomed and accepted.

When you come to St. John's, the first time, you have no friends, no families, so you are alone here, how can you make yourself feel warm in a foreign country, so the people, but if the people never talk to you, never invite you, how can you feel warm.

#### **4.2.7.5 Friendliness of local residents**

SE felt the local people are “super” friendly. They were tolerant of his wife's accented English. His co-workers respected his eating habits when he ate some Chinese dishes with special smell. “They try to accept what you are doing instead of shouting at you or showing their strange face to you.” In addition, he was glad and proud to answer the question of “where are you from?” “I like that question, I will say I am from China. The reason is, first, I make myself better than others, and then they will know Chinese people are good, better, diligent, hard-working.”

Though SE has never been treated unfairly so far, he thought discrimination is unavoidable. “I have to say China is a developing country, we more or less will be discriminated by some other western country people.” He thought the only way to eliminate discrimination was to work hard and to better himself. “Instead of just saying that don't discriminate me, I work hard, I just use my personal behavior to show Chinese people are diligent.”

## **Chapter Five – Discussion**

Some aspects of life in Newfoundland appeal to international students. These virtues include closeness to nature, clean atmosphere, and a gentle pace of life. In particular, some students think Newfoundland is an ideal place to start their families and raise their children. Though they extol the advantages of living in Newfoundland, few of them decide to settle permanently here. That is to say these virtues are not sufficient to keep these students in this province, as some other factors may push them to leave. These pushing factors include the lack of meaningful connections, discrimination, the lack of supports for accompanying spouses of international students, the lack of career opportunities in sectors other than oil and gas, and the lack of city services such as public transit and snowclearing. Therefore, general policies are needed to improve these areas in order to make Newfoundland more attractive to international students. In this chapter, I first present discussion in depth about these pushing factors in order to shed light on the areas which the government, the university, and the local community could work together to retain international students in this province. I then present the limitations of the study and make future research recommendations.

### **5.1 Building Meaningful Connections**

Making friends with host culture students is hardly easy for international students, and visible international students are more likely to experience more difficulties. This is supported by Sirari's (2014) findings that white international students tended to be happy with their friendships with host country students, while Asian and black international students felt it hard to have meaningful interaction with Canadian students. Gareis (2012) also found that "East Asian

students in Anglophone countries experience greater difficulties than students from other regions in finding host-national friends” (p. 323). Among the participants I interviewed in this study, only the student from South Europe, SA, had many local friends, the three Asian students either mainly mingled with other international students or only had a few local friends, but their friendships were not very close.

Bridging over the two groups to enable them to have opportunities to better understand each other by creating peer interaction opportunities is critical because friendships between the two groups of young people may have positive influence on retaining international students in Newfoundland. As Chira, Barber, and Belkhodja (2013) indicate, close friendships with Canadian students could promote international students’ sense of belonging to their host city. Perrucci and Hu (1995) also found that cross-culture friendships would “make an important contribution to satisfaction among international students” (p. 506). This is also consistent with Hendrickson, Rosen, and Aune’s (2011) research on friendship networks of 84 international students at the University of Hawaii. They found that international students who had more relations with American students were more likely to feel satisfaction and connection.

Many previous studies attributed international students’ failure in making local friends to their lack of language skills (Volet & Ang, 1998; Burdett & Crossman, 2012; Gareis, 2012). However, it was not reflected in this study because all the three Asian students were fluent in English. In particular, the student from West Asia who had been teaching English in her home country for seven years before she came to Canada still struggled to relate to local students. Therefore, the separation between the two groups of young people could not be simply attributed to international students’ limited language proficiency.

Beyond language barriers, international students' lack of effective communication skills could be a reason that prevents them from establishing friendships with Western students. The student from South Europe, SA, is from a Western culture whose communication style shares some similarities with North American students. Thus, compared to the three Asian students, SA had less trouble approaching Canadian students. As Trice's (2007) indicate due to the differences between Eastern and Western cultures, most Asian students "do not acquire as many skills initiating friendships and are unsure how to pursue friendships with host nationals" (p. 115). In the study, she found some international students lacked small talk skills, which is important for establishing friendship in the United States. In addition, international students' personalities might also have influence on their contact with Western students. The student from South Europe was extroverted and talkative, while the three Asian students were somewhat introverted and reticent. According to Hojat (1982) people who were shy and introverted were less likely to create social networks and were more likely to feel loneliness.

More importantly, although the majority of international students want to have more deep and meaningful contact with local students, the available social opportunities are limited. Thus, the university needs to create more opportunities to promote communication between international students and their Canadian peers. Considering that some international students are introverted and are reluctant to seek out social activities (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2007), the university needs to find ways to push them to get involved in these activities. Requiring international students to participate in one to two social activities in each semester might be a way. In addition to creating social opportunities, workshops on foreign countries could be organized on campus and the university could encourage Canadian students to join these

workshops to gain more knowledge about foreign cultures which, in fact, serves as the basis for acceptance.

Outside of the university, though most local residents are friendly, discrimination still exists and international students are particularly vulnerable to it. Most of the international students I interviewed had experienced being discriminated against at some public places. Thus, the government needs to take the responsibility to cultivate diversity awareness among Newfoundland residents. As Goss Gilroy Inc.'s study (2005) indicate, some participants in their study felt some residents in Newfoundland were not able to understand and accept immigrants' cultural practices. Therefore, the government needs to implement resources to educate local residents on culture diversity.

It is important to give public service providers diversity training because international students often experienced discrimination at some public places, such as restaurants, shops, and clinics. It is consistent with prior studies that international students were more likely to experience discrimination in social situations (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). The finding is also supported by Cho's (2009) study that many international students who participated in his study mentioned that they were mistreated at restaurants. For example, they were served late by restaurant staff, rudely treated while ordering food, or impatiently treated by cashiers. He pointed out that the ill treatment was due to restaurant workers' personal prejudiced attitudes. Most of them were young and lacked education on different cultures. Therefore, teaching restaurant staff, grocery cashiers, and health care staff some knowledge about other countries and other cultures is critical to eliminate discrimination in public places because they serve people at the frontline and to some extent their image represents the image of the whole city.

## 5.2 Supporting Spouses of International Students

International students' settlement decisions were primarily influenced by their by their accompanying spouses' experiences in the host country. Though SA herself would like to stay in Newfoundland for a certain period of time, she has decided to leave upon graduation because her partner is not pleased with life here and wanted to leave. SC thought Newfoundland is a decent place to start her family; however, she would leave if her husband would like to settle elsewhere. Such a result is in line with current literature. Kong (2003) conducted a research on spouses of MUN international students, finding that spouses' negative emotions had a further effect on the retention of their student husbands in Newfoundland. There is another study on the influence on retention of rural family physicians in rural Newfoundland (Myao & Mathews, 2006). They found that "a spouse's feelings of contentment were an important predictor of whether or not physicians remained in a rural community; physicians whose spouses were more content in a rural community were more likely to stay" (p. 275). Although their research was not directly about international students, it may offer insights into the influence of accompanying spouses' experiences on retention of international students.

Nonetheless, international students' spouses, in particular, who were neither students nor employed full-time were more likely to have negative experiences. As an unemployed non-student accompanying spouse, SA's partner became quite depressed in the first few months. Due to the lack of educational opportunities and the loss of their professional identities, non-student spouses without a job frequently experience social isolation, financial challenges, and emotional struggles (Teshome & Osei-Kofi, 2012). The challenges and struggles encountered by spouses of international students were revealed in many prior studies. However,

it needs to be pointed out that most prior studies focus on female accompanying spouses of international students because women made up the majority of accompanying spouses and little attention has been paid to male spouses. Yellig (2010) suggested that the experiences of male accompanying spouses may differ from those of female accompanying spouses. They may share the similarity with female spouses in terms of the challenges they met, however, they may also have their own gender-based challenges.

Language barrier is a source of negative emotions for spouses. In the first few months after SA and her partner came here, she was busy with her classes and her partner had to stay at home all day long because his English was poor and he couldn't get around alone. Kim (2011) found that spouses completely depended on their partners due to their limited English communication skills, which made them feel distressed, especially to those who were confident and independent in their home countries. Additionally, because of the language issue, they found it stressful to make local friends and to participate in community activities, contributing to their loneliness and isolation. Also, low English language proficiency limits spouses from social interactions (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011). In addition to the language barrier, employment issues also concerned spouses. Many of them gave up their career in their home countries, either permanently or temporarily. Due to the loss of their jobs, they also lost their social status (Myers-Walls, Frias, Kwon, Ko, & Lu, 2011) and lost their professional identity, which used to contribute to their self-esteem (De Verthelyi, 1995).

In order to support spouses of international students, the university plays a key role. Teshome and Osei-Kofi (2012) recommended that "it is imperative for colleges and universities to provide spouses of international students with access to programs and services that meet their

educational, professional, and social needs” (p. 62). Bigler (2007) also revealed that the amount of spouses’ support programs offered by their partners’ universities was positively associated with spouses’ levels of perceived social support.

Considering the two major challenges faced by spouses, it would be beneficial if free or affordable English courses could be continuously provided to them. The high cost of taking English classes limits their participation in cases where international student couples have financial difficulties since they have still not entered the labor market. In fact, the importance of language support for spouses of MUN international students was revealed in Kong’s study (2003). She has designed an English program for spouses called *Second Language Learning Community* to meet their language needs. The goals of such program were not limited to the improvement of language skills of spouses, but also included the offering of opportunities to socialize with people from other countries, to learn more about other cultures, and to reduce their negative emotions. Currently, the university provides free ESL classes to international students and their spouses. In addition, some newcomer service providers have free English class open to spouses of international students. However, few of the ESL classes are offered all year round. Therefore, offering ESL classes and providing other language support on a continuous basis would be more beneficial.

More importantly, employment services provided by the university could be extended to spouses of international students. Most of them are desperate to find jobs to support the family and to regain their professional identity. As husbands often direct the family, providing employment support for spouses of female international students is especially important. Han and Humphreys (2006) revealed that “lack of spouse employment opportunities is a serious and

overwhelming concern, especially for female IMGs (international medical graduates)” (p. 197). Similar to international students, spouses were not content with getting simply a restaurant job, as De Verthelyi (1995) indicated that working temporarily in department stores and ethnic restaurants would make them feel like they are lacking in professional interest or personal gratification. It is evident that helping spouses to enter the professional labor market is critical because regaining professional identity through meaningful jobs could make spouses feel enriched and live a balanced life. Spouses’ sense of satisfaction with their life in Newfoundland is one of the important incentives for international students to stay here.

In addition, involving spouses in various social activities is important because it can connect them with local communities and make their life more colorful, enabling them to gradually develop emotional attachment to this province. Social support was especially important to male spouses because female immigrants had greater social support and adapt to new environments faster than their male counterparts (Espiritu, 1999). As Yellig (2010) indicated, one of the male spouses who participated in his study experienced a great deal of challenges associated with a new role as a stay-at-home spouse, including language barriers, loneliness, and feelings of alienation in the host culture. In order to deal with these challenges, Martens and Grant (2008) suggested that the university and local communities could organize some activities to involve both spouses and locals because spouses usually appreciate opportunities to interact with Canadians. Other meaningful activities also might be beneficial. Kim (2011) found that spouses could gain happiness and satisfaction through meaningful volunteer activities as a way to expand their social networks. The networks “enhanced their sense of belonging and acceptance and helped them to develop companionship and friendship – which further helped to reduce their

stress” (p. 762). In addition, he suggested activities related to spouses’ home country cultures should be held, such as activities including those related to their ethnic food, language, and traditional holidays, through which spouses could feel as being part of the communities.

### **5.3 Balancing Economic Development and Creating Career Opportunities**

International students who are not majoring in engineering programs probably would not feel as optimistic as the Newfoundland government in terms of their employment prospects in this province. The government has been publicizing its economic boom in the natural resource sector and the need of workforce in Hebron, Muskrat Falls, and the Long Harbour industrial projects (Government of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2014). However, non-engineering international students may feel that the positions could be provided by these projects are irrelevant to their fields of education. Thus, they would still feel the major-related labor market looks grim in Newfoundland.

The unbalanced economic growth is likely to discourage non-engineering international students and push them to leave. In this study, all of the four students who may leave were worried about finding major-related jobs in Newfoundland. Gien and Law’s study (2009) argued that lack of jobs related to what they have been learnt and been trained was the primary reason for international students deciding to leave Newfoundland. Compared to large urban centers, Atlantic Canada lacked diversity in industry and immigrants with special skills found it much more difficult to find related employment there (Evernden, 2008). They were always in search of a better job elsewhere which could “take advantage of their level of education or professional

competences” (Houle, 2007, p. 23). Therefore, Atlantic Canada has a much lower rate of retention than the large metropolitan centers.

Balanced economic development is key to keep international students specialized in various fields in Newfoundland. This is what the government should make an effort to achieve. At this stage, it would be better if the government could convey information to young people that these industrial projects not only provide job opportunities in natural resource sector but also needs work force in other sectors as well. The clear illustration of job openings in various areas could make international students feel optimistic about their career prospects in this province. At the same time, the government should find ways to attract different businesses to invest here. Also, the government could develop favorable politics to encourage international students to start their own businesses here.

Apart from the government who plays a critical role in achieving balanced economic development, the university and the local employers could also help to raise international students’ awareness of its economic diversity. The university could organize workshops to introduce Newfoundland’s current economic situation and the main companies in each sector. The introduction should not just focus on the oil and gas industry or other engineering sectors. It needs to include as many fields as possible. Also, Newfoundland employers could work with the university to provide internship or off-campus work opportunities. Working in a real work environment could enable students to feel the vitality of Newfoundland companies. The more confidence they have in the local economy, the more likely they will stay in this province.

## 5.4 Improving City Amenities

Memorial University has long been the main organization which has provided a wide range of supports to international students. However, there are some supports beyond its capacity. Improving city amenities is a key area which could remove international students' daily inconvenience and show government's care of these young people.

None of the international students I interviewed in this study owned a car. They rely on public transport and walking. However, all of them complained more or less that the public transport here is inefficient which makes them struggle with their daily life. This issue has been raised in Gien and Law's study (2009) and Burnaby, Whelan, and Rivera's (2009) pilot project. However, it has not received adequate attention because international students' complaints about the bus system here can still be heard. Some people may think it is a minor issue because they have access to cars and take for granted that everyone has their own transportation. In fact, it is not possible for international students to afford a car when they are students or when they are ready to enter the labor market. For those who plan to depend on public transportation to commute from their home to work place, the lack of efficient bus systems may push them to leave for other cities providing reliable bus system. Consistently, Gemma Mendez-Smith, the executive director with the Four-County Labor Market Planning Board, called attention to this public transportation issue and indicated that young people were less likely to work in a city that lacked transportation and they were more likely to move away to find work (Blackburnnews, 2013). Therefore, it would be helpful if the government could enhance its public transportation service, such as improve the schedules and routes, build more bus booths, and lower the rates of fare.

The two female students also complained about the poor sidewalk conditions in winter. Gien and Law's (2009) raised the same issue in their study, indicating sidewalk conditions needed to be improved. However, still few sidewalks are regularly plowed. It is reported that many residents of St. John's complained about the snowy and icy sidewalk conditions in 2014 winter (CBC, 2014b). Some people were bound in their homes during the whole winter season. International students are one group that is seriously affected by the lack of snow-clearing service. Although improving sidewalk conditions is a basic service, it shows the government's concern for all of its residents. Earlier in March 2014, in response to the people's complaints, the city presented some plans for improving its snow-clearing next year (CBC, 2014a).

## **5.5 Study Strengths and Limitations**

This study was designed to examine the trend in post-graduation settlement decision among MUN international students and to explore the factors contributing to their decision by using a mixed methods design. The study was designed to fill a gap in the research literature, by giving voice to international students in small Canadian cities, and further explore the factors contributing to their relocation and retention. This section concentrated on the strengths and limitations of this study.

### **5.5.1 Strengths**

One of the strengths of this study is the diversity of participants of on-line survey. They were comprised of international students from a range of regions, such as Asia, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the United States, which added to the breadth of participants' perspectives. In addition, they were majoring in different programs including

Arts, Business Administration, Education, Engineering and Applied Science, Interdisciplinary Studies, Nursing, and Science. The quantitative sample also included some gender diversity in that 47% were male participants and 53% were female participants. This helped add to the trustworthiness of the findings.

Furthermore, the interviewees were comprised of international students in different marital status, including both single and married international student. In addition, the accompanying spouses of three student couples were consisted of both student and non-student spouses. This helped highlight the influence of spouses in different status on international students' settlement choice and the influence of gender roles.

The researcher's familiarity with the phenomenon investigated is another strength of this study. As an international student myself, whether to settle in Newfoundland or not is an issue I have been considering from time to time. Concerns and advantages of living in this province are always weighed in my mind. This enabled me to build rapport with them and put myself in their place. Joined by my husband not long ago, I could further realize that where to live for international students with accompanying spouses is not a personal decision but a family decision.

### **5.5.2 Limitations**

Several limitations result from the research design and methodology used in this study. First, the researcher is the sole interviewer with a married international student status. Thus, it is possible that some of the researcher's biases and assumptions might have influenced the interpretation of the findings. However, I have made efforts to control the influence of my

personal bias through emailing the individual interview transcripts to the participants for reviewing. Also, I have listed all the points where I thought I might misunderstand during data analysis stage and sent follow-up emails to interviewees for confirmation.

Another limitation relates to a relatively small sample of international students, which limits statistical power. According to the Fact Book 2012 (Fowler, 2013), there are 791 international graduate students studying at MUN, however, I only collected 58 responses to the on-line survey. The sample of the interview was only comprised of five international students, and four of them were from Asia, thus the contribution of cultural difference to settlement decision could not be assessed in depth.

Although originally I aimed to explore factors contributing to relocation and retention, I was only able to recruit and interview one international student who has long-term settlement plans in Newfoundland. Thus, the interpretation of reasons for retaining in this province was less rich. Given that all the participants were MUN students, the generalizability of the findings is limited to international students who are temporarily residing in Newfoundland. Consequently, these findings may not be generalizable to other international students attending universities in other provinces of Canada.

## **5.6 Implications for Further Research**

Future research on MUN international students' post-graduation settlement decision should be extended to include larger and more diverse samples. Future studies could use more culturally representative samples, by including students from the Middle East, North Africa, and Pacific Ocean, which were not contained in this study. In addition, this study only included three

student couples and thus larger samples of international student couples could be included in future studies. Besides, the influence of religious belief on student couples' settlement plan was not explored in this study because none of the three student couples had any religious belief. Thus, future studies could include student couples with religious beliefs and pay attention to the impact of religious beliefs on their settlement decisions. Considering current studies on student couples are mainly include male international students and their female accompanying spouses, future studies could focus more on female international students and their male accompanying spouses. Studies giving voice to both international students and their accompanying spouses could be conducted to provide a more in-depth understanding of their settlement plan.

Longitudinal research in a mixed quantitative and qualitative methodology is recommended to track international students' post-graduation life investigating whether those who moved out for better employment opportunities really have secured satisfied jobs and their struggles in the city they relocated; whether these movers think about returning back to Newfoundland; whether those who planned to live in Newfoundland for a short period would like to prolong their stay here; whether those who planned to stay permanently in this province are really content with their settlement choice.

Finally, the current study highlighted only some of the economic and non-economic determinants to international students' settlement choice. Considering we live in a fast-changing world, other factors contributing to international students' relocation and retention may arise. Thus, future studies are needed to explore these new aspects.

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## **Appendix: Online Survey for International Graduate Students**

1. Gender / Age: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Male
  - Female
  
2. Where are you from? Home country: \_\_\_\_\_
  - Asia
  - Europe
  - Latin America / Caribbean
  - Middle East and North Africa
  - Pacific Oceania
  - Sub-Saharan Africa
  - United States
  
3. Enrollment Year / When are you going to graduate? \_\_\_\_\_
  - 2011 Fall
  - 2012 Winter
  - 2012 Spring
  - 2012 Fall
  - 2013 Winter
  - 2013 Spring
  
4. Program:
  - Arts
  - Business Administration
  - Education
  - Engineering and Applied Science
  - Graduate Studies – Interdisciplinary
  - Human Kinetics and Recreation
  - Marine Institute
  - Medicine
  - Music
  - Nursing

- Pharmacy
  - Science
  - Social Work
  - Unspecified/Other
5. After graduation, do you plan to apply for permanent residence in Canada?
- Yes
  - No
6. Where do you plan to live after graduation?
- ... to live in St. John's permanently
  - ... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to another city in NL
  - ... to live in St. John's for some time and then move to ...
    - Toronto
    - Montreal
    - Vancouver
    - Calgary
    - Other city in Canada
    - Home country
  - ... to leave St. John's as soon as I graduate, and go to ...
    - Toronto
    - Montreal
    - Vancouver
    - Calgary
    - Other city in Canada
    - Home country
7. What are the factors influencing your post-graduation settlement choice?
- Quality of work
- Better job opportunities in my field of education
  - Better salary
  - Better work conditions
  - Better business climate
- Quality of life
- To be close to family and friends
  - Higher level of safety
  - Better social welfare and health care system
  - Better public transport system
  - The quality of the urban environment
  - The quality of the small city environment
  - The diversity of cultural and social activities
  - The diversity of restaurants
  - The diversity of the nightlife
  - Better climate/weather
  - Lower cost of living (lower tax)
  - Lower housing price

- Higher level of ethnic and cultural diversity
- More people there are from my home country
- Better religious conditions (more temples / mosques)
- Welcoming local communities