

Young Adult's Perspectives on the Attractiveness of
Living in Rural Canadian Communities

by
Shannon Bence



VANCOUVER ISLAND
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YOUNG ADULTS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF LIVING IN
RURAL CANADIAN COMMUNITIES

by
Shannon Bence

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THESIS EXAMINATION COMMITTEE SIGNATURE PAGE

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Department of Recreation & Tourism Management for acceptance, the thesis titled "*Young Adult's Perspectives on the Attractiveness of Living in Rural Canadian Communities*", submitted by Shannon Bence in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management.

Supervisory Committee:



Nicole Vaugeois, Ph.D.,
Co-Supervisor
Regional Innovation Chair
Vancouver Island University
British Columbia, Canada



Terri McDonald, Ph.D.,
Co-Supervisor
Regional Innovation Chair
Selkirk College
British Columbia, Canada



Katherine King, Ph.D.,
External Reviewer
Senior Lecturer
Bournemouth University
Bournemouth, United Kingdom

Dedication

To the young people represented in this study, may your perspectives be heard and your voices be prioritized. Thank-you to everyone who provided such honest and in-depth responses, the richness of your comments provide great insights for the communities working to attract young people.

Warren, the love of my life. No words can express how grateful I am for your love, support and encouragement throughout this journey. Thank-you for helping me accomplish my dreams, achieve my goals, and stimulate my brain. For always being my safe place to run to - your humour and love got me through the toughest of times and for that I am forever grateful. For having more patience than a partner could ever hope for and for taking me fishing, when I really needed to reconnect with the real world. You have helped me love every minute of this journey, and for that I dedicate this to you. Our future is bright and our list of things to do and try is long; thank-you for helping me cross this one off my list, now lets get to the others! I am beyond excited to start and enjoy the next chapter of our adventure together.

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Table of Contents

Dedication	2
Acknowledgements	2
List of Figures	7
Glossary of Terms.....	8
Abstract	10
Chapter 1: Introduction	11
Chapter 2: Literature Review	14
Changes in Rural Canada	14
Young Adult Migration: An Overview	16
Youth Out-Migration: Motivations to Leave Rural Living.....	18
Impacts of Young Adult Out-Migration	20
Youth Out-Migration: Motivations to live in a Rural Community	22
The Opportunity: A New Approach to Addressing the Out-Migration of Young Adults	25
Breaking down the assumed homogeneity of young adults	26
Moving Forward: A Critical Analysis of Existing the Literature	28
Chapter 3: Methodology	31
Introduction	31
Overview of Study Design	32
Adopted Typologies.....	33
Pilot Study.....	34
Method Implementation	35
Online Survey.....	36
Virtual Focus Group.....	38
Method Rational	39
Other Possible Study Methods.....	42
Study Limitations	43
Data Analysis	44
Chapter 4 - Findings	46
Introduction	46
Young Adults – An Aggregate Perspective	46
Introduction	46
The Extent of Attractiveness	49
Attraction to Living Rurally	51
Migration Characteristics	62
Rural to Urban Migration	62
Rural to Urban Migration Recap.....	66
Urban to Rural Migration	66
Recap of Migration influences & motivations	70
Emerging Typology	71
Relocation Difficulties.....	73
Barriers & Deterrents	76
Unattractive Attributes of Rural Living.....	76
Supports Wanted: A Young Adult Perspective	84
Community Investment in Young People	84
Ideas to Increase Employment	87
Access to Telecommunications	88

Social Supports	89
Summary- Aggregate Findings	91
Introduction to the Four Subgroups.....	92
Rural Returners	92
Rural Stayers.....	101
Rural Leavers.....	107
Urbanites	117
Findings Summary.....	125
Chapter 5 - Discussion	127
Introduction	127
Reframing Young Adult Mobility	127
Addressing the Barriers Identified By Young Adults.....	133
Reframing Young Adult Mobility Summary	140
New Insights Gained.....	141
Recommendations.....	147
Community Level Supports.....	147
Provincial Level Supports	148
Federal Level Supports.....	150
Recommendations Summary.....	151
Moving Forward: Future Research	151
Conclusion	154
References	156
Appendices	164
Appendix A – Types of Amenities – (Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire, 2010)	164
Appendix B – Survey Questions – By Subgroup.....	165
Aggregate Survey.....	165
Rural Returners	165
Rural Leavers.....	177
Rural Stayers.....	189
Urbanites	198
Appendix C - Research Consent Form Online Survey	209
Appendix D – Facebook Focus Group Questions	211
Appendix E – Research Consent Form Facebook Group Page	212
Appendix F – Facebook Recruitment Script.....	215
Appendix G Knowledge Mobilization Product	216
Knowledge Mobilization Strategy.....	216
Knowledge Mobilization Strategy: Detailed Description.....	217
Appendix H Reflective Chapter	218
Appendix I – Ethics Report	222

List of Figures

Figure I. Future Plans of Rural Youth	Page 23
Figure 2 – Importance of Access to Natural Amenities	Page 57
Figure 3 – Importance of Cultural Amenities	Page 59
Figure 4 – Importance of System Amenities	Page 61
Figure 5 – Pull Factors Influencing Rural to Urban Migration	Page 64
Figure 6 – Push Factors Influencing Rural to Urban Migration	Page 64
Figure 7 - Pull Factors Influencing Urban to Rural Migration	Page 68
Figure 8 - Push Factors Influencing Urban to Rural Migration	Page 68
Figure 9 – Classification of Respondents by Future Migration Intentions	Page 71
Figure 10 – Major factors making it difficult to relocate rurally	Page 75
Figure 11 – Non-Influential Factors in Relocation to Rural	Page 101
Figure 12 – Factors making it Difficult to relocate to a Rural Community	Page 124
Figure 13 - Classification of Respondents by Future Migration Intentions	Page 143
Table 1 – Summary Table of Aggregate Data Overview	Page 48
Table 2 – Summary Table of Rural Returners Overview	Page 92
Table 3 – Summary Table of Rural Stayers Overview	Page 101
Table 4 – Summary Table of Rural Leavers Overview	Page 108
Table 5 – Summary Table of Urbanites Overview	Page 118

Glossary of Terms

<i>Concept</i>	<i>Definition</i>	<i>Reference</i>
Counterurbanism	The residential migration of people from what might loosely be termed as 'urban' areas and what might be loosely termed as 'rural' areas	(Laoire, 2007)
Cultural Amenity	Amenities that are based in the cultural context of rural areas including heritage, recreation and sport, arts, industry and community and which serve to enhance quality of life in rural regions. The value of natural amenities is driven by human perceptions of aesthetics associated to heritage, recreation and sport, arts, industry, and community. They contain tangible and intangible elements.	<i>Vaugeois, N. & Whitney- Squire, K. (2010).</i>
<i>Natural Amenity</i>	Amenities that are based on the natural attributes of rural areas including climate, land and water and which provide the settings and materials for work and leisure pursuits of rural residents. The value of natural amenities is driven by human perceptions of aesthetics associated to climate, land, and water. They contain tangible and intangible elements. Cultivated or transformed landscapes also fit within natural amenities (i.e. farmland).	<i>Vaugeois, N. & Whitney- Squire, K. (2010).</i>
System Amenity	Amenities that support the development of natural cultural amenities including infrastructure, services and connectivity.	<i>Vaugeois, N. & Whitney- Squire,</i>

	The level of support provided to rural enterprise and infrastructure development drives the value of system amenities.	<i>K. (2010).</i>
Rural Community	Rural areas and small (rural) cities refer to cities and municipalities located outside urban areas and having a population of less than 10,000.	<i>Canada's Rural Partnership; Bollman, R. D., & Clemenson, (2010)</i>
Rural Returners	Young adults raised rurally, relocated to an urban centre and then returned to rural living	Malatest & Associates (2002)
Rural Leavers	Young adults raised rurally but left to live in an urban centre for reasons such as school or employment	Malatest & Associates (2002)
Rural Stayers	Young adults raised rurally and remained living in rural areas	Malatest & Associates (2002)
Urbanites	Young adults raised in an urban setting, never lived rurally or moved to a rural community later in life	Malatest & Associates (2002)
Young Adults	Young people between the ages of 20-29	Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, (2011)

Abstract

With transitioning economies, political and social restructuring, many rural Canadian communities are plagued with population instability and the out-migration of residents. One group that has been identified as a core challenge to attract and retain, are young adults. Attracting young adults to relocate to rural areas for employment and to establish families is a goal of many of Canada's rural communities. Yet, these same communities often struggle due to limited knowledge on what motivates young adults' relocation decisions. The purpose of this study was to examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural Canadian communities. To gain more of an understanding of young adults perspectives on the attractiveness of living rurally, the objectives for this study were to: (1.) Identify to what extent young adults were attracted to rural areas; (2.) Identify the most common attributes that make rural communities attractive or unattractive; (3.) Examine how young adults made their relocation decisions; (4.) Determine if differences exist between types of young adults based on their background with rural areas; and (5.) Produce recommendations on how rural communities can incorporate the findings to attract young adults. The data collection tools utilized in this study included the implementation of an online survey and a virtual focus group. The major research findings identified that the majority of respondents were attracted to living in rural communities, although respondents were attracted to different types of rural communities. Respondents were attracted to living in rural communities for reasons relating to the increased access to the outdoors, nature and wildlife, close-knit atmosphere, knowing your neighbour, family and friends, and the slower pace of a rural lifestyle. Although many respondents were attracted to living in rural communities, many were unable to do so, due to a variety of barriers and deterrents that exist. Barriers such as the lack of employment opportunities, the affordability of rural living, limited access to services and the perception that rural living lacked overall opportunities prevented many respondents from relocating. In terms of factors that influenced respondents' mobility decisions, it became evident that many of the respondents were motivated to relocate based on opportunities relating to employment, education and lifestyle ventures. Lastly, a number of recommendations were identified to help communities move forward by overcoming the barriers and deterrents that can prevent young residents and families from relocating to rural areas.

Chapter 1: Introduction

*“Young people are in a key position as far as the future of the remote rural areas...without [the] renewal of their population from within, these areas cannot remain viable or maintain their economic functions in the long-term”
(2003, as cited in Stockdale, 2004, p.296).”*

Over the last few decades rural Canada has experienced immense changes (Parkins & Reed, 2013). With transitioning economies, political and social restructuring, many rural communities in Canada have experienced a variety of impacts such as population instability and the mass exodus of residents (Market et al., 2010; Shucksmith, 2004). Many rural communities have been impacted by large numbers of young adults migrating out of rural areas in search of better opportunities located elsewhere.

Young people are often viewed as the lifeblood of the community; however due to the existence of opportunities elsewhere, immediately or soon after high school graduation, they often leave their communities in search of employment opportunities or to pursue post-secondary goals, both of which are usually located in larger urban centres (Argent, 2009; D’Amico, 1996; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 2003; Jones, 2004). The loss of a younger population can create immense impacts on the communities left behind, especially among those unable to replenish declining demographics with new young residents migrating into the community (Argent, 2009; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002). The loss of young people residing in rural communities affects the quality of life of many rural residents as their out-migration can contribute to the loss of local services (Argent, 2009), social and human capital (Stockdale, 2006) and a demographic imbalance (Bollman & Clemenson, 2008). As well, retaining a young population is important as they can contribute to the growth and development of a community (Davies, 2008).

While young adult out-migration from rural communities has been taking place since the mid to late twenty-century, at the turn of the millennium, Dupuy, Mayer, & Morissette (2000) reported that all Canadian Provinces continue to lose large portions of their younger populations. Both Dupuy et al., (2000) and Malastest & Associates Ltd

(2002) indicated that this trend is expected to continue. As young people continue to question their community's ability to provide a prosperous future, the likelihood of remaining in their community is slim; out-migration becomes an option for some and a necessity for others (Higgins, 2008). Without the existence of a young population, communities will struggle to sustain their economic and social structures (Stockdale, 2006; Stockdale, 2004).

Although young residents are important, retaining a young population becomes a challenge for rural communities as they are in competition with their more desirable urban counterparts (Garasky, 2002). As a community's young population dwindles, community based services such as schools and recreation programming start to disappear which contributes to a decrease in the job opportunities within a rural community and further influences others to leave making relocation increasingly challenging for those who are trying to migrate into the community (Argent, 2009; Garasky, 2002). As the social and economic sustainability of rural areas is intertwined with a community's ability to retain a young population, it is critical that the young adult out-migration is addressed (Brown, 2002).

While it is the goal of many rural communities to attract young residents and families, many struggle to do so (Argent, 2009; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning, Nuttall, Hendry, Kloep, & Wood, 2003; Jones, 2004). This challenge exists for many reasons; one being the fact that relatively little is known about young adults' migration motivations and preferences. With little information on how to attract young residents and families, communities are limited in their ability to grow and prosper. (Stockdale, 2006).

While the long lasting challenge of the out-migration of young adults is not expected to go away, it is important to recognize existing evidence that suggests young people are interested and keen to relocate rurally (Davies, 2008). Scattered lightly throughout the existing research examining return-migration or in-migration a theme that young people want to relocate rurally is evident. However, much of the existing literature focuses on young people's out migration behaviour rather than examining what it would

take to get young people migrating to rural communities. Studies conducted by Malatest & Associates (2002), Dupuy et al., (2000), Davies (2008) for instance all showcase the interest of rural youth and young adults to relocate or remain living rurally. Based on the evidence that exists, it is crucial for communities to recognize this opportunity and for future research to understand and to take a new angle on the problem.

Further exploration of the factors that prevent young people from residing in rural communities is needed. While the research examining young adult migration has focused on topics such as migration patterns (Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Dupuy et al., 2000), factors that influence migration (Davies, 2008), the complexities of migration choices (Glendinning et al., 2003; Garasky, 2002; Jones, 2004), and the barriers that may prevent migration (Stockdale, 2006), little is known about how to increase the number of young adults age 20-29 to living in rural communities.

While there are a number of programs that currently exist at the community, provincial and federal levels working to assist young adults to relocate to rural communities, little academic research has focused on this aspect, and even less has focused on gaining young adults' perspectives on the topic. Although the goal of many communities is to attract young residents and families, communities are limited in their capacity to do so until a better understanding of young adults perspectives of living in rural communities is gained (Davies, 2008; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008).

The purpose of this study is to examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural Canadian communities. Young adults are defined as being between the ages of 20-29 (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011). In order to understand the reasoning behind this research, the next chapter of this thesis examines the existing literature on the topic of young adult migration and the attraction and retention of young adults to rural communities. Next, the methods utilized in the implementation of this study are examined, followed by a chapter identifying and explaining the findings of this study. Lastly, the findings are further examined in the discussion chapter, followed by a conclusion.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Changes in Rural Canada

Change has always been a prevalent part of rural Canada (Parkins & Reed, 2013; add). However, over the last few decades, economic restructuring and technological advances have contributed immense and accelerated change among rural communities (Market et al., 2010; Shucksmith, 2004). This shift has impacted the day-to-day activities and the social wellbeing of many rural residents residing within these communities (Jackson et al., 2006). With the inability to adjust quickly and a limited resource base to draw upon, many communities have been left with unstable economies, ageing infrastructure, disappearing local services, and the mass exodus of residents (Summer, 2005). The impacts resulting from the fast paced change within rural Canada threatens the long-term vitality and sustainability. To adjust to the changes taking place and to address the threats many rural communities are now undergoing a period of revitalization (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011).

As some communities work to revitalize themselves during this time of transition, a debate among scholars questions the worth of revamping and investing in rural areas (Champion & Brown, 2012; Parkins & Reed, 2013; add). Markey (2004) explains that some feel rural and small-town communities are the backbone of the Canadian economy while others feel rural and small-town areas are surviving only due to the financial support driven from urban areas. Researchers such as Reimer (2013) respond to this debate by discussing the importance of understanding the interconnectedness between rural and urban centres and the importance of keep both environments healthy and thriving. Ward (2006) builds on this point by stating the importance of examining rural-urban interdependencies in order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the restructuring caused by the accelerated change taking place within rural Canada. It is particularly important to note the interdependencies between rural and urban environments, because rural communities cannot undergo successful revitalization in isolation. This is primarily because rural areas are affected and influenced by the activities and power relations that exist within urban environments (Parkins & Reed, 2013). To explain this point further, Reimer (2013) clearly depicts the relationship between rural and urban areas:

“Rural places provide the timber, food, minerals, and energy that serve as bases of urban growth. They also process urban pollution, refresh and restore urban populations and maintain the heritage on which much of our Canadian identity rests. In return, urban Canada provides the markets for rural goods, much of its technology, and most of its financial capital and manufactured goods, along with a good deal of its media-based culture. Decisions made and actions taken in one region often have implications for those in another region – whether explicitly or implicitly. To understand both regions, therefore, one must understand the relationships that binds them” (p. 91).

The quote by Reimer (2013) communicates the relationship between rural and urban areas but it also showcases the importance of supporting rural areas through this period of change. Furthermore, Reimer (2013) highlights that focusing primarily on urban centres is not solution to addressing the struggles and challenges faced by rural regions as urban centres rely on rural regions and vice versa, and urban areas also suffer a variety of challenges. The urban idyll can cover up the fact that many urban areas suffer from social ills such as overcrowding, loneliness, and lack of green space to name a few. This highlights the importance of the need for rural places to be supported through the process of this change as they provide relief and a sense of balance to the challenges faced by urban areas (Reimer, 2013).

Understanding the importance of vibrant and healthy rural regions is crucial as many areas are faced with challenges that make dealing with the fast paced change even more difficult. Stabilizing declining populations are one of the challenges that communities are working to address (Dupuy et al., 2000; Malatest & Associates, 2002). One way communities are attempting to revitalize is by attracting and retaining new residents (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011). Attracting new residents is a crucial step in the process of revitalization as they can contribute to a community's economy by establishing businesses, building new homes and purchasing consumer goods (Gmelch, 1986). As young adults have often been cited as the most critical component to successful rural revitalization (Rothwell et al., 2002; Stockdale, 2006) the attraction and retention of young residents and families is a goal of many rural communities.

To gain better insight on how rural communities can become more successful in attracting young residents and families, it is first important to examine the existing literature examining young adult migration, mobility decisions and the factors that influence mobility preferences. The following section will start with an overview of young-adult migration followed by an in depth look at motivations to move and the impacts associated with out-migration from rural areas. To end, an examination on what is known about young peoples' attraction to rural areas as well as the challenges that exist in relocating to rural communities is provided.

Young Adult Migration: An Overview

The out-migration of young people in rural communities is not a new trend nor is it specific to a Canadian context (Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Hajesz & Dawe, 1997). In Europe for example, the phenomenon of rural depopulation dates back to the 1850's where the Council of Europe (1950) cited it as an epidemic. Stockdale (2004) brings attention to the decline of young people in rural Austria, France and Scotland whereas Davies (2008), Garasky (2002), Laoire (2007), and Dupuy et al., (2000) examined the same phenomenon in the context of rural Australia, Ireland, America and Canada. In Canada, the mass exodus of rural residents occurred shortly after the phenomenon took place in the United States in the late 1930's and 1940's when the farming crisis became prevalent (Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Garasky, 2002). Since this time, many young adults have been leaving their rural communities in search of higher education or better employment opportunities elsewhere, often located in urban centers (Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Garasky, 2002). Over the years the trend of young adult out-migration evolved into a normalized step in the process of growing up (Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002).

Overtime, Canadian rural communities have experienced fluxes both in gains and loses of resident populations. As of 2006, aggregate data on Canada suggests that rural Canada is growing (Bollman & Clemenson, 2008). This growth is still smaller than the growth that is taking place within urban centres and most of it is taking place in communities adjacent or in proximity to larger urban centres, indicating that overall the population trend in rural Canada is one of decline (Bollman & Clemenson, 2008).

The declining number of young people residing rurally is a serious concern for many rural communities (Argent, 2009; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008; Jones, 2004; Laoire, 2007; Stockdale, 2006). Between 1986 and 1996 Canada's rural communities experienced a 12-16% loss of youth ages 15-19 and 18-22% loss of their young adults ages 20-29 (Malatest & Associates Ltd, 2002). More recently, Dupuy et al., (2000) reported that all Canadian Provinces continue to lose large portions of their younger populations and that the mobility patterns of young people can differ based on age. Dupuy et al. (2000) suggests that young adults in Alberta and British Columbia are more likely to leave rural areas in their early 20's than the young adults who grow up in urban centers. In the Atlantic Provinces, the opposite was true; young adults of the same age (20-24) left rural settings less frequently than their urban counterparts. Dupuy et al. (2000) found that 25-29 year olds in the Atlantic Provinces were less likely to relocate out of rural areas than those living in urban centres. Young adults living rurally in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia were more likely to leave their rural setting than young adults who grew up in urban areas. As highlighted, the mobility patterns and characteristics of youth can be dependant upon their age as well as the province in which they live (Dupuy et al., 2000).

The out-migration of young adults also exists within urban settings, however this is a prevent problem for rural communities as a lower rate of youth return. For example, over a 10 year period, only 1 in 4 out-migrating youth are expected to return to their original community (Malatest & Associates Ltd, 2002). Malatest & Associates (2002) conducted a follow up study to the research completed by Dupuy et al., (2000), by implementing a nation wide study examining youth migration. Similarly to the results produced by Dupuy et al., (2000), Malatest and Associates (2002) also concluded their study by stating that rural Canadian communities are likely to continue to lose large portions of their young populations to larger urban centres. Studies such as these forecast a dim future for rural Canada. As young people continue to question their community's ability to provide a prosperous future, the likeliness of youth remaining in their community is slim (Higgins, 2008).

The retention of a young population can significantly benefit a community long into the future (Laoire, 2007; Stockdale, 2006). When addressing the out-migration of the young population it is easy to focus on the retention of those leaving, however even at 100% retention, communities still need to attract young adults from outside of the community (Stockdale, 2000). Researchers such as Brown (2002) emphasize the importance for communities to also attract new young adults as they can often bring entrepreneurial, political, and leadership skills to the communities in which they move. In order for communities to start to accumulate a surplus of young adults, the need to identify what attracts young people to living in rural communities is essential. Interestingly, little research to date focuses on young adults' attraction to living in rural communities. Rather, much of the literature and previous studies conducted focus on young peoples migration behaviour (Argent & Walmsley, 2008; Bryant & Joseph, 2001; Dupuy et al., 2000), the reasons young people leave (Stockdale, 2004; Argent, 2009) and the impacts that results from few young people residing in rural communities (Artz, 2003; Brehm, Eisenhauer, & Krannich, 2004; Gibson & Argent, 2008; Higgins, 2008).

The next section examines what is known about young adult migration behaviour and why young people leave, the impacts of out-migration, and the small portion of research that starts to uncover the elements that attract young people to live in rural communities. Examining each of these three areas of the migration literature, help to provide insights into the why attraction should be studied.

Youth Out-Migration: Motivations to Leave Rural Living

The out-migration of young people from rural areas is often referred to as “bright lights syndrome” which refers to the mass exodus of young people out of rural communities and the attraction young people have towards urban life. This syndrome is based on the perception that rural living is perceived to be dull and boring where as a city environment appears to be exciting and vibrant (Argent & Walmsley, 2008). In a broader perspective, Siegel (2008) explains the movements of residents by discussing that people tend to migrate from areas of less attraction to those of higher attraction. This perspective highlights the importance of understanding whether young adults find rural areas attractive and if so why.

Among young people who grow up rurally, there are a variety of motivations that entice them to leave their communities. To better understand these motivations, a number of scholars have identified factors that are said to *push* young people out of their rural communities and *pull* young people towards living in larger urban centres (Jackson et al., 2006; Gibson & Argent, 2007; Argent & Walmsley, 2008; Panelli, 2002; Hjort & Malmberg, 2007; Williams & Jobes, 1990; Eacott & Sonn, 2006; Glennding et al., 2003). An extensive list of studies have identified employment and education as being the two most cited factors influencing young people to leave rural areas (Argent, 2009; Davies, 2008; Dupuy et al., 2000; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning et al., 2003; Jones, 2004). The motivations to relocate in order to increase ones opportunities such as those related to employment or education have been examined by a number of studies including Hektner (1995) and Mills & Hazarika (2001). Mills & Hazarika (2001) examined the migration of young adults from non-metropolitan counties, by specifically looking at the out-migration of young adults and the motivations to leave in order to gain employment that provided a higher income (Mills & Hazarika, 2001). The study found higher paying employment and higher returns on ones post-secondary schooling were two influential factors in young adults' decisions to migrate (Mills & Hazarika, 2001). Also examining employment related motives, Hektner (1995) examined the conflict that arises when rural adolescents need to move away from their home communities in order to fulfill certain career aspirations but are faced with the decision of having to leave the communities in which they grew up. Other studies have also identified that the limited employment options for woman specifically and the prevalence of seasonal employment positions, as being factors that push young people away from rural living and towards residing in an urban centre (Eascott & Sonn, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006; Gibson & Argent, 2007).

In addition to limited employment and education opportunities, factors such as limited access to affordable housing, problems finding a spouse, the desire to establish a new identity, the lack of privacy, the lack of things for young people to do in rural areas, the feelings of restlessness, the desire for change and new experiences, and the need for independence have all be cited as being influential factors that have been identified to push young people away from rural living (Eascott & Sonn, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006; Gibson & Argent, 2007; Panelli, 2002; Siegel, 2008).

Some scholars indicate that perception can play a role in the out-migration of young people from rural areas (Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope & Gabriel, 2007). For example, Hajesz & Dawe (1997), highlight that the culture a community can create around out-migration itself can also influence young people to leave. Over the years, it appears that the out-migration of young adults in rural areas has become less of a trend and more of a permanent part of rural life (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Glendinning et al., 2003). In many communities out-migration is an expected and normalized part of life that many see as being the next step in life, especially after high school graduation (Easthope & Gabriel, 2007; MacDonald et al., 2013; Hajesz & Dawe, 1997). Some scholars warn about the caution that needs to be taken in terms of creating this culture intentionally or unintentionally, as they could be a contributing factor in the out-migration of young people. This is because sometimes communities can create a perception that leaving is a sign of being successful whereas staying can be associated with having lower status, less power, a lack of initiative, or being unsuccessful (Hajesz & Dawe, 1997; Easthope & Gabriel, 2007).

On a similar note, other factors that have been identified to contribute to this push, relate to how a community treats and values their young people. Factors such as young people feeling little control over changing the current situation of their community, the lack of sensitivity to young peoples needs and aspirations, as well as young people feeling under valued by their communities all contribute to force pushing young people out of rural areas (Eascott & Sonn, 2006; Jackson et al., 2006). It is evident that there are many factors that influence or push young people out of living in rural areas. It can also be seen that these factors relate to the economic state of rural areas, the availability or access to certain amenities and services, as well as the perceptions, norms and personality of rural communities themselves.

Impacts of Young Adult Out-Migration

While the motivations for young adults to leave their rural communities are clear and influential, it is important to understand the number of impacts that take place when young adults act on these motivations and choose to leave their communities and migrate towards larger urban centres. If a community is unable to replace their young adult

population who are leaving with young in-migrants, a deficiency of young residents is created which can lead to community-based impacts. Lewis, 1979 (as cited in Stockdale, 2004) highlights the consequences of these impacts by stating that the out-migration of young people is detrimental to the vitality of rural areas that it can contribute to the overall collapsing of a rural society (p.170).

One of these impacts is the loss of human and social capital as well as the loss of future leaders (Argent, 2009; Garasky, 2002; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008; Jones, 2004; Laoire, 2007; Stockdale, 2006; Stockdale, 2004). Researchers such as Stockdale (2004) have examined community consequences related to the out-migration of young residents on a rural community's human and social capital; Stockdale (2004) defined human capital is the skills and knowledge held by an individual and is lost when youth leave their communities. The loss of a community's human capital is a problem as many rural communities do not have the labour market to utilize the full potential of their human capital as the jobs that do exist within rural communities are often in low status sectors which do not allow for innovative practices (Stockhome, 1998; Aghion & Howitt as cited in Stockdale, 2006). Woolcock (1998) states that human capital is the key component in rural revitalization and plays an important role in the future of a community. This is because human capital is "the primary source of innovation (p. 354)" according to Aghion and Howitt (1998), which is needed by communities to address prevalent community issues.

An additional impact is the unbalanced demographic aging of rural Canada. Canada's rural population is older than the urban population as 15% of the total population in predominantly rural areas is 65 years of age or older whereas 13% of the population in predominantly urban regions would fall into the senior category (Dandy & Bollman, 2008). Additionally, in the 1986, 1996, 2006 census years it was found that the senior population in rural areas were higher than the Canadian average (Dandy & Bollman, 2008). Dandy & Bollman (2008) discuss various factors that influence the aging among rural residents, one being the large numbers of young people leaving rural areas and the numbers of community members aging within their community or new retiree migrants coming into the community (Dandy & Bollman; 2008). Additionally, the

large numbers of young people leaving their rural communities can lead to the reduction of services and entry level workers available within the communities, both in which affect the long term health and vitality of rural communities (Chew et al., 2010; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Halseth & Ryser, 2006; Malastest & Associates Ltd, 2002). As well, this leaves few young people to help fill the labour demand needed for services such as those required by an aging population, which can untimely lead to a lower quality of life for those who remain in the community (Argent, 2009; Garasky, 2002; Frey, 1993; Stockdale, 2006).

Beyond the aging of rural communities and the loss of human and social capital, rural communities that experience a continuous outflow of young adults can experience a downward spiral of disappearing services (Argent, 2009; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002). If there are not enough young people within a community, services such as sports associations, sports leagues, and secondary schools as will disappear as the demand becomes too small to create a need for these services. This becomes problematic as it ultimately creates a smaller job pool for young adults wanting relocate into the community (Argent, 2009 & Davies, 2008). This can create friction as the loss of these services make it more challenging for young adults to find employment opportunities to sustain a viable livelihood, for themselves and their families (Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002). Additionally, the loss of these services also decreases the quality of life of the remaining residents and the overall attractiveness of living in the community. This can further influence young people to migrate out of the community (Argent, 2009). As well, this downward spiral of disappearing services becomes problematic for communities are new employment growth is unlikely to take place in an area experiencing population decline (Bollman, 1999). Without employment opportunities the chances of young adults remaining or relocating to a community is slim (Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning et al., 2003; Jones, 2004).

Youth Out-Migration: Motivations to live in a Rural Community

Despite the many reasons that influence young people to leave their rural communities and migrate towards an urban centre, there is evidence in the return migration literature that suggests young adults are interested and desire to return or relocate to living in rural communities (Davies, 2008; Dupuy et al., 2000; Glendinning, et

al., 2003; Malatest & Associates, 2002). This important to note as much of the return-migration literature suggest that many young adults such as those in their late twenties are interested and keen to relocate back to their home community for reasons such as starting a family (Glendinning et al., 2003). Additionally, many young adults are attracted back to their hometowns for reasons such as those relating to strong social networks, community attachment, and the nostalgic memory of their childhood (Chew et al., 2010; Davies, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008). Dupuy et al., (2000) highlights the fact that rural areas are experiencing greater in-flows of individuals ages 25-29 compared to urban areas in six Canadian Provinces. The data in this study showcases that a small portion of young people are in fact relocating to rural areas, however this data does not indicate on whether or not these young people remain in the rural community for a lengthy period of time. On a similar note, Malatest & Associates (2002) found that the many rural youth have future plans to relocate back to a rural community, as highlighted in *Figure 1*. Based on the evidence from the return-migration literature, it appears that some young adults are interested in relocating to a rural community, especially young adults in the older age bracket.

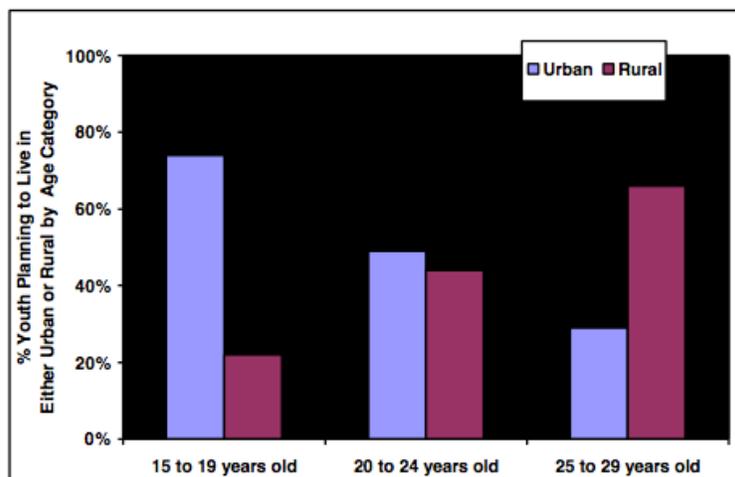


Figure I. Future Plans of Rural Youth (Malatest & Associates Ltd, 2002)

While there is evidence that suggests young people who grew up rurally are more likely to relocate to a rural community than those who did not (Davies, 2008; Malatest & Associates, 2002), emphasis should be placed on attracting both young adults who grew up in rural and urban settings. This is because many young adults who have finished post-secondary, may be looking for a place to start a family, and may have a desire to escape

the pressures and stress of urban areas (Dupuy et al., 2000; Malastest & Associates, 2002). Other scholars such as Mills & Hazarika (2001) note that young people from both rural and urban areas are interested in migrating to rural areas and but not necessarily to the communities in which the rural migrants grew up.

Although urban in-migrants are not commonly the focus of youth migration studies, gaining insight into their mobility preferences and motivations is key, as urban young adults represent a large portion of young people who rural communities could be trying to attract. Forsythe (1981) highlights that new migrants such as those from an urban areas, are significantly different from rural migrants as they do not have family connections within the community and 'they have no prescribed places in the communities to which they move' (p.287). Urban migrants who are not employed are relocating rurally to "make a radical change in their own style of life or getting away from it all by attempting to become part of a rural way of life of which they have little personal experience" (p.287). Therefore it is also important for future research to consider these motivations and preferences for both rural and urban young adults as both make up the potential future resident pool that communities could be attracting (Forsythe, 1981; Williams & Jobes, 1990). Although the study conducted by Forsythe (1981) dates back over three decades, it showcases the fact that urban migrants are present in rural areas and can play a potential role in the increase of residents living within rural areas. Despite often being forgotten in migration studies, when looking to address the challenge of population decline in rural areas, researchers should continue the work of Forsythe (1981) and others by gaining further understanding of the mobility preferences and motivations of both rural and urban young adults. This is important as there are different characteristics among young adults and these characteristics influence young peoples' perceptions of rural places as well as their mobility motivations and preferences (Garasky, 2002).

Although many young people leave rural living for a variety of reasons, leaving doesn't necessarily indicated that young adults don't want to return. However, from the impacts examined, there are a number of barriers and constraints preventing young adults from relocating back or moving to rural communities. Although a number of studies

suggest that young adults are connected to their communities, their families, and actually want to return, they are unsure of the employment opportunities, which can be a major barrier to relocation (Davies, 2008; Dupuy et al., 2000; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Malatest & Associates Ltd, 2002).

The Opportunity: A New Approach to Addressing the Out-Migration of Young Adults

Many communities are fighting an uphill battle when trying to appear as an attractive place for young people to remain in or relocate to as they are perceived as places that “lack” in desired attributes (Hajesz & Dawe, 1997; Johnson et al., 2002; MacDonald, 2013). In their chapter examining the *De-mythologizing Rural Youth Exodus*, Hajesz & Dawe (1997) note the importance of changing the negative perception often associated with rural communities. Hajesz & Dawe explain that this perception contributes to the mass exodus that takes place in rural areas around the time of high school graduation. It is important to recognize that this perception contributes to influencing young people to out-migration from their communities as well as deters them from relocating back (Davies, 2008, Easthope & Gabriel, 2008; Johnson et al., 2002; MacDonald, 2013; add). Also relating to perception, MacDonald et al., (2013) notes the importance of recognizing the changes in young peoples’ aspirations for their career and life experiences, as many young people no longer view traditional employment such as fishing to be a good job, as their parents once did. Rather, the young adults had aspirations towards attaining post-secondary education and longed for opportunities to experience living in a larger urban setting. If young people are changing their perceptions about what is considered a ‘good life’ and a ‘good job’ as MacDonald (2013) suggests, then the rural communities recognize these changes as they may present an opportunity for rural communities to attract young residents and families.

While out-migration becomes an option for some and a necessity for others (Higgins, 2008), it is clear that the mass exodus of young adults is a significant problem for many rural communities. There is an urgency to identify ways for rural communities to better attract young adults and their skills sets that can contribute significantly to revitalization. If evidence highlights the fact that young adults are interested in relocating to a rural area then why is increasing the number of young adults relocating to rural

communities such a crucial issue to address? In order to gain a better understanding of young adult attraction to living in rural communities, a number of scholars indicated the need to further the understand young adult attraction and retention to rural communities by learning more from the perspectives of young adults themselves (Davies, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008).

Breaking down the assumed homogeneity of young adults

Many researchers investigating the topic of youth or young adult attraction and retention have not provided insight into the different types of young adults that may exist in rural areas. This may be due to the fact that the definitions that researchers are using to classify young people as youth or young adults varies greatly, and the terms are often used interchangeably. In many cases youth/young adults are classified into categories based on age. The challenge with this is that among the research on this topic the age in which researchers use to define youth/young adults varies. For example, one study conducted by Jackson et al (2006) defined youth as being between the ages of 13-24, while Glendinning et al (2003) defines youth as being between the ages of 11-18. Other studies such as Bjarnason & Thorlindsson (2006) examines youth in 9th and 10th grade ages 14-16, while Garasky (2002) categorizes youth as being between the ages of 14-17. Although the age range for these studies are similar in the sense that they mostly target middle school or high school aged youth, the challenge emerges when researchers start to classify youth as being in their twenties or later such as in the studies conducted by Dupuy et al. (2000) and Malatest & Associates (2002). The loosely used definitions of youth and young adults particularly become challenging when youth say individuals who have not yet graduated high school yet are defined in the same category as youth who have previously graduated. This broad style of classification becomes a problem, as it is clear that mobility preferences and motivations are influenced by age (Chukuni Communities Development Corporation, 2010; Dupuy et al., 2000; Malatest & Associates, 2002).

With a loose definition of age utilized, it is challenging to know which factors involved in migration are influential on certain age groups. As well, if the term youth is being used loosely it becomes very challenging to make statements about youth mobility in a general sense, especially when some researchers are referring to youth and young

adults separately while others are using the terms interchangeably. The study conducted by Malatest & Associates (2002) examining youth migration, does a good job at highlighting this point by describing the various mobility preferences among different age clusters of youth/young adults. Specifically, Malatest & Associates (2002) examined youth ages 15-29 and categorized these groups further by splitting the sample into three groups: 1.) 15-19 years old; 2.) 20-24 years old; and 3.) 25-29. The breakdown of these age groups enabled the study to identify specific characteristic among the sample that provide a deeper level of insight into different ages of young adults for example, had different mobility preferences. The study found that young adults in the older category (25-29) more frequently cited that they would return to a rural community in the future than those in the young age groups.

Similar to the study conducted by Malatest & Associates (2002), the 2010 Youth Survey based in Red Lake Ontario conducted by the Chukuni Communities Development Corporation (2010), also took the approach of understanding youth mobility by clustering similar age groups together. Although classifying youth as being between the age group of 15-40 can be seen as a broad definition of youth, the study categorized youth into four sub-categories: (1) 15 to 18 years; (2) 19 to 24 years; (3) 25 to 30 years old; and (4) 31 to 40 years old. This approach allowed researchers to gain a more informative insight into the differences that exist amongst respondents of different age groups. As this study also found that mobility motivations and preferences changes depending on ones age, it is important to note important of further categorizing young adults into small subgroups with like characteristic, whether it be age or other similarities, helps to better identify the mobility preferences and motivations of young people, and how these preferences and motivation differ depending on the characteristics of the small subgroups (cite).

The study conducted by Malatest & Associates (2002) has been one of the few studies examining youth/young adult migration to further categorize young adults beyond the characteristic of age. In this study, researchers categorized young adults into four subgroups: 1.) Rural Leavers: rural youth who left their rural community and currently resided in a larger centre; 2.) Rural Stayers: rural youth who had always resided in a rural community; 3.) Rural Returners: rural youth who moved to an urban centre and since returned to living in a rural community; and 4.) In-migrants: youth who grew up in an

urban centre and moved to a rural community. By further categorizing youth into these four subgroups, Malatest & Associates (2002) found that mobility preferences and motivations differed amongst the subgroups. Naturally, as described above, rural youth differ from urban youth and understanding these differences will help rural areas be better informed about who they are attracting, how to attract which types of migrants, and it will help to identify the potentially different supports that are needed to help both rural and urban youth/young adults relocate to rural areas.

In addition to looking for differences in young adults' preferences and motivations, understanding the mobility patterns of young adults in general are important in that it will help rural communities to become more informed how to attract and retain young demographic (Rothwell et al., 2002). Understanding how characteristics such as age, cultural influences, previous migration patterns, and previous exposure to rural environments all help to further uncover details that are crucial in gaining further insight into how young people make their relocation choices ultimately allowing rural communities to enhance or develop attraction and retention strategies (Argent & Walmsley, 2007; Eacott & Sonn, 2006; Easthope & Gabriel, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Johnson et al., 2002; Stockdale, 2004).

Moving Forward: A Critical Analysis of Existing the Literature

With such an impactful problem existing over such a long period of time one must ask why many rural communities continue to struggle with the inability to attract and retain a young population. The answers to the question tend to appear when one starts to examine the rural literature as a whole. The amount of existing research on the topic of attraction and retention to young adults to rural communities can at times be deceiving. This is because the literature is scattered amongst different disciplines making patterns and commonalities difficult to notice. For example, insights on the topic of young adult attraction and retention to rural areas can be gained through the examination of the literature focused on youth mobility, community development, rural development, rural employment, labour market migration, amenity migration, education and urban-rural linkages to name a few. As well, it is important to note that research in this area has been conducted over a long span of time. It is important to look at all areas of the rural literature and beyond a Canadian context to be able to gain a more informed insight. As

well, researchers must recognize that most studies investigating this topic often forget to include, prioritize and utilize the voices and perspectives of young people themselves (Davies, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008). Therefore to gain a more comprehensive perspective on young adults' mobility preferences and motivations researchers need to ensure they are actually prioritizing the voices of young people themselves (Davies, 2008; Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008).

Although there is still an great amount to learn in regards to the mobility preferences and motivations of young adults, numerous researchers have uncovered and touched on the points that young people often leave their rural communities due to lack of employment, education and social opportunities (Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Halseth & Ryser, 2006; Malatest & Associates Ltd, 2002). Much research is limited in scope when conducting research on young adults by not looking to the other related topics that may provide further insight on young adult mobility while others are focused on understanding why young people are leaving and the mobility preferences and motivations associated with leaving, that the question of what motivates young people to relocate to a rural community often becomes lost. In many cases the purpose of conducting the research is to better understand how to get young people relocating into rural areas. Researchers have been caught up in the academic and theoretical understanding of youth/young adult migration and little focus has been placed on the understanding and development of potential attraction and retention strategies. Few studies such as Malatest & Associates (2002) have gone beyond the typical recommendations for future research and instead made a clear attempt at recommending potential strategies for rural communities to apply to help increase the retention of young residents and families.

Not only is it crucial for researchers to start including the voices of young adults in research but it is also essential to start synthesizing the literature that relates to the mobility choices and preferences of young people and start reframing the questions being asked. Understanding how young people perceive living in rural areas is a valuable starting point. To gain an in-depth understanding of these perceptions, future research needs to examine if young people are interested in living in rurality, identify the attractive

and unattractive features of rural communities, and the potential supports that could help young people relocate to a rural community. Examining potential supports to help young people relocate is extremely important as many researchers have already uncovered a variety of constraints that prevent young people from relocating to rural areas. Therefore instead of asking the same question to young adults in regards to what are the barriers prevent young people from relocating to a rural area instead the question needs to be reframed and uncover the potential supports could help relocating to a rural community possible or easier for young people.

As communities recognize the important role young residents play in revitalization, many have made attracting and retaining young residents and families a priority. As there is currently limited information examining the mobility preferences and motivations of young residents, it is challenging to know how to attract young people to rural areas. Until research provides further insight into the factors and elements that drive the mobility decisions of young people, rural communities are limited in their potential to attract and retain young residents and families and the existing trends of destabilized populations are likely to persist.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology utilized in this study, which has assessed the attractiveness of living in rural communities from the perspectives of young adults. First, the purpose and objectives of this study will be reviewed. Secondly, there will be a comprehensive overview of the research methods utilized followed by the rationale for using the selected methods and finally a review of the ethical considerations incorporated into the study design.

Introduction

While much of the existing research examining young adult migration has focused on why out-migration is occurring, there is a need for future research to move past the 'why' and examine the process of attracting young residents and families to relocate to rural communities (Glendinning et al., 2003). Due to limited research examining young adults' attraction to rural communities, there is a need to understand young adult attraction to rural communities in a general sense and "how" young adults' make their relocation decisions.

In order for rural communities to attract young residents and young families, it is necessary to gain a better understanding of how to attract young people to relocate to rural communities. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural Canadian communities. To gain more of an understanding of young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living rurally, the objectives for this study were to: (1.) Identify to what extent young adults were attracted to rural areas; (2.) Identify the most common attributes that make rural communities attractive or unattractive; (3.) Examine how young adults made their relocation decisions; (4.) Determine if differences exist between types of young adults based on their background with rural areas; and (5.) Produce recommendations on how rural communities can incorporate the findings to attract young adults.

While the purpose of this research was to understand young adults' attraction to living in rural communities and identify the elements in which they perceive to make rural living attractive, the study was centralized around learning more about how young people make their relocation decisions and identifying the factors in which influenced

those decisions. By reviewing the existing literature it is clear that many factors contribute to young peoples' decision to relocate. Although a large portion of the research examining young adult mobility has focused on identifying the factors such as employment, education, family, and friends that influence a young person to leave or stay, currently little is known about the amount of influence each factor has on ones decision to relocate. Once there is an understanding of how influential certain factors are in terms of attracting young people to live rurally, rural communities, policy makers, and researcher will have a better understanding of the potential supports and strategies that may more successfully attract young residents and young families.

Overview of Study Design

This study was designed to have a mix method approach including an online survey and a virtual focus group. To achieve the study purpose and objectives, the methodology for this study involved the implementation of an online survey and virtual focus group were implemented via Facebook. This was done through the creation of a Facebook page, through the primary researchers personal Facebook account. The online survey collected the perspectives of individual respondents whereas the virtual focus group was intended to collect a wide variety of thoughts, opinions, and perspectives that emerged from a group discussion. The two approaches were to be used to triangulate the data between the findings emerging from this study and the findings identified by previous studies highlighted throughout the literature on youth migration. However, the response rate (N=6) for the virtual focus group was too low to contribute to the responses into findings of this study; therefore only the data generated from the online survey was used to formulate the results for this study (N=341).

In order to participate in the study, participants were required to be between the ages of 20-29 and had to be a Canadian citizen, permanent resident, or in process of attaining permanent residency. The age range for this study was chosen based on the fact that young adults between the ages of 20-29 are often referred to as a highly mobile group of migrants (Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, 2011). As well, this age group was chosen because respondents were either in the beginning, midst or reflecting upon their migration decisions which allowed for a wide spectrum of perspectives to be attained. Within this age group, the respondents were more potentially

looking for communities to reside for lifestyle or employment reasons, likely more so than individuals who recently graduated from high school. Therefore, researching this age group helped to identify how to attract young people who were just about, in the midst of or had just made relocation decisions. This diversity helped to identify a number of potential ways for communities to attract in young adults looking to remain or relocate to a rural community.

Adopted Typologies.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of how young adults' decisions making processes and how they perceived rural living, two typologies were adopted and embedded into the design of the survey. First, a typology presented by Malatest & Associates (2002) in their study on youth - ages 15-29 - migration was used. Malatest & Associates (2002) categorized respondents into subgroups based on where they grew up and their previous migration behaviour. In total, four subgroups were used to categorize participants, these subgroups were: 1.) "Leavers: youth who left their rural community and now reside in a larger centre; 2.) Stayers: youth who had always resided in a rural community; 3.) In-migrants: youth who moved from an urban community to a rural community; and 4.) Returners: rural youth who had moved to an urban centre and since returned to a rural community" (Malatest & Associates, 2002, p. 7). This typology was adopted but was altered to better fit the intentions of this study. The four subgroups used in this study to classify respondents were as follows: 1.) Rural Returners: young adults raised rurally, relocated to an urban centre and then returned to rural living; 2.) Rural Stayers: young adults raised rurally and remained living in rural areas; 3.) Rural Leavers: young adults raised rurally but left to live in an urban centre for reasons such as school or employment; and 4.) Urbanites: young adults raised in an urban setting, never lived rurally or moved to a rural community later in life. This typology was used to identify the differences in mobility preferences and motivations that existed amongst a diverse group of young adults.

In addition to understanding the sample through various subgroups, it was also important to utilize a measurement tool in order to indicated the level of attractiveness certain attributes of rural living had according to respondents. Therefore, the second typology that shaped the design of this study was the amenity topology identified and

discussed by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010). The study conducted by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) examined amenity-based rural development in the terms of using amenities to develop and revitalize rural spaces and to attract visitors, residents, and businesses. Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) classified various amenities into three categories:

- 1.) “**Natural amenities:** amenities that are based on the natural attributes of rural areas including climate, air quality, land and water and which provide the scenic settings and materials for industry and leisure pursuits of rural residents.
- 2.) **Cultural amenities:** amenities that are based in the cultural context of rural areas including heritage, recreation and sports, arts, industry and community and which serve to enhance quality of life in rural regions.
- 3.) **System amenities:** amenities that enable the development of natural and cultural amenities including infrastructure, services and connectivity (Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire, 2010, p. 6)”

To better understand what young people’s mobility motivations and preferences, the three types of amenities identified by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) were used to develop a list of amenities that were ranked in the online survey by respondents. This provided a better understanding of what types of amenities and services young people valued and indicated as being important to have access to in the communities in which they decided to reside. It is important to note that within the three types of amenities, Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) further broke these amenities down into different categories, as seen in *Appendix A*. For example, natural amenities can be further broken down into the categories of climate and air quality, land, and water and within these categories; Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) provide examples of the different types of amenities. The full list of amenities that were ranked by respondents in this study are highlighted in the study’s survey found in *Appendix B*.

Pilot Study.

In order to ensure the study ran smoothly, a pilot study was conducted. Prior to the release of the actual study, the primary researcher conducted a pilot study by conducting the survey with five different individuals. In person, these individuals completed the survey at different times, allowing the feedback from each individual be

incorporated into the survey prior to when the next individual completed the survey, allowing for the appropriate changes to be made. In terms of the virtual focus group, the final questions were tested on each one of the five individuals who completed the pilot survey. After the pilot study was completed and the appropriate changes were made, the study was release live via Facebook. These changes included spelling and grammatical corrections as well as the order of the questions for the online focus group. The pilot study was not conducted online to avoid confusion between the pilot study and the actual study. This was also to avoid the pilot study from being shared by various individuals or groups on Facebook, which allowed the study to go live once and at the appropriate time.

Method Implementation

Facebook was used to implement both the online survey and the virtual focus group. A Facebook page was created and hosted all the information relating to the study, what it was about, the purpose, and how the information collected was to be used. The online survey was created through and hosted on Survey Monkey and was advertised through the study's Facebook page while the virtual focus group took place right on the study's Facebook page. In order to utilize Facebook in this way, the study's Facebook page was created through the primary researcher's personal Facebook account. After the study page was designed, the primary researcher asked anyone on her Facebook network to join the page through using the Facebook 'like' button. The purpose of this was to have thirty individuals 'like' the page in order to gain Facebook insights, a measurement tool that analyzed the Facebook page performance, the effectiveness of individual posts and indicated how participants were discovering and responding to the page posts.

Once the Facebook insights measurement tool was attained, a virtual snowball sample technique was employed in order to gain study participants. The primary researcher identified 8 individuals on her Facebook Network to share the link to the online survey and study page. The 8 individuals chosen fit into the categories of the study subgroups of Rural Returners, Rural Stayers, Rural Leavers and Urbanites; there were 2 individuals in each of these four categories. Eleven organizations were also selected to send out the link to the online survey and study's Facebook page. The organizations selected, were involved with rural young adults or rural issues in some way. For example, some of these organizations were involved with attracting young people back to rural

areas, supporting & involving young people who were currently living in rural areas, or had invested interest with rural Canada in general. The organizations that send out the invitation to participate in the study were: (1) Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation; (2) Alberta Centre for Sustainable Rural Communities; (3) Return 2 Rural; (4) Voice on the Coast; (5) Canada 4-H; (6) P.E. I. 4-H; (7) Youth Centres Canada; (8) Yukon Young Farmers; (9) Rural Ontario Institute; (10) 21inc; and (11) Generation Squeeze. Once the study page was fully updated and the online survey was ready to be employed, the survey went live and the invitation to participant and the link to the survey was send out to the eleven organizations and 8 individuals who all shared the post with their own Facebook networks. The data collection for this study for both the online survey and virtual focus group took place over a four weeks period starting on August 11, 2013 and ending September 11, 2013. After this time, the online survey and virtual focus group were closed and data analysis began.

Online Survey

Design.

The online survey was designed to measure a variety of elements involved with gaining a better understanding of young adults mobility preferences and motivations, overall the survey had a response rate of N=341. As it was important to prioritize the voices of young adults, the online survey was designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Respondents were asked to respond to a number of open-ended questions, which helped to ensure their perspectives on collected. This provided the opportunity for new perspectives to be uncovered and ensured that survey was not just reinforcing what was already known on the topic.

The online survey was designed and implemented through the Survey Monkey software. As one of the objectives of the study was to examine the differences that exist between the four subgroups, the survey started as one and then branched off into four different surveys, one for each subgroup; an example of each of the four surveys can be found in *Appendix B* As described, the survey started by asking respondents about their age and which subgroup they fit into. By using the logic tool embedded in the Survey Monkey software, each subgroup linked to a different version of the survey. If respondents selected that they identified most as a Rural Leaver for example, they would

then complete the survey version created specifically for Rural Leavers. Overall, in each of the subgroup surveys, there were about 3-5 specific questions that applied to that particular subgroup. Four versions of the survey was created in order to be able view the results by each particular subgroup which allowed for the differences and similarities between the subgroups to be identified.

In terms of design, the survey was organized into three main sections: 1.) Demographic information; 2.) Migration decisions and influences; and 3.) Attractiveness of rural living. The organization of the survey was crucial and was influenced by the design of the study. The demographic information collected in the survey allowed for researchers to gain a better understanding of who the participants were. This section gathered information in terms of age, migration history, career path, level of education, and identified which of the four subgroups participants fit into. The second section of the survey attained information on how respondents made their relocation decisions and worked to identify the factors in which influenced respondents' relocation decisions. As well, this section also was designed in order to help understand the various challenges respondents faced when making their migration decisions and teased out the challenges surrounding respondents' ability to relocate rurally. The third section of the survey collected information that gave insight into how participants perceived rural living. To do this, the survey was designed in a way were information relating to what the participants felt should and should not change about rural areas was collected, what concerned them about relocating to rural areas as well as identifying the amenities that respondents felt is important to have access to in the communities they chose to reside in.

Ethical Considerations

As this study involved human participants careful ethical considerations were given. First off, as the survey was created and implemented virtually, special considerations were given towards online safety and privacy. The first page of the survey was the consent form. Before beginning the study, respondents were required to read through the consent form and decide to accept or decline the terms and conditions of the study; a copy of the consent form in its entirety can be found in Appendix C. Before moving forward with the completion of the study, respondents' had to accept the conditions of the consent form. The consent form made respondents aware that Survey

Monkey, was a US-based survey software service that uses US-based servers in order to indicate that Survey Monkey is subject to the US Patriot Act, which allows US officials to access any data obtained and stored on their servers. Overall, participants were asked to voluntarily complete the online survey, which took respondents approximately between 15-20 minutes of their time.

Virtual Focus Group

Design

Unlike the online survey, which was created through Survey Monkey and advertised over Facebook, the virtual focus group was designed on and implemented through the study's Facebook page. The virtual focus group had a response rate of (N=6). The purpose of the virtual focus group was to help triangulate the data generated from the online survey and with findings from other studies displayed amongst the young adult migration literature. The virtual focus group was designed in a way where it would compliment the data generated by the online survey by collecting a wide variety of thoughts and opinions that were expanded upon and built on through a group discussion. By utilizing Facebook as a tool to implement the focus group, anyone who had a Facebook account and fit the requirements of the study could participate at any time over the course of the four-week data collection period.

The virtual focus group was unique in the sense of the way it was designed and implemented. In the same case of the online survey, the virtual focus group ran for a total of 4 weeks, the same four weeks as the online survey. For the span of the four weeks, every three to four days a question was posted on the study's Facebook page. Participants were then invited to respond to each question by stating their opinions and by commenting on posts written by other participants. The intention of the virtual focus group was to tease out young adults' perspectives on living in rural Canadian communities, in more of a discussion format rather than based on one individual response. The question utilized during the Facebook focus group can be found in Appendix D. Although this started to happen, due to a low response rate, the data collected was not utilized, as the sample size was not large enough to inform the results of this study. Therefore, only the data collected from the online survey was incorporated into the findings of the study.

Ethical Considerations

For this study, the ethical considerations involved with this research were emphasized due to the virtual nature of the way the focus group was implemented. To ensure the necessary ethical considerations took place, at the beginning of the virtual focus group, participants were given clear instructions in regards to how to answer the questions, ways to respond to other participant responses and how to ensure to keep their responses respectful. In order to ensure the respondents were familiar with the ethical considerations given to the implementation of this study, one of the first study posts gave a comprehensive overview of the terms and condition of the virtual focus group and explained the consent form that needed to be filled out by all respondents who participated; the copy of this consent form can be found in Appendix E.

When respondents were asked to respond to each of the questions posted, guidance was not given to participants in terms of how they were to respond to each individual question. This helped to avoid research bias as it gave the respondents the freedom to answer the questions based on how they felt was most appropriate. However, to ensure the conversations and responses remained appropriate and respectful, the comments were monitored. If discussions became inappropriate or disrespectful the primary researcher and facilitator would refer back to the objective each question was working to achieve, however this inappropriate comments or discussion did not occur during the course of the virtual focus group.

Method Rational

For the purposes of this study, Facebook was used as virtual interface to host the study information. Essentially, through using Facebook an online social media campaign was created to advertise and mobilize the study. With Facebook being the most popular Social Networking Sites (SNS) as well as the highest trafficking site on a day-to-day basis (Moreno et al., 2012), it was an ideal instrument to utilize as a data collection tool. As well, Facebook was also an ideal tool to use as large portions of Facebook uses are those of young adults between the ages 20-29 the age group of the study's intended sample (Moreno et al., 2012). Being able to access such a large portion of a demographic in one setting – a virtual setting- allow researchers who are focused on examining and

analyzing young peoples' behaviours and interactions, makes Facebook a valuable research tool (Moreno et al., 2012).

While virtual methodologies are not a traditional method employed in social sciences research, Baltar & Brunet (2012) and Wilson et al. (2012), note that with the fast paced evolution of the Internet over the last decade, being connected and interacting with the virtual world has become a common part of everyday life. As well, although Facebook is still relatively new and researchers have questioned validity of the SNS being used for research purposes (Wilson et al., 2012), Baltar & Brunet (2012) state that "Nowadays it is impossible to understand human behaviour and its context without taking account of its virtual reality" (p. 71). This point showcases the fact although conducting research over Facebook is still in its emerging stages, it is important for the social sciences to adapt to the new ways people are communicating and to explore the potential and possible roles Facebook could play in social sciences research. Building on this point, Baltar & Brunet (2012) also noted that the Internet plays a central role in "commerce, banking, firm strategies, policy development, healthcare, marketing, industry, and politics" and that this increase in Internet interaction makes virtual relationships important to examine (p.57). Baltar & Brunet (2012) suggests that although utilizing SNS as a research tool is still relatively new and not yet fully understood, if online research is implemented properly it can be valued at the same level of seriousness as online transactions, political campaigns and learning courses.

One of the strengths of using Facebook as a platform to host the study, was that by creating a study Facebook page allowed for all of the information relating to the study, what it was about, the purpose, what the information would be used for, and who was involved was able to be hosted in one spot. In an ethical sense, hosting the information as well as the links to participate in one spot allowed for participants or potential participants to fully understand the study and its intent at their own pace, prior to participating. This allowed participants the freedom to explore the study page and to become familiar with what the study was working to achieve and then could freely choose to participate in the study in a convenient and non-intrusive way as the potential participant was not approached by a physical person.

Facebook was also chosen as a tool to host the study's information and to stream the online survey and virtual focus group as it allowed for a virtual snowball sample to be implemented. The primary research was able to implement a virtual snowball sample by first mobilizing the invitation to participate in the study through her own personal Facebook network. As described, eight individuals were selected each representing a Rural Returner, Stayer, Leaver or Urbanite. The eight participants went on the study's Facebook page and shared the invitation to participate with their own personal Facebook network. This allowed the exposure of the invitation to participate to increase immensely but also allowed the study to be exposure to numerous young adults all over Canada as each of the participants were originally from various provinces across the country. Also in terms of gaining participants, Facebook proved to be extremely beneficial in terms of having the organization share the links for the online survey and virtual focus group. Many times, once the organization share the linked, other organizations, groups, or individuals connected to that organization would also share the link with their own Facebook networks. This increase the exposure of both the online survey link and Facebook focus group and allowed participants to be invited to participate in the study in a very non-intrusive way and allowed for the snowball sample to continue.

By implementing virtual methods, both the online survey and virtual focus group expanded the reach and possible distribution of the invitation to participate in the study. Since it was important to gain a board perspective in terms of the range of young adults who participated in the study, implementing the study by using virtual tools were idea. Baltar & Brunet (2012) for example, used Facebook to implement a virtual snowball sampling method to target "hard-to-reach" populations. As described, utilizing Facebook to share and advertise the invitation to participate in the study with various individuals and organizations, made the participation in the study accessible for young adults located in both rural and urban areas across the country. As previously mentioned, the study's Facebook page was created through the primary researchers Facebook page. While this may be untraditional in terms of social sciences research this proved to be beneficial and was supported by Baltar & Brunet (2012) who in their study, found that using Facebook to create a virtual snowball sample resulting in a higher response rate than utilizing a

traditional snowball sample technique. The reasoning behind this increased response rate was suggested as being because the by putting a face to the research can actually increase the response rate of the study as participants can see the actually person who is implementing the study (Baltar & Brunet; 2012).

Other Possible Study Methods

Both the online survey and focus group were the methods implemented to collect the data for this study, as respondents were able to participate in the study at any time over the course of the four weeks in which the study ran. This was key to implementing the study as the virtual nature of the methods made the study more accessible and convenient for a larger portion of respondents to participate. Also the virtual nature of the methods strategically used in order to reach a boarder and more diverse young adult population. While other methodologies such as a face-to-face survey or traditional focus group could have also been implemented neither had the reach or convenience for participants as did the virtual methods selected. Additionally, in terms of reach, one of the key goals of this study was to understand the differences between the four subsample groups it was important to have a large enough sample were those differences became evident; this was attained by utilizing methods that were virtual. As well, a face-to-face survey, traditional focus group, or in-depth interviews would not have would not have enabled the study to keep its board parameters as the respondents would have all been from a smaller of geographic area, whereas the virtual methods were able to reach a larger number of respondents located across Canada.

In terms of other online methods, non-traditional methods such as photovoice could have been implemented. However, strategically, the intention of the study was to utilize methods in which were convenient for the intended audience and promoted the least amount of clicks (cite). Although photovoice would have been a innovative way to collect visual information on the attributes that participates found attractive about rural communities, it was decided that ranking of various features within the online survey would be a more successful and accurate way of measuring the features in which young adults perceived to be attractive of rural living. Also in terms of clicks, the virtual focus group was thought to be a more effective method to employ over photovoice as respondents who were already on the study page could simply respond to the weekly

questions without having to travel to another location on the web or would have to find or take various photographs, which might not have been easily accessible.

Study Limitations

The study has a number of limitations. It is important to highlight that the study's sample size (N=341) is not a representative sample. As well, while the study collected quantitative data, the online survey was structured in a way to collect a wealth of qualitative data. Although the data collected provides immense insights, the data itself is not representative nor is it heavily reliant on statistical data. Also in terms of the structure of the study, while utilizing the typology presented by Malatest & Associates (2002) of the four categories of Rural Returners (n=77), Stayers (n=56), Leavers (n=128) and Urbanites (n=80) proved to be a sound foundational classification system, the subgroups were different sizes and therefore the perspectives may not have been evenly represented. In relation to the sample characteristics, the sample was heavily represented by female respondents (78.1%) while only (21.5%) of respondents were male. Therefore, the results of this study are not an even representation of gendered perspectives.

The online nature of the study was limiting a few ways. For instance, the study was only accessible to individuals who were on Facebook and active during the study period, as the online survey and virtual focus group was not advertised or mobilized through any other means than over Facebook. As well, another limitation involved the organizations and groups that sent out the invitation to participate in the online survey and virtual focus group. While 3-4 groups in each province were invited to share the link to the online survey and focus group, only certain groups responded and went on to share the invitation. While this was expected, some provinces like Manitoba for example didn't have any organization share the invitation so there were few respondents who were from Manitoba. Alberta on the other hand had a large representation of respondents as most of the organizations contacted, shared the link. While the purpose of the study was not to target respondents within a specific geographical region, this is important to keep in mind, as it is one of the many characteristics of the sample. On a similar note, many of the groups who did share the invitation were those involved with farming, including the 4-H groups and the Yukon Young Farmers. Therefore Albertan and farming perspectives may be over represented in term of the perspectives shared in the findings of this study.

On a similar note, more rural based organizations shared the invitation to participate in the study than urban-based organizations, which is another limitation of the study.

Another study limitation was the virtual focus group was unsuccessful in terms of response rate (N=6). Due to the low response rate, the data collected from the virtual focus group were not incorporated into the findings of the study. One reason that may explain the low response rate is that study's Facebook page may have had too much information posted on the page at the beginning of the study. This may have made it confusing for the participants and unaware that the focus group was going on. As well potential respondents were not invited individually to participate in the focus group, rather individuals who 'liked' the study page (n=147) were asked as a group to participate. In future studies, a better approach would be to confirm with a number of individuals to participate and which may inspire others to participate as well. Due to the low response rate for the virtual focus group, the study lost the ability to triangulate the data collected. However, knowing the virtual focus group was a non-traditional data collection tool, the structure of the online survey was designed in a way to test the reliability of the answered provided by respondents, this was done by asking respondents similar questions in a number of different ways.

Data Analysis

Once the four-week data collection was completed, data analysis began. As online survey was collected both quantitative and qualitative data, the data analysis took place in a number of stages. First off, the online survey was downloaded from Survey Monkey into Excel and SPSS. Here the data was cleaned up and organized so analysis could begin; this stage included making charts in Excel and naming the variables within SPSS. As the surveys were separated per subgroup, in order to gain an aggregate understanding of the data, Excel was used to combine the data from the subgroups. Once the quantitative data was examined, the qualitative data was analyzed. This was done through a thematic analysis where common themes were clustered together and color-coded by hand. The HyperRESEARCH social sciences research software was then used to help organize and code the qualitative data. This software provided help in terms of identifying the most dominant themes that occurred amongst the data and within each of the individual questions as well. SPSS was used to further understand the data collected

by providing insight into the statistical characteristics of the data. SPSS was used to conduct a number of chi-square statistical tests on the various variables that were measured by the study.

Chapter 4 - Findings

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the findings that emerged from this study. The findings chapter of this study is broken down into five sections. The first examines the aggregate data representing the sample overall. The last four sections examine the four subsample groups individually to identify and describe differences that exist between the four subgroups. The first section of this chapter examines the aggregate data, by providing an overview of the sample highlighting the sample demographics, respondents' perspectives on living in rurally and to the extent to which the overall sample was attracted to living in rural communities. Secondly, the attributes respondents identified to be attractive and unattractive about rural communities and the various factors in which respondents indicated were influential on their migration decisions will be highlighted. Lastly, the barriers and deterrents that respondents indicated that made relocation or remaining rurally, will be described as well as the supports in which respondents are needed to make relocating to rural communities easier.

Young Adults – An Aggregate Perspective

Introduction

The diversity of perspectives represented within the sample were immense. This diversity was a common thread woven throughout the perspectives and comments provided by the respondents. It was extremely evident that the young adult respondents were not a homogeneous group, as many respondents held different perspectives on the attractiveness of living rurally as well as the level of influential certain factors had on their relocation decisions. While the majority of respondents indicated that they found rural communities to be attractive places to live, there were many attributes of rural areas that were identified as being both attractive and unattractive features of rural communities. As well, a number of factors were influential on respondents' relocation decisions to both urban centres and to rural communities. The breadth of perspectives collected from respondents in this study was a key element that made this sample unique and was a core contributor to the value of the study's findings.

As the Malatest & Associates (2002) respondent classification typology was adopted, this diversity was better understood as respondents were categorized into four

groups. Recalling that the respondents were categorized into four subgroups that were based on respondents' migration history and the community –urban or rural – in which respondents grew up is important as this typology shaped the structure of this study. The four subgroups were defined as: a.) Rural Returner: young adults who were raised rural, left and then returned to rural living; b.) Rural Stayer: young adults who were raised rural and remained living in rural areas; c.) Rural Leaver: young adults who were raised rural but left to live in an urban centre for reasons such as school or employment; and d.) Urbanites: young adults who were raised in an urban setting, never lived rural or moved rural later in life. Overall, Rural Leavers represented 37.5% of the total sample while Urbanites were the next largest group at 23.5%, followed by Rural Returners (22.6%), and lastly the smallest subgroup, Rural Stayers, accounted for 16.4% of the total sample. Altogether, the study had a total of N=341 valid responses.

The respondents in the study were also categorized into three different age groups: a.) 20-23; b.) 24-26; and c.) 27-29. As seen in the summary table Table 1, the distribution of respondents within each of the three categories was quite even. The youngest age group of 20-23, consisted of the most respondents (39.0%). The second largest respondent group was 24-26 years of age (32.0%), followed closely by the oldest age group of 27-29 years old (29.0%). Although the age distribution of the sample was relatively even, noting the sample is more representative of respondents in their early twenties rather than of those in their later twenties is important. In terms of gender, as seen in Table 1, the sample consisted of mostly female respondents (78.1%). The majority of the sample, over 75% had moved between 1-4 times while just over 15% of respondents moved 5 or more times. Out of the entire sample, 7.6% of respondents indicated that they had not moved.

Table 1. Summary Table of Aggregate Data Overview

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender N=242		
Male	52	21.5%
Female	189	78.1%
Age N=341		
20-23 years old	133	39.0%
24-26 years old	109	32.0%
27-29 years old	99	29.0%
Mobility N=276		
0 moves	21	7.6%
1-2 Moves	122	44.2%
3-4 Moves	90	32.6%
5-6 Moves	26	9.4%
7-8 Moves	11	4.0%
9 or More Moves	6	2.2%
Current Education Level N=242		
Some high school	0	0%
High School Diploma	9	3.7%
Some College	8	3.3%
Some University	43	17.8%
Post-secondary certificate/diploma	48	19.8%
Bachelors degree	107	44.2%
Master's degree	25	10.3%
Doctorate, law or medical degree	2	0.8%

Total Valid Responses for study:

N=341

Overall, the respondents within the sample had a high level of education. With the exception of 3.7% of the sample, all respondents had completed some college or university level education. Most frequently, respondents held a Bachelor degree (44.2%), a post-secondary certificate or diploma (19.8%) or had completed of some university (17.8%). Although fewer respondents indicated that they have attained a Masters degree, this still made up 10.3% of the overall sample.

The career paths pursued by the sample were diverse (N=242). Overall, respondents most frequently indicated that they were employed in agriculture (12.0%), in the non-profit, volunteer, or social service sectors (10.3%), or were currently enrolled as a student (10.3%). Business, management and advertising (9.5%) as well as medical

services (8.7%) were also career focuses of a number of respondents. Career paths in education (7.4%), arts and entertainment (6.6%), banking, finance, and accounting (5.4%), as well as tourism/recreation (4.5%), and natural resource based industries (3.7%), were career in which were less represented amongst sample. It is also important to note that many of the career paths chosen by respondents are those often indicated to be needed in rural areas, such as business, medical services, and education to highlight a few.

The Extent of Attractiveness

When examining the extent to which the young adults represented in this study were attracted to living in rural communities, it became evident that the majority of respondents (59.6%) intended to live rurally in the future or to remain living in a rural location. The diversity in respondents' perspectives in terms of how to view living in rural communities was again highlighted when asked about their future migration intentions. While 59.6% of the sample intended to live rurally, within this group, respondents desired to live in different types of rural communities. For instance, 25.6% of respondents desired to live within commuting distance to an urban community while 17.9% within commuting distance to other rural communities. A smaller portion of respondents (11.5%) indicated their desire to live in a small town or village of 1000 people or less, whereas the last 4.6% of respondents indicated their desire to live in a rural community that was not within commuting distance to an urban centre. It is important to note that the 59.6% of respondents who indicated their desire to live rurally would be greater as 15.3% of all respondents indicated that they would like to remain in their current communities, which would have consisted of respondents already living rurally.

Rural Identity

When examining the respondents perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural communities, it became clear that not only were a number of attributes identified but often the theme of identity was woven into the comments provided by respondents. For instance, one respondent stated, *"I love living rural. I feel safe and wave to people on the road. I love being known as a person who has "the work ethic of a farm kid" and who isn't afraid to get their hands dirty. Oh yeah, and there's free parking – RS."* There were

numerous comments from respondents from across the subgroups that had an undertone highlighting rural identity.

Identity was a key theme that emerged from the perspectives collected throughout the study. This theme particularly became evident among respondents who grew up rurally or among Urbanites who had formed a relationship with a rural community. When describing growing up rurally, one respondent stated,

“Living rural can be a lot of work, when it comes to farming especially. Having said that, the benefits I experienced growing up on the farm were incredible. Open spaces, farm work, outdoor hobbies, were all parts of what growing up rural meant to me, I wouldn't change it for anything–RS.”

This quote highlights the attachment to rural living that was formed during childhood. Similar bonds and a sense of attachment also came through in the comments from other respondents. The theme of rural identity also emerged when respondents were asked to describe their future migration plans. The following quotes reveal some of the various perspectives respondents had of rural living and highlights the theme of identity that was woven throughout respondents' comments:

“We plan to live in the city for about 6 more months but we are planning to buy a ranch and raise our children in a rural setting like I was –RL.”

“Would like to move to an acreage or farm around Cochrane. Would like to take over my grandparents acreage in Smoky Lake AB because of the history I have growing up there and love for the community and town – U.”

“To finish my 3 year contract, go back to school to earn a second degree, have a family, move back to my childhood home to raise our children with my husband. My parents plan to live on the same land – RR.”

“Plan to continue living on 6th generation family farm for the rest of my life – RS.”

The quotes above highlight and showcase the respondents' attachment to various communities. The feelings of wanting to raise a family in a rural community were a strong pull factor for many of the respondents within the rural subgroups. In addition to raising a family, respondents across the subgroups were connected to living rurally because of intangible attachments they had to rural living. For instance, the feelings of being socially connected to the community itself, its residents, and being able to have or build a strong social network was also highly desired by respondents and commonly indicated as attractive attributes. While there was a range of perspectives collected throughout this study, there were some clear similarities between the subgroups that emerged as the larger themes of the study. For instance, the attractive and unattractive features of rural living identified by respondents, across the subgroups were very similar. The follow section explains these common themes to better understand young adult attraction to rural communities.

Attraction to Living Rurally

Overall, it was evident that respondents found many of the characteristics of rural living appealing. When describing their perspectives on rural communities a small number of respondents indicated that they did not want rural communities to become rurally located urban centres or rural communities with urban inspired characteristics. Rather, respondents discussed that their attraction to rural communities based in the foundation of rural character, the small town feel, a close-knit atmosphere, access to natural landscapes and community support for local food and local businesses. Respondents did however discuss the value or desire to have access to urban type conveniences such as access to public transportation, entertainment services, access to more stores and stores that had later hours of service. When expressing their perspectives of rural communities, respondents often used descriptive words such as quaintness, culture, community support, nature, space, peace, quite, and the outdoors, similar to the quotes below:

“If you are drawn to the land and enjoy being surrounded by farms, this is the place for you. It's wonderful and very quiet! – RS”

“I love rural living you don't usually have your view blocked by sky scrapers or smog you have more room for a yard not so close to neighbours – RR”

“A benefit of rural living is well water is better than city water, it's quieter, feels safer, better social relations to a whole community – RS”

Respondents, especially those in the rural subsample groups often discussed how various features of rural living such as the access to space, the outdoors, a close-knit community, and the safeness of a community made rural areas attractive places to settle down and raise a family. Urbanites were less likely to indicate their attraction to rural communities to raise children and in many cases indicated that the lack of services and overall lack of opportunities made raising children in rurality unattractive. The quotes below highlighted a few perspectives on the topic:

“I have always imagined myself raising a family in a rural/outside the city area, Because I was raised in Prince Edward Island, I could never imagine raising a family in a big city. Backyards, community life and familiarity is very important to me when I imagine having children – RL”

“I would like to return to a moderately large rural area where my family and I can have options for things like school, basic needs, and housing. I believe that a good size rural area is no bigger than a population of 500 but a town with a population of 300 or less is too small unless I was to live on an acreage or live the farming/ranching lifestyle.”

As highlighted in the latter quote, farming, ranching and access to acreage and land were often indicated by respondents as being attractive features of rural living. A number of respondents indicated their plans to take over or return to their family farm, while other respondents expressed their strong desire to grow their own food, start gardening and

own their own acreage. Two respondents who discussed the attraction of living rurally for farming purposes are represented below:

“Freedom and space to raise your own food, and to teach your children where their food comes from is the most important to me, my 18 month old feeds chickens (meat & eggs) and cattle (meat) as well as works in the garden with me. This is the most important reason to live rural, with Family near by as #2 - RR”

“For me, the current allure of rural living is being able to pursue a more active role in local food production (maybe owning enough land to produce food for myself and others - small market garden kind of thing), and also living in the kind of close-knit community I was raised in – RL”

Among the sample groups, the importance of access to agricultural settings and the attractiveness of farming in general varied, however it was highly valued by Returners and Stayers. Many respondents indicated their strong desire to reside in a rural community, and while many respondents had trouble relocating or remaining rurally, a significant number of respondents were able to find ways to be able to live rurally.

Findings ways to live the Rural Lifestyle

It became evident that many respondents were heavily drawn to living rurally. The respondents who seemed to be more drawn to rural living for lifestyle related reasons such as those related to living close to family or in their home community, were able to return to rural living. However, a significant number of respondents indicated their desire to relocate to a rural community but were unable to because of a number of barriers, commonly for reasons relating to lack of employment opportunities.

Of the respondents who returned or remained, respondents commonly indicated that they were working for the family business, which in many cases was indicated as being a family farm. Working with a family business enabled some respondents to have a guaranteed source of employment within their desired community. A small number of respondents who had moved away to attain post-secondary education often mentioned they had full intentions to return to rural living as they had a position on the family farm

or within a family business. Other respondents, who were not working for a family business, indicated that there were employment opportunities within the community in which they planned to live, or were living. Living in proximity to urban centres or larger rural areas enabled a large number of respondents to live rurally and attain their preferred lifestyle by having a secure source of employment. Below are a few quotes from respondents who explained their strategy to be able to find a balance between employment and lifestyle opportunities in the communities in which they lived:

“My work is a fairly long commute, but this way I feel like I work to support the lifestyle I choose, not the other way around of living close to work in an urban setting that I don't enjoy in order to be closer to work... that would be like living to work – RR”

“I love living in the rural settings, and the fact that I have to drive 40 minutes for work does not bother me. I would rather drive 40 minutes in the country rather than being stuck in traffic!! - RL”

As seen from these quotes, proximity can be used as an enabler for young adults to live their desired lifestyle. Rather than living in proximity to a larger centre, a small number of respondents indicated that they specifically selected their career paths in order to make rural living a viable option. For instance one respondent stated, *“I adjusted my career path to suit my need and preference to continue living rurally - RS”* while another stated, *“I plan to return to a rural area, possibly to the community I grew up in (though I would consider other places) to work as a veterinarian. Rural Alberta has more opportunity for me in large animal medicine- the area I would like to practice in- than urban Alberta – RL.”* It is clear from the perspectives of these respondents and their strong desire to reside rurally that attaining viable employment while living ones desired lifestyle was possible. While it may be easier to attain a balance between lifestyle and employment in some communities more than others, there was a cluster of respondents represented within the sample that were finding ways to fulfill both their lifestyle and employment desires. In addition to employment, a number of respondents also desired to be in proximity to a larger center as it increased their access to urban services and

amenities. For instance one respondent stated, “*When I do decide to make a long-term commitment to an area, it will likely be a rural or small town setting with lots of access to outdoor recreation but also in proximity (1-2 hours) to a larger urban centre to be able to access greater arts and cultural activities (e.g. large concerts) – RL.*”

Attractive Amenities of Attractive Communities

In order to gain a better understanding of how to attract young adults to rural communities it was important to first understand the features in which they valued within a rural community. As previous discuss, the respondents within this study found a number of attributes of rural living to be attractive. It was important to have respondents indicate the various amenities in which they felt were important to have access to in the communities in which they choose to reside as this identification could better assist with the attraction of young residents and young families to rural areas.

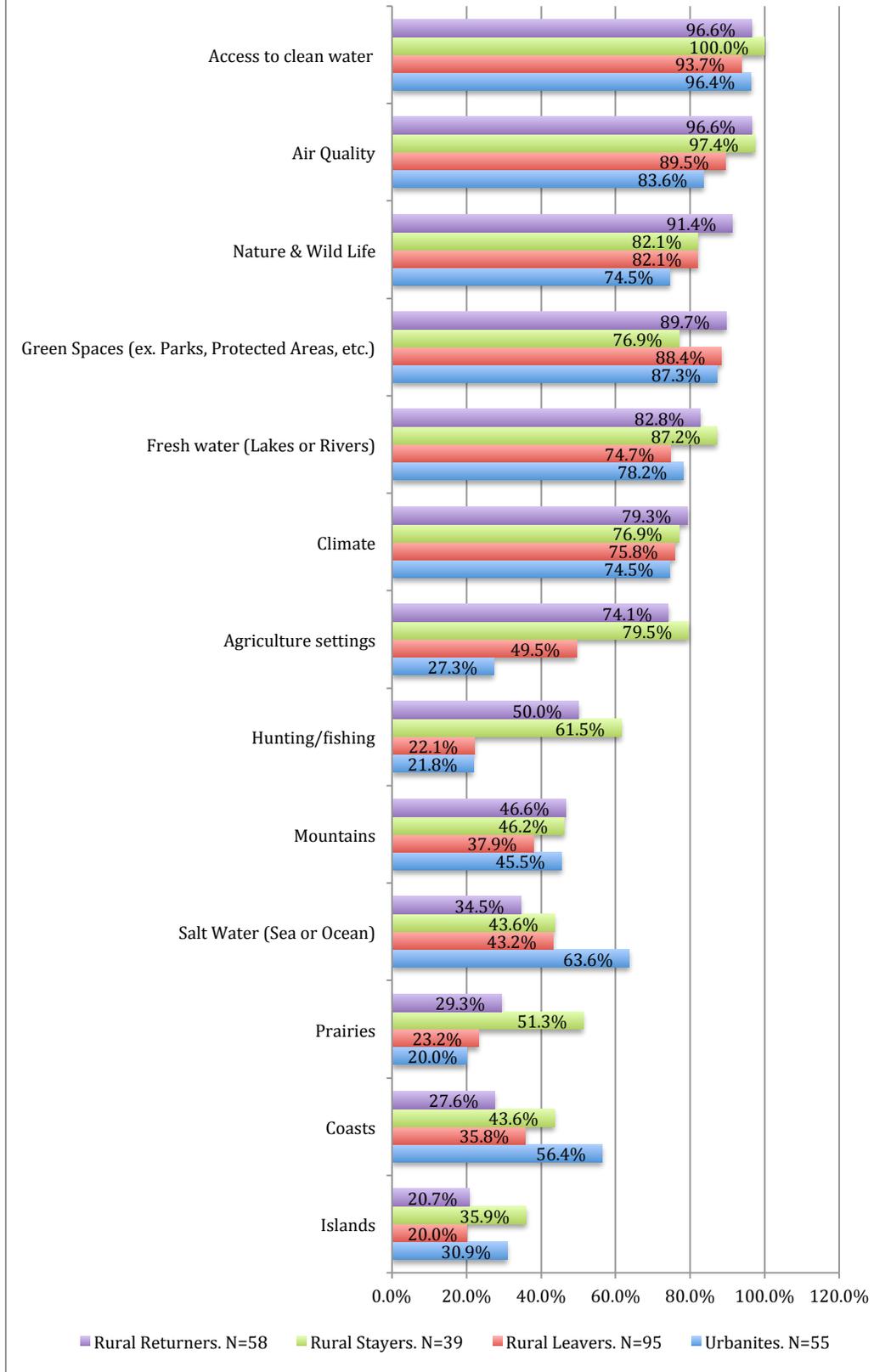
To do this, the amenity typology identified by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010), was use to help identify the value and the various level of importance in terms of access, respondents associated with certain types of amenities. The three types of amenities identified by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010), were used was used as a measurement tool to identify the attributes that respondents perceived to make up attractive communities.

Natural Amenities

Natural amenities are defined as “*amenities that are based on the natural attributes of rural areas including climate, air quality, land and water and which provide the scenic settings and materials for industry and leisure pursuits of rural residents.*” Respondents in all four subgroups highly valued the access to natural amenities. As seen in *Figure 2*, the amenities that related to the general natural elements of an area were more important for respondents to have access to than amenities that related to a specific geographical characteristic of an area. For instance, respondents most frequently indicated the importance to have access to clean water, good air quality, nature and wild life, green spaces and fresh water sources. However, factors such as mountains, salt water sources, prairies, coasts, or islands less ranked by fewer respondent as being important to have access to than the more general natural amenities listed above. Interestingly, the *climate* of an area was indicated by seventy-five percent of respondents in all subgroups

as being an important feature of their community of choice. In terms of differences, *agricultural settings* were highly important to respondents in the Rural Returners (74.1%) and Rural Stayers (79.5%) subgroups, whereas Rural Leavers (49.5%) and Urbanites (27.3%) didn't associate the same level of importance with the amenity as the rural subgroups. Access to *hunting/fishing areas* has a similar breakdown of the subgroups, where they were valued more by respondents in the Rural Returner and Stayer subgroups than Leavers and Urbanites. Urbanites valued the access to the *ocean* (63.6%) and *coasts* (56.4%) more than respondents in the other subgroups. Although the natural amenities that relate to geographical characteristics were ranked by fewer respondents as being important, a small number of respondents in each of the subgroup indicated their desire to have access to these amenities, indicated that within the subgroups, respondents' decisions differ and the mobility motivations of an individual may relate to these specific amenities as they each promote a certain lifestyle.

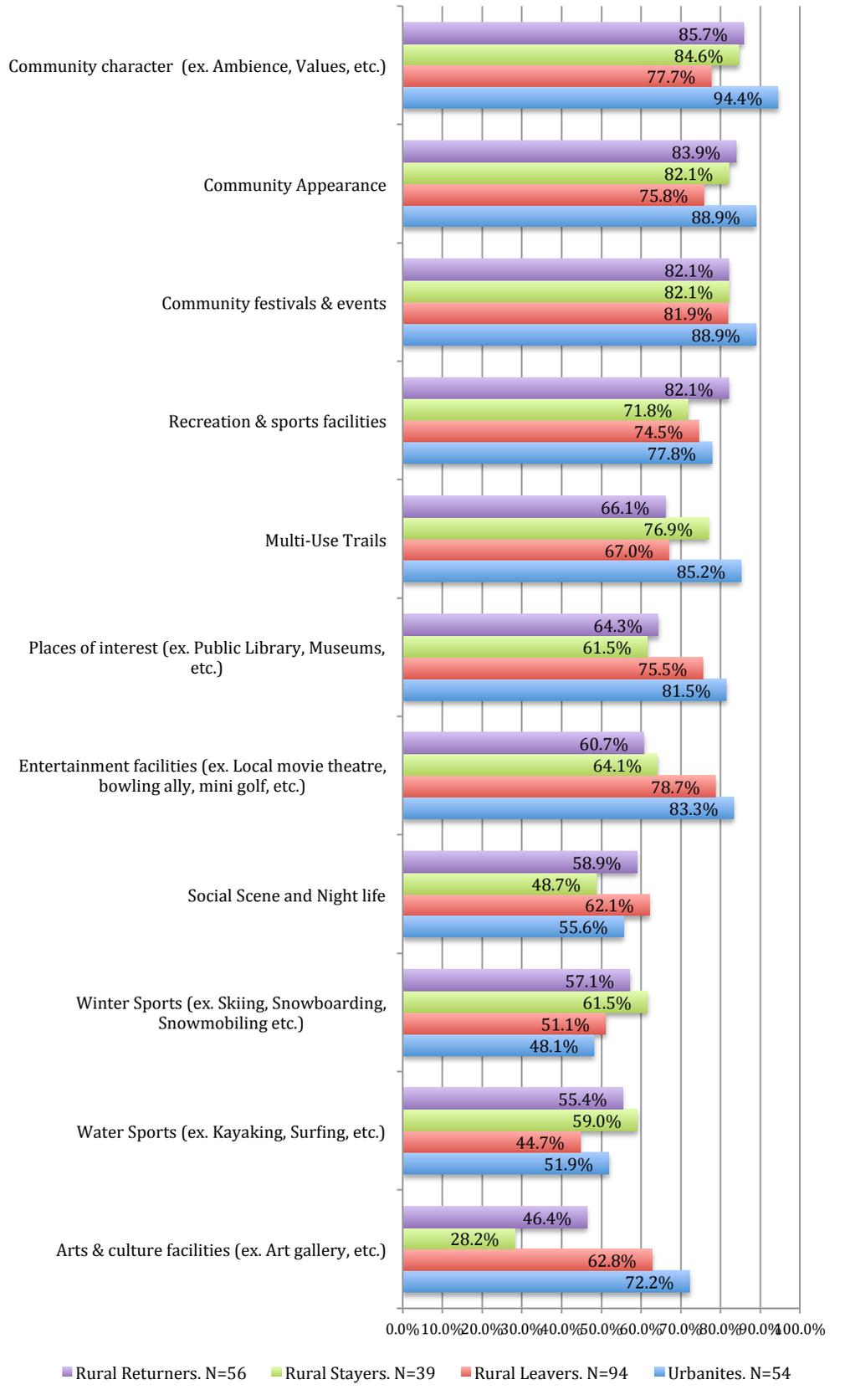
Figure 2. Importance of Access to Natural Amenities - By Subgroup.



Cultural Amenities

Cultural Amenities are defined as “amenities that are based in the cultural context of rural areas including heritage, recreation and sports, arts, industry and community and which serve to enhance quality of life in rural regions” (Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire, 2010). As highlighted in *Figure 3*, two intangible cultural amenities were ranked highly by all subgroups. Community character for instance, was indicated by the majority of respondents in all the subgroups, as being an important feature of a community. Similarly, the appearance of a community and the access to community festivals and events were highly valued as well. The amenities that related to things to do within a community including the access to recreation facilities, multi-use trails, places of interest, and entertainment facilities such as a local movie theater or bowling alley were all valued by the majority of respondents within each subgroups. Interestingly, Urbanites had the most respondents indicated the importance for eight of the eleven cultural amenities, many of which related to things to do. Rural Returners and Stayers often times had fewer respondents in their subgroups than Leavers and Urbanites indicated that they desired access to amenities such as places of interest or entertainment facilities. Both Returners and Stayers had more respondents indicate the desire to have access to sport related activities such as winter or water sports than respondents in the Leaver or Urbanite subgroups. Art and cultural facilities was an amenity that got mixed reviews by respondents in the different subgroups. Rural Stayers (28.2%) had the smallest number of respondents indicate the importance to have access to art and culture facilities, whereas Urbanites (72.2%) highly valued access to the amenity. Similar to Urbanites, Rural Leavers had a high number of respondents (62.8%) indicate the importance of an art and culture scene and Returners had 46.4% of respondents indicate the importance of the amenity in the community in which they reside. Rural Stayers also had the smallest portion of respondents indicate the desire to have access to nightlife and a social scene. Although differences exist between the subgroups it is important to recognize the high number of respondents within each subgroup indicated their desire to have access to that particular amenity as It is clear that respondents value diversity in terms of things to do within a community as well as lifestyle in which these individual amenities promote.

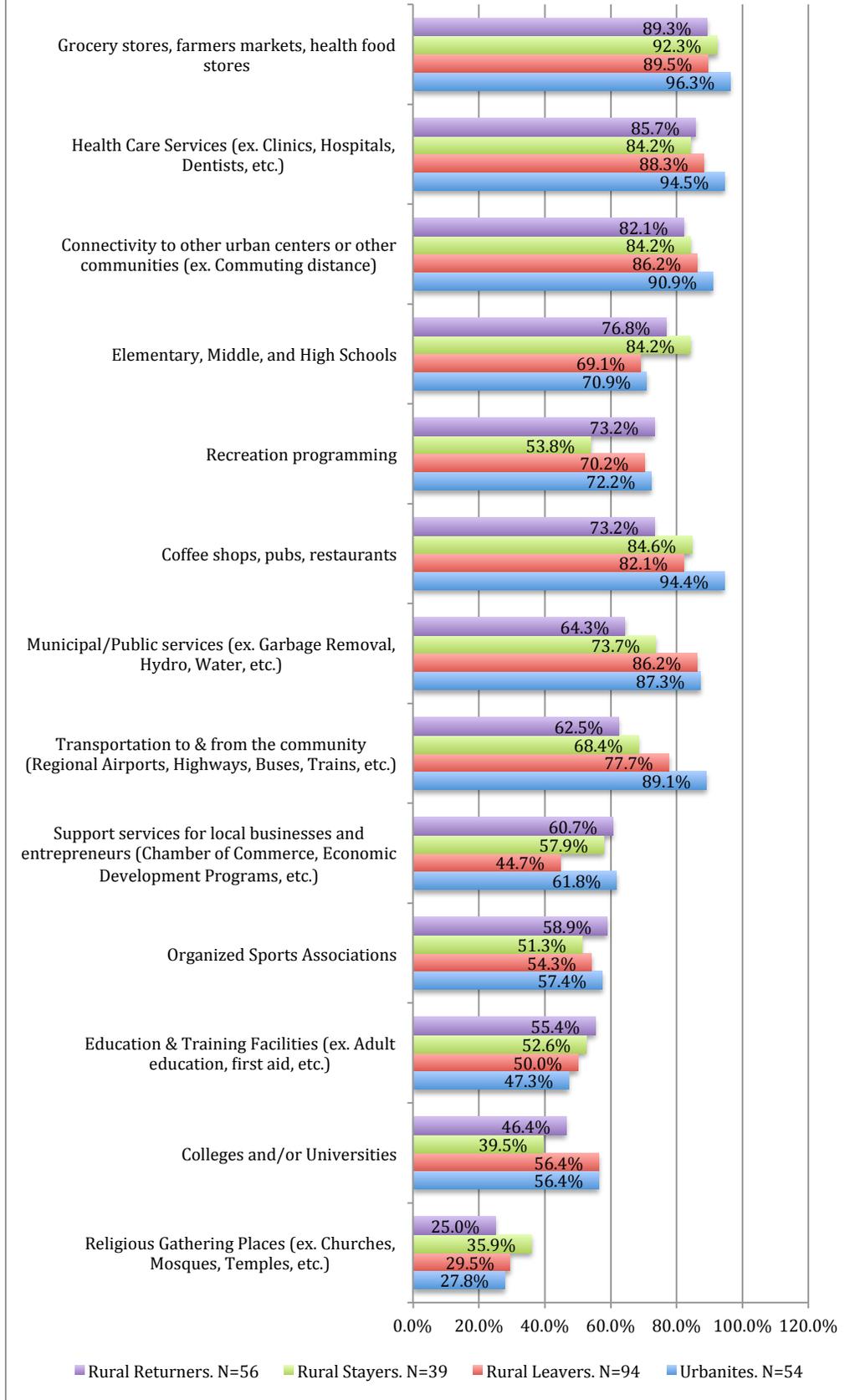
Figure 3. Importance of Access to Cultural Amenities - By Subgroup.



System Amenities

System amenities act as enablers, that allow residents to live their desired lifestyle or allows residents to live within a particular community. As highlighted in *Figure 4*, some of the most frequently cited system amenities that respondents desired access to in the communities in which they reside were *grocery stores/farmers markets/ health food stores, health care services, and connectivity to other urban centres or rural communities*. Respondents in each of the subgroup placed a high importance on the connectivity to other communities or urban areas. 43.5% of respondents indicated that in the future on a long-term basis they wanted to reside in a community that was commuting distance to other rural areas or urban centres. This was not surprising to see as a large number of respondents indicated that they valued a community's connectivity to urban centres or larger rural regions as it increased their options for employment, services, entertainment facilities, as well as enable them to be closer to ones friends and family. In terms of differences, Urbanites had the most respondents out of the four subgroups indicated the importance of having access to a diverse range of coffee shops/restaurants/pubs, municipal services, and the transportation to and from a community. Rural Stayers had the most respondents indicate their desire for access to grade schools (84.2%) and religious gathering places (35.9%), but had the fewest respondents desire access to recreation programming (53.8%). Rural Returners had the fewest respondents desire access to municipal services (64.3%) and transportation to and from a community (62.5%), even through Returners placed a high value on residing in a community that was commuting distance to other rural areas or urban centres. Rural Leavers had the smallest portion of respondents indicated the need for *support services for local businesses* and the one of the largest number of respondents indicate the desire to have access to colleges and universities. Out of all the system amenities ranked, fewest respondents indicated the importance of having access to organized sport associations, education facilities and post-secondary education, and religious gathering places.

Figure 4. Importance of Access to System Amenities - By Subgroup.



Amenity Summary

Overall, it was evident that respondents within the subgroups valued amenities to different extents. However, the different subgroups often had a similar percentage of respondents indicate the importance of the amenities listed. There were few amenities such as agricultural settings, hunting and fishing, salt water, and arts and cultural facilities, where one subgroup valued it significantly more than the others. This indicated that certain amenities that hold more important to or a higher level of attractiveness for certain subgroups. Interestingly, respondents ranked the system amenities similarly. Although there were still differences between the subgroups, there was less of a span between the subgroup percentages than with the natural or cultural amenities. It is important to note the ways in which the subgroups indicated the importance for certain amenities as the system amenities enable living in a certain community, the natural and cultural amenities help to establish a certain lifestyle. This further highlights the diversity in perspectives that exists among the subgroups and the sample as a whole.

Migration Characteristics

To understand the migration characteristics of the sample, specific factors that were identified by previous research were ranked in terms of the level each factor had on respondents' migration decisions.

Both lifestyle and employment related factors were influential on respondents' decisions to relocate or remain rurally. Recognizing that respondents' mobility was connected to lifestyle related factors is key in understanding why they are motivated to relocate to certain communities. Overall, 29.8% of respondents indicated that they would relocate based on factors that were related to ones lifestyle. 12.8% of respondents indicated that they would relocate for employment related reasons even to a community that did not align with their desired lifestyle. Rather, respondents most frequently indicated that they would only move to a rural community if there were a balance of employment and lifestyle opportunities.

Rural to Urban Migration

Understanding respondents' reasoning behind their migration decisions helped to provide valuable insight on how to attract young residents to rural communities. *Figure 5* and *Figure 6* highlight the various factors identified by previous studies as being factors

in respondents' decisions to leave their rural community for an urban centre. *Figure 5* and *Figure 6* highlight Rural Returners and Rural Leavers respondents as they grew up rurally and then relocated to an urban centre later in life. As seen, the Figures showcase the various factors ranked by respondents in terms of the level of influence each had on respondents' decisions to leave. Although many studies have identified that these factors play a role in rural young adults decisions to leave, very few studies have worked to understand the level of influence the certain factors have on a young adults' decisions to relocate to an urban centre.

Figure 6 highlights the unattractive features of rural living that *push* or encourage young people to leave their rural community, whereas *Figure 5* showcases the attractive features of urban areas, which are known to *pull* or draw young people to relocate to an urban centre. By viewing both Figures it can be seen that the majority of factors in *Figure 5* were more influential on a larger number of respondents than the factors ranked in *Figure 6*. As well it can also be seen that the majority of factors, in both Figures were ranked as being highly influential by more Leavers than Returners.

Figure 5. Pull Factors Influencing Migration Out of Rural to Urban - RR & RL

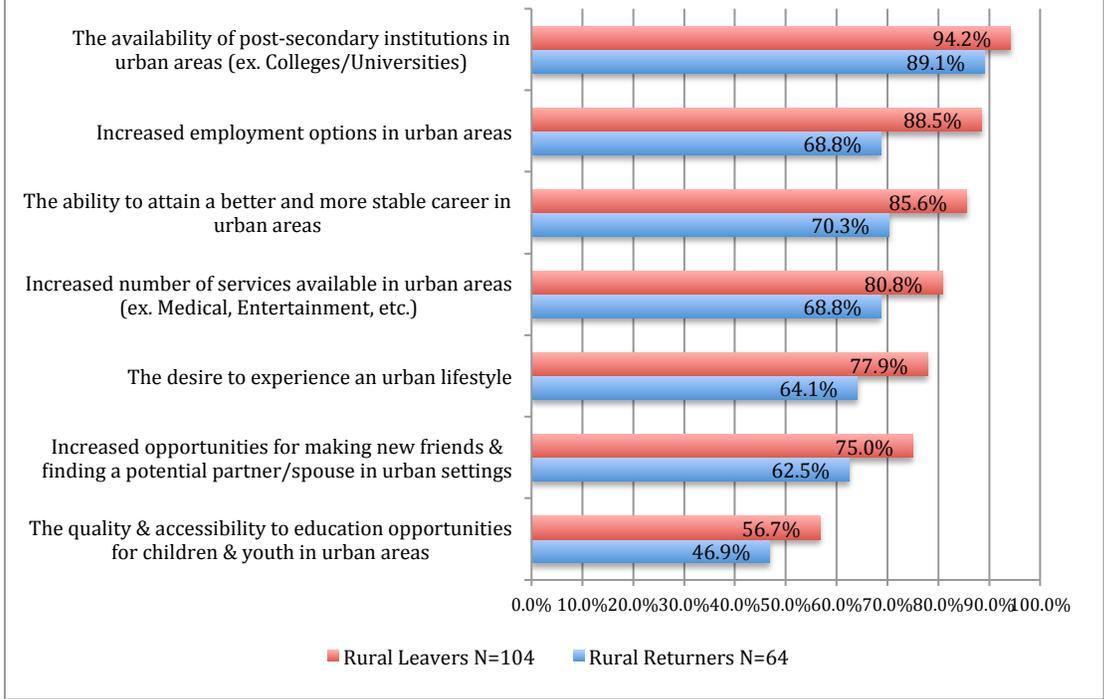
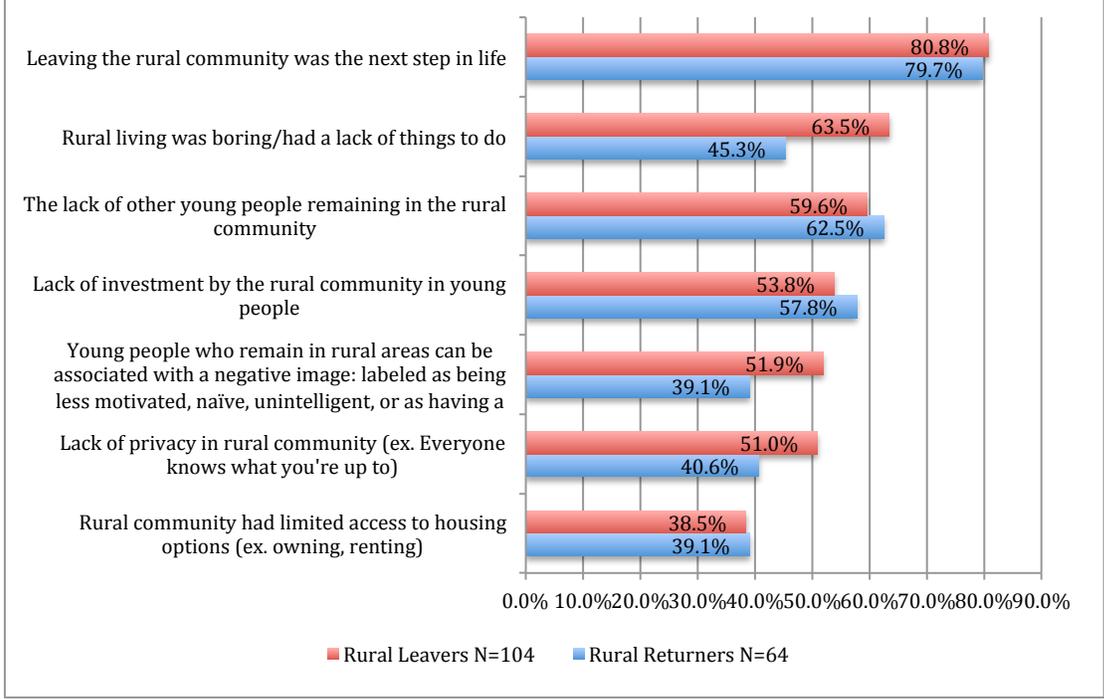


Figure 6. Push Factors Influencing Migration Out of Rural to Urban -RR & RL.



Pull Factors – Rural to Urban Migration

As highlighted *Figure 5* the *availability of post-secondary institutions in urban areas* had the most influence on the greatest number of respondents. 94.2% of Rural Leavers and 89.1% of Rural Returners indicated that this factor was highly influential on their decisions to leave. Also see in *Figure 5*, for both subgroups, employment related factors were influential. For instance, 88.5% of Rural Leavers indicated *the increase of employment opportunities within urban areas* was a highly influential on their decision to leave. Similarly, the majority of Leavers also indicated that the *ability to attain a better or more stable career in urban areas* (85.6%) was influential as well. While Returners were also highly influenced by *the increased employment opportunities within urban areas* (68.8%) and by the *ability to attain a better or more stable career in urban areas* (70.3%), less Returners were influenced by these factors than respondents in the Leaver subgroup. Both subgroups however, were strongly influenced to relocate to an urban centre based on the increased availability of services, their desire to experience an urban lifestyle and the increased chance to make friends or find a spouse. While a greater number of respondents in both subgroups were highly influenced to relocate to an urban centre, there were a number of factors that would or did play a role in respondents' decisions to relocate back to a rural community.

Push Factors – Rural to Urban Migration

Respondents indicated that a number of factors were influential or would be influential on their decisions to relocate or remain living in a rural area. Unattractive features of urban living and attractive features of rural living were also influential. As highlighted in *Figure 6* both a high number of Leavers (80.8%) and Returners (79.7%) were strongly influenced to leave their community as *leaving the rural community was the next step in life*. More Leavers than Returners were influenced to relocate because *rural living was boring, the negative image young people who decide to stay, and the lack of privacy in a rural community*. The only two factors that influenced a slightly greater number of Returners more than Leavers in both *Figure 6* and *Figure 5* is the *lack of other young people remaining in the rural community* and the *lack of investment in young people*. The differences found between Rural Leavers and Rural Returners highlights the unique characteristics of the two subgroups.

Rural to Urban Migration Recap

It was evident that respondents' decisions to move to an urban centre were influenced by a number of factors. Overall, the attractive features of urban areas such as the increased opportunities to pursue post-secondary education, attain employment, access to more services and experience an urban lifestyle, were all strongly influential on respondents' decisions to relocate rurally. Although there were similarities between Leavers and Returners, differences were apparent as well. Rural Leavers were highly motivated by opportunities related to education, employment and other experiences that existed in an urban centre, while fewer respondents within the Returner subgroup indicated that employment and experiencing an urban centre motivated them to relocate to an urban centre. It is also important to recognize the influential factors that depicted the negative elements of rural areas had on respondents' decisions to relocate. While the factors represented in *Figure 6* were not ranked as frequently as factors in *Figure 5*, they still had a strong influence on respondents' relocation decisions. The following section, discusses how the factors highlighted in *Figure 6*, such as the lack of other young people, limited housing options, a community's limited investment in young people, not only contributed to respondents' decisions to leave but were also deterrents preventing many respondents from returning to living rurally.

Urban to Rural Migration

In addition to the factors that influenced respondents to relocate to an urban centre, there were multiple factors that influenced young people to relocate to or remain living in a rural community. To gain a better understanding of urban to rural migration, the attractive features of rural living, represented in *Figure 7* and the unattractive features of urban living represented in *Figure 8* were examined. Identifying the level of influence the various factors had on respondents' past or future relocation decisions provided valuable insight into young adults motivations to relocate rurally.

Pull Factors – Urban to Rural Migration

Similar to when making a decision to relocate to an urban centre, a number of influential factors were involved in respondents' past or future decisions to relocate or remain living in rural communities. *Figure 7* highlights the factors that influenced respondents in each of the four subgroups to relocate or remain living in a rural community. The two most frequently indicated factors included respondents' *connection*

and attachment to rural living and having friends and family close to or within the community. In comparison to the other subgroups, Stayers had the highest percentage of respondents indicated that their *connection to rural living, having friends and family within the community and having a shared values with a community* were influential on their decisions to remain. Urbanites on the contrary, least frequently indicated that these factors were influential, however this was still influential on 77.6% of Urbanites decisions to relocate rurally. *Having an employment position in the rural community* was also a highly influential factor for many of the respondents in the four subgroups. Rural Leavers (88.1%) had the largest percentage of respondents out of the four subgroups, indicated that *having an employment position in a rural community* would be highly influential on their decision to relocate while Rural Returners (72.6%) had the smallest percentage of respondents indicated that employment was influential on their decisions to return. *Leisure and Recreation opportunities located in a rural community* were also indicated by over 70% of respondents in each of the four subgroups as being strongly influential on their decisions to relocate rurally. Respondents across the four subgroups least frequently indicated that the *increased entrepreneurship opportunity in rural areas* encouraged them to relocate or remain rurally. With the expectation of Returners, fifty percent or more of the respondents within in the other three subgroups indicated that increased entrepreneurship opportunities were a draw to relocate or remain in rural areas.

Figure 7. Pull Factors that Influence Living in Rural Areas - By Subgroup.

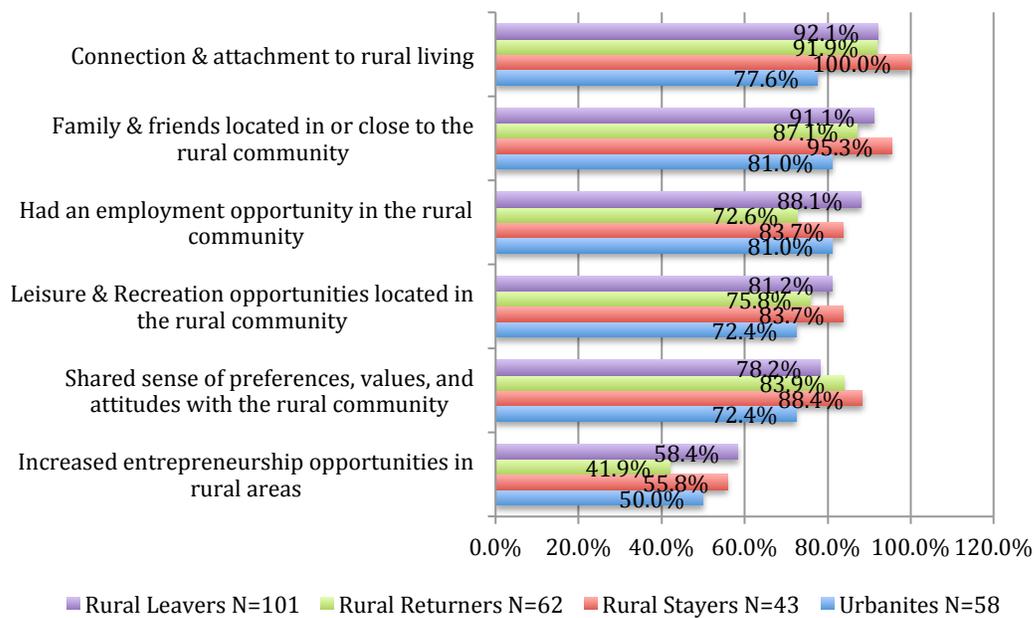
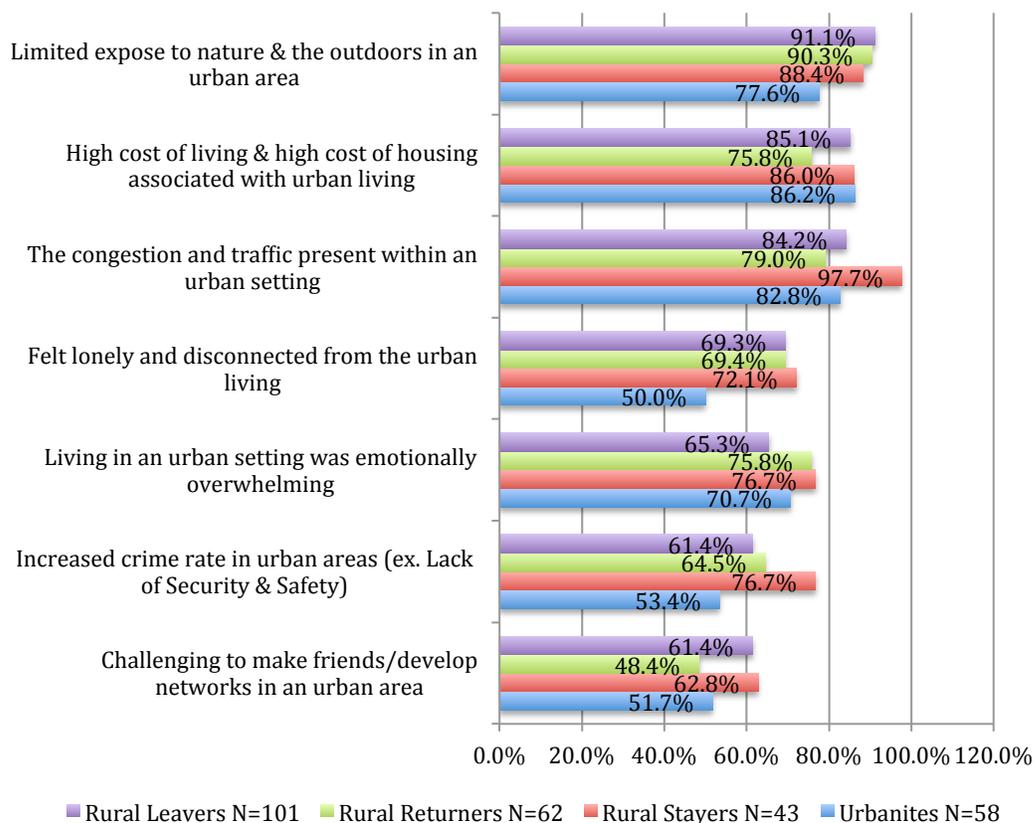


Figure 8. Push Factors Influence Living in Rural Areas - By Subgroup.



Push Factors – Urban to Rural Migration

When working to understand respondents' motivations to relocate, it was important to identify the characteristics of urban areas that influenced respondents to relocate rurally. *Figure 8* highlights the factors that influenced respondents within the four subgroups to living rurally. Recognizing that the factors that pushed respondents out of urban areas and towards rural living were influential on more respondents than the factors that pushed young people out of rural communities, as it validates the strong attraction to rural areas that existed amongst the Rural Leaver and Returner subgroups. Overall, the unattractive features of urban centres were influential factors for the majority of respondents in each of the four subgroups, showcasing the strong attraction to rural areas.

As showcased in *Figure 8*, the three most frequently cited factors that contributed to respondents past or future decisions to relocate rurally were the *limited exposure to nature and the outdoors*, the *high costs of housing and living*, and the *congestion and traffic* in urban areas. The factors that related to the intangible connection or feeling associated with urban life such as feeling disconnected, overwhelmed, or being unsafe were also indicated by a significant number of respondents in each of the subgroups as being influential. *Figure 8* indicates, that respondents are attracted to rural living based on characteristics that relate to the lifestyle of an environment including the intangible feelings of being socially connected, attached to the community and safe within the community.

In terms of differences, rural subgroups, most frequently indicated that the *limited exposure to nature and the outdoors in urban areas* as being influential on their decision to relocate. Urbanites rather, most frequently indicated that the *high cost of living and housing associated with urban areas*, was a strong draw to living rurally. Over eighty percent of respondents in each of the rural subgroups also indicated the *high costs of rural living and housing* was strongly influential on their decision to live in a rural location. As seen in *Figure 8*, Rural Stayers frequently had a high number of respondents indicate that the various unattractive factors of urban areas were influential on their decisions to remain living rurally. For example, 97.7% of Stayers indicated that the *congestion and traffic present within an urban setting* influenced their decision to remain,

and so did the *urban areas being emotionally overwhelming* (76.75), and *the feelings of urban areas are unsafe* (76.7%). While large portions of respondents in the other subgroups indicated that these factors were influential on their decisions to live rurally as well, Rural Stayers were the most frequently to indicate that these factors played a large role in their decisions to stay. Interestingly, although Urbanites grew up in an urban centre, a high percentage of respondents indicated that urban centres *being emotionally overwhelming* (70.0%), *insecure or unsafe* (53.4%), and *a challenging place to establish social networks* (51.7%) were influential on their decisions to live in a rural community.

Recap of Migration influences & motivations

It was clear that respondents' relocation decisions were influenced by numerous factors, many of which were related to employment and lifestyle opportunities. The factors relating to certain types of opportunities such as post-secondary education, employment, to access services, experiencing an urban lifestyle, connection to rural living, residing close to family and friends, increased access to the outdoors, and recreation opportunities were all influential on the majority of respondents' decisions. While a significant number of respondents indicated that attaining an employment opportunity was a strong motivation to relocate to or remain living in a rural community, only 12.8% indicated that they would move to a community solely for employment reasons. This suggests that while many respondents were motivated to relocate for employment opportunities, other factors such as those relating to the lifestyle a community promotes, are influential on respondents' decisions to relocate as well.

In terms of living rurally, both the unattractive features of urban living and the attractive features of rural living were influential on the majority of respondents' past or future relocation decisions. As seen in the Figures highlighting the influences to relocate to an urban centre and those that draw young people to rural living, more respondents were influenced by the factors that encouraged rural living than the factors that influenced Rural Leavers and Returners to relocate to an urban centre. This suggests that amongst these two rural subgroups, the opportunities that existed in an urban area were more influential on respondents' decisions to move than the unattractive features of rural living. This potentially indicated that rural young adults are not leaving based solely on the fact that they find rural communities to be unattractive places to live, potentially

indicating that just because young people leave a rural community doesn't necessarily indicate that they don't want to return at some point. To support this hunch, most of the factors representing both the attractive features of rural living and the unattractive features of urban living, were indicated by the majority of respondents in each of the subgroups as being influential on their desired to relocate to a rural community. Although there are differences between the subgroups, it is very clear that there are a number of influential factors that attract the young people to living in rural communities.

Emerging Typology

The diversity that was evident throughout in findings of this study provided valuable insight into the fact that young adults are not a homogeneous group and while categorizing respondents into the four subgroups was beneficial, these categories didn't fully describe the sample. Utilizing the four-subgroup typology enabled the examination of respondents' past migration behaviour, which helped to identify respondents' current perspectives of rural living and the elements in which their current perspectives were based on. However, while the examination of respondents past migration behaviour was beneficial, pairing this understanding with an examination of respondents' future migration plans was extremely valuable when working to uncover respondents' migration motivations and preferences. When working to identify to what extent respondents represented in this study were attracted to living in rural communities, it became evident that based on their future migration intentions the respondents could be further categorized, as highlighted by *Figure 9*.

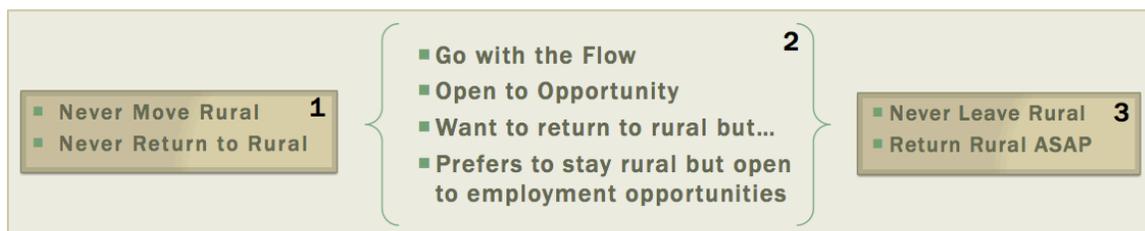


Figure 9. Classification of Respondents by Future Migration Intentions

In addition to utilize respondents past migration behaviour to understand their future migration plans, it was also important to examine respondents current stage of life to help understand the current focuses that may influence their future migration behaviour. It became evident that the young people represented in this study had a diverse range of priorities and focuses at the time of participating in this study. Very few

respondents indicated that they desired to maintain their current lifestyle (10.0%), hinting at the fact that other were completing various tasks such as in the process of establishing a career or attaining employment (32.9%) or pursuing their educational goals (30.4%). Also, 5.0% of respondents were focused on finding a partner or significant other and 4.6% were focused on travelling and exploring. Not only does this hint at the fact that the young people within the age group of 20-29 are currently focusing on pursuing particular opportunities, but it also indicates that many respondents have not yet settled in a community for future long-term residents. Interestingly, only 13.7% of respondents indicated that they were in the process of identifying a community to settle down in on a long-term basis. This highlights that many of the young people within this study had not yet made concrete plans to settle or were not in the process of relocating for the purposes of establishing long-term residents. This is an important characteristic of the sample to highlight as it uncovers the opportunity that communities have to attract young adults.

Figure 9 displays the further categorization of respondents based on their future migration intentions. As highlighted, group one, the second smallest of the three groups consisted of both Urbanites who had never moved to a rural community and were strongly unattracted to relocating rurally, and Rural Leavers who either grew up rurally and disliked it or simply felt living in an urban area was a better fit for their lifestyle preferences. These respondents had no intentions of relocating to a rural community in the future. Respondents in group three were categorized based on their strong desire to reside in a rural location. This group consisted of Rural Stayers who had strong intentions to always live rurally or of Rural Returners who had returned to rural living and intended to stay. As highlighted, group three also included Rural Returners and Leavers who intended on returning to rural areas as soon as they could. As described, group one and group three were polarized in terms of their desire to live rurally, whereas group two, the largest of the three groups, consisted of a mixture of young adults who are all open to living rurally but are motivated to relocate for different reasons.

Respondents in group two were not as strongly attracted to rural living compared to the respondents in group three. This was especially true amongst the respondents who indicated that they were “‘*open to opportunities*’ and willing to ‘*go with the flow.*’ While

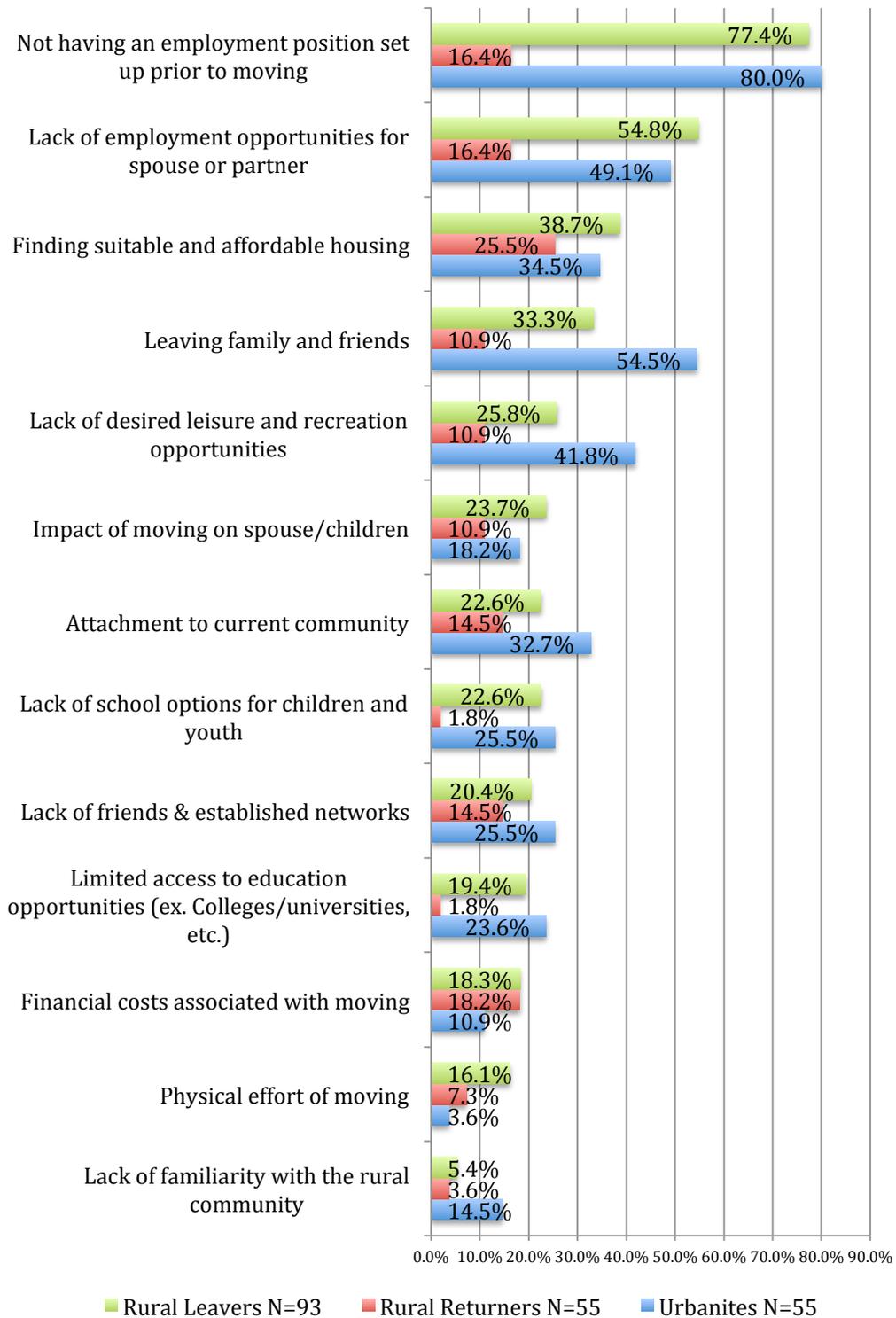
these respondents were open to living rurally, they were not attached to a specific community nor did they feel an essential need to live rurally. Rather, these respondents were motivated to relocate based on being open, willing and flexible to take advantage of opportunities as they arose regardless of their location. However, respondents classified as the *'prefers to stay rural but open to employment opportunities'* were drawn to living rurally but were motivated to relocate for employment and were motivated to pursue these opportunities even if they were located in an urban centre. In contrast, the final group of respondents in groups three, classified into the *'wants to return to rural but...'* had a much stronger sense of attachment to rural living. This group had a strong desired to live rurally but were unable to do so as one or more barriers or deterrents were preventing them from relocating. The unique characteristic about group three is that the respondents' mobility motivations strongly related to pursuing opportunities. It is important to note that group three are not necessarily motivated by their desired to settle, rather respondents in this group are keen to pursue opportunities such as those relocating to employment, lifestyle, education, travel, and life experience.

Relocation Difficulties

When examining respondents' migration motivations and preferences, it was important to identify the factors made relocating difficult. *Figure 10* highlights the factors in which respondents indicated as being major factors making it difficult to relocate rurally. Although there are common themes, a number of differences can be seen between the subgroups. As highlighted in *Figure 10*, *not having an employment position prior to moving* and *the lack of employment opportunities for ones spouse* were strongly identified by the majority of respondents in the Rural Leaver and Urbanite subgroups as being a major barrier. Rural Returners however, were significantly less frequent to indicate employment was a barrier making it difficult to relocate rurally. Rather, Returners most frequently indicated that *findings suitable and affordable housing* (25.5%) was a major barrier to relocation. As showcased throughout *Figure 10*, Rural Leavers and Urbanites were much more frequent to indicate that the factors listed making it difficult to relocate rurally, than Returners. While a small portion of respondents indicated that the *lack of familiarity with a rural community* was a major factor making their relocation difficult, Rural Leavers (5.4%) and Returners (3.6%) found it to be much less of a factor than Urbanites (14.5%). Similarly, Urbanites (54.5%) more frequently indicated that *leaving*

family and friends was a deterrent making relocating difficult, than Rural Leavers (33.3%) or Returners (10.9%). *Figure 10* does not highlight the factors that were very frequently ranked by respondents as being medium or small factors making it difficult to relocate rurally. The *attachment to one's current community* (58.1%), the *lack of desired leisure and recreation opportunities* (54.2%) and the *lack of friends and established networks* (53.7%) were each ranked by more than half of respondents as being small or medium factors in making it challenging to relocate rurally. Similarly, the *financial costs of moving* (56.2%), the *physical effect of moving* (52.2%), and *limited access to education opportunities* (49.8%) were also indicated by a large portion of respondents as being small or medium factors that make relocating difficult. These factors are important to highlight as although they weren't immense barriers to relocating rurally, they still played or would play a role in the difficulty of being able to relocate to a rural community.

Figure 10. Major* Factors Making it Difficult to Relocate to a Rural Community - By Subgroup.



Barriers & Deterrents

Unattractive Attributes of Rural Living

Despite the positive perspectives shared by many respondents, there were a number of challenges and deterrents identified by respondents preventing them from relocating to a rural community. Although each of the subgroups had unique characteristics, the respondents across the subgroups very commonly discussed the same attributes in which they perceived were unattractive features of rural living.

Lack of Opportunities & Community Influence

Respondents especially those in the Urbanite and Leaver subgroups, often discussed how the fact that the general lack of opportunities within rural areas, was an unattractive feature of rural living. A large number of respondents from across the subgroups indicated the perception that suggests rural communities lack opportunities to further ones employment, education or life experience contributed to their decisions to out-migrate from a rural area or deter them from relocating into a rural area. A small number of Rural Returners and Stayers often discussed while there is a perception that rural communities have no opportunities, opportunities exist they can be harder to find as many employment related positions are often attained through word of mouth. However, the majority of respondents did not have this positive perspective about rural areas. Rather the a large number of respondents discussed how rural communities lack opportunities related to employment, education, lifestyle such as recreation opportunities, and life experiences. The quotes below highlight a number of respondents' perspectives on the unattractive features of rural living:

“Slow, boring, lack of opportunities – U”

“The stigma surrounding rural communities and the idea that they're just boring and unambitious keeps young people out. Those things have to change, they have to be seen as realistic and viable places for young people to live – RS”

“Both rural and urban communities have people who have positive and negative experiences. When someone has a negative experience in a 'community' -

someplace they hoped to feel safe and at home - they will feel a real need to leave – RL.”

“I generally find that people living in rural communities are closed minded, naive, or in no way understand the field that I work in or the lifestyle I pursue – RL”

A large number of respondents in the rural subgroups indicated that the perception held by their community, family and/or friends contributed to how they perceived rural living. Many respondents indicated that after high school graduation it was important to leave as there was a perception that suggested you had to leave in order to be successful. Numerous respondents indicated that there was a perception that if you remained in a rural community that you were lazy, unmotivated, and unsuccessful. It became evident that this perception not only contributed to the out-migration of young adults but also deterred many young people from relocating rurally. The quotes below highlight how respondents discussed how the community itself created a negative perception of rural living;

“Youth are highly encouraged to "find something better" than their parents had, that there is nothing for them here. It starts from High school. "You get paid more in the city," "there's more to offer in the city," and "there are people more like you in the city" are most often heard. It makes rural living seem like a backwoods, dying out sort of existence that no one wants their youth to be subjected to. And once youth see and experience the services the cities have to offer, coming back to rural areas with so little to offer them compared to the city seems like a huge downgrade – RL”

“I have experienced [pressure to leave] within my community. There is pressure to get out and live in a city or travel. There is definitely judgement towards individuals who don't leave the rural community to experience other ways of living- RL”

The quotes above reflected a number of respondents' views who indicated that rural communities themselves and the perspectives and attitudes of rural residents were influential on their perspective on rural living. Interestingly, a small portion of respondents in the Rural Returner and Leaver subgroups discussed how once they returned after attaining post-secondary education they were not well received by the community. This was sometimes because older residents and individuals who remained after high school graduation can often hold negative perceptions of those that leave. The perspectives highlighted below provide insight into the challenges that can exist when an individual is returning to a community:

"I am often accused of thinking "I am better" than others because of my education. This is not accurate for many reasons, I chose education because I did not want to work in the types of jobs offering on the job training (and advancement accordingly); kudos to the folks who did NOT spend \$40,000 to get into their desired occupation! With this, I feel as though I have a bias that folks who have never experienced living in other communities are narrow minded – RR."

"Growing up...I heard a lot of comments like "You're too smart to stay around here". It was expected that I would leave my rural community for a larger centre...to pursue post-secondary studies. When I left...people wondering what made me "too good" for [my community]...People assume that since I have "gotten out" I have no desire to move back. [My province] is almost seen as a backwards location; what well-educated young person would want to live there? However, I am seen as almost snobbish by [my community] who assumes that since I've gone off and been educated...that I see myself as too good to return to rural life – RL"

"I enjoy small towns and would like to stay, but realistically for my career and my wife's career, we will have to go to a larger centre in the next few years. Small towns tend to need blue-collar workers, not professionals and education. I have

found small town residents and company owners even look down on those with university education – RR”

Unwelcoming & Unsupportive

Building on the perspectives highlighted in the quotes above, a large number of respondents discussed how some communities can be closed off to new comers, closed minded towards new ideas or change, racist, traditional, politically and socially conservative and can be limited in their world view and unaccepting towards other lifestyles. Respondents often indicated that for the reasons listed previously, rural areas were not appealing environments to relocate into. Also, it was common for respondents to discuss the challenges of being young within a community as respondents indicated a lack of respect, limited opportunities to have their voices heard and to feel empowered by the older residents within a community. The quotes below provide insight into the perspectives of some respondents who felt this friction:

“Young people need to be treated as peers in any environment, Rural or Urban. Peers will support each other and find each other work. When young people are not treated as valued peers in any environment, they should and will leave. Due to my bias, this means I now seek out urban centres where young people are more easily located. One day, when my age & experience allows, I look forward to returning to small towns – RL.”

“Young people need to be ACTUALLY valued. That means not just saying "we want your opinions" and then doing the same old same old time after time. If our opinions and ideas aren't considered and then acted upon, we won't bother to stay/return or build our rural communities... – RL”

Not being treated as a valuable part of rural society, created a negative perception of rural living among a number of respondents within this study. It was very clear that respondents desired to be apart of the strong social networks that often exist within a rural

community and as well, respondents desired to overall be accepted by the communities in which they decide to live.

Perception of loneliness, disconnect & social isolation

Many respondents expressed that rural communities can be socially isolating as there was a lack of other young people, limited ways to meet other young people in the community or because they didn't have established social networks. For instance one respondent represented this view well by stating:

“I know that some of my friends found rural life oppressive because they were very limited culturally. There is a distinct difference between beliefs and values in urban or rural settings. If you didn't appreciate the people or activities that were typical in your rural community, there weren't a lot of other options. You were socially limited – RL”

“The biggest challenge for me has been the impact on my social life and dealing with the more frequent solitude that comes with living in a rural setting. I have other friends who live in a rural setting as well, but most have long-term partners, some have children, and many are still geographically separated from where I live. I have found it difficult to develop close friendships because of my geographical separation from my peers – RR.”

The perception of the lack of other young people to engage with was often discussed as a strong deterrent for respondents to relocate rurally. It is interesting to recall that the draw to rural communities for many respondents was the feelings of connectedness, sense of community, and strong close-knit social groups yet a significant number of respondents were worried about being able to break the tight knit groups within rural areas to be come a part of the community.

Lack of Employment

“One of the biggest challenges I have found is lack of suitable employment. Many rural areas have only service jobs to offer young people, which does not allow them to afford to build a life or future - these are 'keep you alive' jobs and that's it – RL”

Employment was heavily discussed as a challenge preventing many respondents from relocating rurally. Building on the need to change the perception of rural areas, an interesting theme emerged relating to when respondents were discussing the negative attributes of rural living. Rural Returners and Rural Stayers many times acknowledged the need for economic activity and the increased employment opportunities within rural communities, however, these respondents either found a way to make rural living work such as commuting a longer distance to their employment or attained a position that allowed respondents to hold down viable employment while pursuing their desired lifestyle. Additionally, in many cases it was noted that employment exists rurally but it isn't always well advertised or it is attained through being connected with the close-knit social networks that exist within a community. However, there was a strong perception among a number of Urbanites and a number of Rural Leavers associated with a general lack of opportunities and in many cases related this to the lack of employment. Whether this perspective is reality, it is representative of respondents' perspectives on living in rural communities.

When working to describe the challenges that rural communities face in terms of employment, one respondent stated, *“Its hard because how do you move somewhere if there are no jobs, but how do you create jobs if no one lives there? – U.”* This question was posed when commenting on the need for year round full time employment opportunities in rural areas. Respondents often indicated their desire to relocate or return to rural living yet, were unable to do so due to the lack of employment opportunities in general. However, respondents often discussed employment beyond the general lack of opportunities by also discussing the need for quality employment positions in terms of pay, those that related to ones chosen career path and for permanent, long-term, year round positions. It became evident that factors such as quality employment, employment

for ones spouse, career type, lengthy commuting distances, seasonality of work and opportunities specifically for young people all seemed to be contributing factors related to employment that further prevented young people from relocating to rural communities. In many cases a number of Rural Returners and Rural Stayers, discussed the need for long-term job stability. These respondents often indicated that increasing long-term job stability was a way to increase the attractiveness of living rurally, but wasn't necessarily identified as a feature that deterred respondents entirely from relocating. The perspectives highlighted below, discuss the challenges that a small number of respondents indicated they experienced while trying to find meaningful work within a rural community:

“A lack of work and a lack of peer group. My peers left the rural area because we couldn't find professional work at professional wages in rural towns. Those jobs were being fulfilled by baby-boomers "retiring" to a lower income job in rural communities, forcing young people to leave in order to gain sufficient experience to compete – RL”

Living in a rural community for a year was a wonderful experience, and I would have elected to stay living there had it not been for the poor employment options...It felt like I was waiting for [my parents] generation to retire before I would be able to move from housekeeping for minimum wage to a job in which I might feel challenged, engaged and stimulated - U

Respondents often discussed the fact that their relocation decisions were dependent upon employment opportunities. As highlighted in the factors that influenced migration to rural areas, respondents indicated that employment would act as a catalyst to relocate to a rural community. However, it is important to further tease out the reoccurring theme that there was a strong perception among a small number of respondents who indicated that some career types were a better fit for an urban environments while others are a better fit for rural living. The perception that certain careers fit better in certain environments is important to highlight, as many of the career paths chosen by respondents are those in which are often highly needed in rural areas, such as business, medical services, and education to name a few.

Spousal Influence

Also in terms of factors that influenced relocation, an interesting characteristic that was evident amongst the sample was the dependability on one's spouse. Oftentimes, when respondents were discussing their future migration plans they often indicated that those plans were dependant on their spouse, their employment situation, and/or their preferences as well. The shared decision-making process adds another layer of complexity to young adults' migration behaviour. Employment for one's spouse was commonly discussed by respondents who wanted to relocate to a rural community but were uncertain about doing so. It was indicated by some respondents that relocating rurally is already challenging in terms of employment without the extra attention needed to ensure both that individuals within the relationship can attain a quality employment position.

Affordability of Rural Areas

In addition to employment, the perception of the unaffordability of living in rural communities was also an unattractive feature identified by many respondents. Respondents often discussed that the lack of quality employment or lack of employment for one's spouse contributed to the unaffordability of living rurally. This was especially true for those who were working to pay off debt acquired from post-secondary education. Often times on the theme of affordability, respondents discussed added expenses of living rurally such as long commuting distances to work or services and the need for affordable housing along with affordable things to do within a community. For instance, one respondent explained, "*Better paying jobs - when I moved home I often didn't have a job in my field so I'd have to take any job that was hiring even though those jobs would not come close to paying my student loans, let alone pay rent – RR.*" Different from the rural subgroups, Urbanites rarely discussed the affordability of rural areas.

Lack of Services

The lack of services available within a rural area was also indicated by many respondents as being an unattractive feature of rural living. This was also a feature that was commonly cited by Rural Returners and Stayers as an area in which could help make rural communities more attractive. Respondents discussed the need for increased access to more stores and services in general, things to do within a community such as events for young people, nightlife activities, leisure and recreation opportunities as well as arts and

culture facilities and events. Access to schools, was another common service that was discussed by a small number of respondents. Access to grade schools was important to a number of respondents who indicated their concerns with the low quality and limited access to schools for their children or future children. For instance, one respondent stated,

“Sense of community is dying with the closing of schools. No school means its VERY difficult to attract young people to the area. Many people don't want their kids to have to travel 30min on the bus to get to school. It's also hard to make grocery stores successful in smaller communities due to pricing it can be tiring traveling 30min to the nearest centre with a store – RL”

Also in terms of services, respondents often discussed that the car dependency of rural communities was an unattractive feature of rural living and created the need for public transportation or alternative transportation routes, such as bus systems, bike lanes, walking paths, or multi-use trails.

Supports Wanted: A Young Adult Perspective

It was evident that many of the young adults represented in this study were drawn to living in rural communities. Despite this attraction, many respondents discussed the barriers and deterrents that prevent relocation into a rural community. When discussing the unattractive features of rural living, respondents often discussed or identified certain supports that would help assist young adults to migrate into rural areas. While examining potential supports that could help young adults relocate to rural communities was not an intended direction of this study, the theme of ‘supports wanted’ was so commonly discussed by respondents that it was important to further highlight their perspectives on the topic.

Community Investment in Young People

When discussing the attractiveness of living in rural areas many respondents highlighted the challenges associated with being a young adult in a rural community. Many respondents, especially those in the rural subgroups indicated the need for communities to start investing in their young population in a way where young people feel valued, respected and important. As discussed previously, many of the respondents

indicated how the negative perceptions attached with rural areas influenced them to leave their community and relocate elsewhere. As well, a handful of respondents also discussed how when they tried to relocate back, they were not welcomed into the community due to perceptions other held of them for leaving or attaining certain goals such as one related to education. When examining the discussion that was taking place amongst the sample, the need for communities to invest in their young people became apparent.

When ranking the factors that influenced their decisions to relocate out of their rural community and into an urban centre, 53.8% of Leavers and 57.8% of Returners indicated that the *lack of investment by the rural community in young people* as being an influential factor on their decision to move. This theme was commonly integrated into the comments provided by respondents when discussing their hesitations to relocate to or remain living rurally. A handful of respondents indicated their perceptions that rural residents and communities can be unwelcoming, not accepting towards change or new ways of thinking. The lack of community investment in young people also was a factor that Rural Returners brought up when asked about the attributes of their communities that they would change in order to make their community more attractive to other young adults. Oftentimes respondents across the subgroups discussed the lack of opportunities to get involved in community politics or community leadership and the lack of respect for their voices and opinions. One respondent discussed the challenges of not being respected as a young leader,

“Larger factor I've found is that rural communities do nothing to engage young people toward creating the amenities that they desire. Or they ""consult"" with them but offer little empowerment to address issues. I've personally led projects with other young people where established community leaders laughed in our face because the plan didn't align with what they thought was possible/necessary in the community. They were wrong, and now hundreds of young people continue leading that project and achieving financial sustainability and leadership skills along the way – RL.”

It became evident that a significant portion of the young people represented in this study did not find rural communities lack of empowerment or investment in young people to be an attractive feature of rural living. Oftentimes, respondents discussed the fact that they understood that young people are essential for the future of a rural community, that the lack of opportunities or what could be offered by their community compared to another rural community or an urban centre outweighed the benefits of staying. Additionally, many times respondents discussed the fact that perspectives of the community itself such as being closed off to change, not interested in new projects or ideas, and challenges involved with penetrating the close-knit social circles and networks that exist within rural communities. However, despite this perspective, many of the same respondents recommended solutions for communities to utilize to better engage their younger generations. Below are some of the quotes that represent the perspectives of those who felt there one way is investing in young people when they are young to help increase their attachment to their community as well as establishing the feelings that they are valued amongst the community:

“Having strong community leaders for the young to look up to is very important –RR”

“I think we need to start teaching the youth at a younger age what a rural community really is – U”

“Get them involved early!!!!!! Being attached and valuing all that you were given as a young person maintains the need to give back to your community – RR”

“I think engaging young people - like children - with intergenerational relationships, and teaching them locally relevant skills, trades, and arts, will make them proud of 'home', and give them someplace always to come back to. By having older people work with the young people in their community, they get to see the value and benefit that young people could have as potential employees. Culture is an awfully hard thing to foster

using 'systems'. Culture is a natural thing that is strongly built on relationships. You ensure the relationships are strong when a person is very young, it'll still be strong when they're a young adult – RL”

The quotes provided showcase the fact that although many of the respondents don't feel rural communities are putting their best foot forward in terms of investing in the young people, that there is hope and in the minds of the respondents a very clear direction on how to move forward.

Ideas to Increase Employment

“Unless people my age are offered unique and life altering opportunities in a rural setting as I was, I see very little reason to move to rural Alberta. Unfortunately, I see educated citizens even less interested in rural Alberta, as opportunities to use their education (outside the trades) are scarce. Either you can make your own job (entrepreneur), or search elsewhere – RR.”

Throughout the data, it was clear that the lack of employment opportunities available within rural areas was a prevalent challenge for many of the respondents within this study. However, there were also a lot of respondents who were able to attain employment either within their rural community or in a location that was commuting distance from their community of residence. Mirrored in the quote above, is the theme that education can create a challenge when relocating to a community as many respondents indicated the challenges of relocating, as they could not find an employment position that related to their career path or utilized their education and the perception held by some residents of those who return with a degree can be perceived as being better than the community. Below are some of respondents' ideas of how to increase employment in rural areas:

“Would love to see more large corporations and businesses extend flexible work arrangements to rural communities - satellite offices, work from home arrangements, modified work weeks – RL”

“Chambers of Commerce and towns/cities need to do a better job of recruiting companies from larger urban centres. Many companies could set up shop in smaller communities for a lot less money than they pay to operate in a city setting – RL”

“Some sort of source of revenue so that communities could keep up with the youth and young adults of the community, be able to afford to set up certain organizations/businesses/recreational facilities that would make young people come back and help to make it a thriving community – RL”

Access to Telecommunications

Many times respondents cited both their desire and need to have access to telecommunications. Additionally, many respondents cited the access to telecommunications as being an attractive feature of a community as it enabled connective to friends and family located elsewhere and as it could increase employment opportunities. The respondents discussing the importance of telecommunications often mentioned the importance of having access to high speed Internet and cellphone services because they work from home. Some respondents were able to attain their desired lifestyle by living in a rural community and were able to maintain viable employment by working online. A small number of respondents from various subgroups indicated the need for rural communities to have quality access to telecommunications would help to increase the number of employment opportunities within a community. The quotes below highlights this perspective:

“Rural areas tend to have great social connectivity but sometimes lack the telecommunications technology to allow for connectivity beyond their borders. As more and more people are engaging in the knowledge-based economy including information and technology, many can work anywhere in the world so long as they have a reliable high-speed Internet connection. If rural areas want to attract a young and diverse population, telecommunications need to be a priority along with creating

and fostering networks for young (and all) entrepreneurs and small business owners to share ideas and collaborate- RL”

“I am confident that this will improve as young people in rural areas dive in deeper into the internet age. There is no reason to feel disconnected from the world/society when you know how to use these simple technologies. If more (legitimate) work-from-home employment opportunities were created for young people I feel that a few of the issues here would be solved – U”

“Improved access to Internet as well as good jobs being created on the Internet – RL”

Many respondents discussed the importance and need for sustainable employment in rural areas. Of the respondents who were discussing the importance of access to telecommunications mentioned that is needed in rural areas. This thought was similar to the other respondents discussing the benefits of telecommunications and the opportunities they could provide a rural community in terms of employment opportunities.

Social Supports

Often when discussing the challenges of relocating into a community, respondents often discussed the need for supports to help them reconnect with the residents who remained within a community or support that could help newcomers integrate into the community. It was frequent for Urbanites, Rural Leavers and Rural Returners to discuss the need for social supports and opportunities to meet other young people within a community. Many times respondents indicated that this was because as a new resident it was challenging to know what is going on when and how to meet others residing in the community. This was often the case for respondents who were returning to the communities in which they grew up. Whether respondents lost connection with their social networks or whether their childhood friends no longer resided in the community, relocating back to ones home community was often associated with concerns about meeting other young people. Rural Stayers were a bit different in the sense that while Stayers acknowledged the challenges for newcomers to integrate into a rural community,

especially those with close-knit cultures and tight social circles, Stayers were the only subsample group not to suggest the need for social supports. Below are a few quotes that expose the common themes and challenges being discussed by the respondents commenting on the challenges of becoming socially connected within a rural community:

“Young people need a social life. Often in small communities where I have lived there are plenty of opportunities to socialize, but they are not well-advertised. Having one primary and well-advertised source where anyone can post information on events, garage sales, opportunities, etc. would be of huge benefit in helping young people get and feel connected. Connected people are much less likely to leave -U”

“I think that it is extremely important to have opportunities for newcomers to a rural area so that she/he can participate in a non-daunting way (and non-committal) to ease her way into the community. Joining town council might not be the thing for everyone – RL”

“For communities that are wanting to attract urbanites, it would be great if there were a "transition" association or weekly gatherings for newcomers. It's important to educate residents of rural communities about how to welcome new residents to the community and to start a conversation about some of the reservations that people might have about opening their communities to new people. Rural living's greatest attraction to me is the potential for a tight-knit community and supportive neighbors. Unfortunately, the opposite sometimes happens and for that reason, I would only move to a community where I knew some of the residents quite well. Being a stranger in a small rural community is not appealing at all. So having some support mechanisms in place for us urbanites would be one way of dealing with this--and that kind of support group would have to have a great online presence because I'd want to know about it beforehand! – U”

The perception of the lack of social opportunities within rural communities and the lack of other young people was a strong deterrent for many respondents. As highlighted in the quotes above, there is a need for communities to establish supports for new and returning residents to integrate into the community and to have opportunities to establish social networks.

Summary- Aggregate Findings

As seen throughout the findings of this study, a number of differences existed between the subgroups. Overall, a diversity of perspectives were identified and examined. Although there was a wealth of perspectives provided by respondents, a number of both similarities and differences between the subgroups were identified. As these differences provided valuable insight into furthering the understanding of young adults' migration motivations and preferences it was important to further examine the four subgroups individually. The following four sections individually examine each of the subgroups and their specific traits and characteristics that were identified to better tease out the differences that exist between the respondents represented in this study.

Introduction to the Four Subgroups

Rural Returners

Introduction

Overall Rural Returners were a unique subgroup and differed from the other rural subgroups in a number of ways. It became evident that Rural Returners were drawn to living rurally for lifestyle related reasons and often discussed their strong attachment to rural living, their friends and family, as well as to specific communities, such as where they grew up. While Rural Returners did share a number of characteristics with the other subgroups, Returners were unique in many ways.

Table 2. Summary Table of Rural Returners Overview

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender N=56		
Male	12	21.4%
Female	44	78.6%
Age N=77		
20-23 years old	22	28.6%
24-26 years old	30	39.0%
27-29 years old	25	32.5%
Mobility N=63		
0 moves	0	0.0%
1-2 Moves	27	42.9%
3-4 Moves	24	38.1%
5-6 Moves	6	9.5%
7-8 Moves	3	4.8%
9 or More Moves	3	4.8%
Current Education Level N=56		
Some high school	0	0%
High School Diploma	1	1.8%
Some College	0	0.0%
Some University	5	8.9%
Post-secondary certificate/diploma	14	25.0%
Bachelors degree	31	55.4%
Master's degree	5	8.9%
Doctorate, law or medical degree	0	0.0%

Total Valid Responses for Rural Returners: N=77

Returners' Unique Characteristics.

The Returner subgroup was the third largest with N=91 respondents. The age distribution of the subgroup was fairly even. As highlighted by *Table 2*, Returners were mostly represented by respondents who were 24-26 years old (39.0%), whereas 32.5% of respondents were in the 27-29 age group. Although the smallest portion of respondents 20-23 years old, this group was still represented by 28.6% of respondents, suggesting that Rural Returners were not necessarily an older group of young adults. Similar to the other subsample groups, Returners were heavily represented by female respondents (78.6%).

To understand Returners as a subsample group, it was important to examine their mobility. Understanding the number of times they had moved provided valuable insight into the fact that Returners' migration behaviour was much more complex than simply growing up rurally, moving away and then returning. Based on the definition of the subgroup, it wasn't surprising to see that the majority of Returners had moved between 1-4 times (81.0%). The remaining portion of Returners indicated that they move 5 or more times (19.1%). A unique characteristic of Returners was that just because respondents returned to rural living, didn't necessarily indicate that they had plans to stay on a long-term basis. Although many respondents within this subgroup indicated that they desired to remain rurally and to stay within their current communities, respondents commonly discussed the need to be open to opportunities in case employment or other factors changed. It seemed as though respondents understood that things such as employment opportunities change within a rural area and while they had hopes to remain they understood and were okay with the fact that things change. While this perspective is challenging to describe, the quotes below highlight this perspective:

"I am tired of moving. I hope to stay in my current location for a good length of time. That being said, you never know where life is going to take you, so that could change – RR."

"We plan on staying where we are currently living, if ever moving, we will still look for a rural community. Always going with the flow because you never know...! – RR."

“I would like to stay living on the Sunshine Coast for now. Life may take me elsewhere, particularly if work opportunities for myself and my partner change – RR”

Rural Returners also differed from the other subgroups as they held different perspectives on employment. Returner held similar views to Stayers where respondents were more attracted to the lifestyle in which a community promotes rather than being driven by employment opportunities such as the respondents in the Leaver and Urbanite subgroups. In terms of education, Returners most commonly held a Bachelors degree (55.4%), a Masters degree (8.9%) or a Diploma or Certificate (33.9%). Although the majority of Returners were well educated, respondents within this subgroup were less focused on attain employment that related to their specific careers and less frequently indicated that they were unable to remain rurally due to the lack of employment positions utilizing their education. In terms of career paths, Returners most commonly indicated that they were employed in agriculture (22.8%), the non-profit sector (14.0%), or in business, management, or advertising (10.5%). Employment in the natural resource industries (7.0%) or in banking, accounting or finance (7.0%) were also common career paths pursued by Returners. Both medical services (5.3%) and education (5.3%) were also popular career paths held by Returners. Out of all the subsample groups, Rural Returners had the most respondents select ‘other’ career paths which included being a stay at home mom, racehorse jockey, being employed in sciences or water treatment. Returners were more willing than Leavers and Urbanites to ‘sacrifice’ employment opportunities for attaining their desired lifestyle. While many Leavers and Urbanites indicated that this compromise was a sacrifice, many Returners did not hold the same perception. Returners were most similar to the Stayer subgroup as they both had a strong desire to pursue rural living. Similar to Stayers, Returners were able to make rural living work in some way, whether it was by commuting to work, working over the internet, working at various jobs within their community or at a position that had lower pay.

It became evident that Rural Returners were attracted to rural living and the majority planned to continue living rurally for the long-term. In terms of the attractive features of rural living, it was most common for Returners to comment on the culture and

lifestyle promoted by living rurally. Respondents discussed the attraction of living in the communities in which they grew up or close to or within the same community as their family and/or friends. Similarly, respondents were also attracted to rural living because of reasons relating to that rural living offered a sense of community, community support, like-minded people, and a high quality of life. Also relating to lifestyle, Returners often described their attraction to rural in terms of agriculture and farming opportunities. Access to owning land, having the opportunity to farm or taking over ones family farm were commonly indicated as motivations for Returners to relocate. Below are various quotes highlighting respondents' comments explaining their perspective of rural living:

“Yes I realize I'm not making the big bucks, but my health, my happiness and my life are so much better off. Even my values are different then my friends. They are all concerned about buying a bigger truck, or a bigger house - I'm more concerned about the food on the table that I got from the local farmer – RR”

“I would say that you have the mentality to enjoy small town living. You can't just run to the store, you can't just head to mall or out for supper. Life is slower, that is for sure. But the sense of community is there and it is a nice feeling! I would not want to live anywhere else – RR”

“Personally I am interested in quality of life, enjoyment of life/family/friends and not solely building wealth/capital. Rural community offers the myriad of opportunities, as well as the quality we are seeking, and an ability to contribute to community development – RR”

When discussing migration, both Returners and Leavers had unique perspectives on the importance of leaving ones rural community. While many communities work hard retain their young people, especially after they graduate from high school, both Returners and Leavers were frequent to comment on the value of leaving one's community. Returners commented frequently on the fact that leaving their rural community was important as it enhanced their view of rural living and of their community. Below are a few quote highlighting some of these perspectives on leaving:

“I was strongly encouraged to take advantage of more employment or educational opportunities in urban centre, but personally [leaving] enhance rural community, it's worth the pay cut, the stress, the pavement and more – RR”

“Since leaving and returning I have a higher appreciation for the community than those who have stayed all along. My opinion is that it is better to leave and return than to stay forever - RR”

Many Returners indicate that leaving was particularly valuable because in many cases it helped respondents to realize their love for rural living and made them appreciate their communities and childhood more. Leaving also helped many Returners appreciate the rural lifestyle more and to take it for what it is rather than focus on the negatives or what is missing. The quotes below represent this perspective:

“[Leaving] made me realize I really wanted to live within a rural community – RR.”

“I did want to leave to see what else was out there. I'm glad I've learned skills outside of my community because I believe I can help bring vibrancy and new ideas back – RR.”

Returners like Stayers, often discussed the benefits of residing in a rural community rather than the negative aspects of rural living; however, Returners were more vocal about the various elements that could change to help increase the attractiveness of rural areas than Stayers.

Another unique characteristic of Returners related to their motivation to return to living in a rural community. Returners were the most vocal out of the subgroups about relocating back to a rural community for the purposes of starting a family. In addition to raising a family, respondents also indicated that they were returning to work or take over their family farm, move closer to their family and friends, to their home community, or simply because they did not want to live in a city. An interesting characteristic of

Returners that didn't emerge in the other subsample groups was the fact that some respondents who identified as Returners hadn't yet relocated back to living a rural community at the time of participating in this study. Instead, they were finishing up a task or commitment that placed them in an urban area. These respondents felt so strongly about returning that they identified as a Rural Returner rather than a Rural Leaver. These respondents identified as Returners as they had full intentions on relocating back to a rural area, for example when discussing future migration intentions, one respondent stated,

"I can't wait to leave this big city - if weren't for educational purposes we would not be here. I can't wait to leave this city and move to a rural community. Rural communities have a stronger sense of quality of life. We are planning on moving to rural BC somewhere in the Okanagan. Of course work and job opportunities will dictate which community specifically, but we know we can never live in a dirty, traffic filled, stinky city again – RR."

Clearly from the emotion embedded in this quote the migration intentions of this respondent were clear. This tone was common among other Returners who hadn't actually returned but had full intention to, as soon as they were finished whatever it was they were doing.

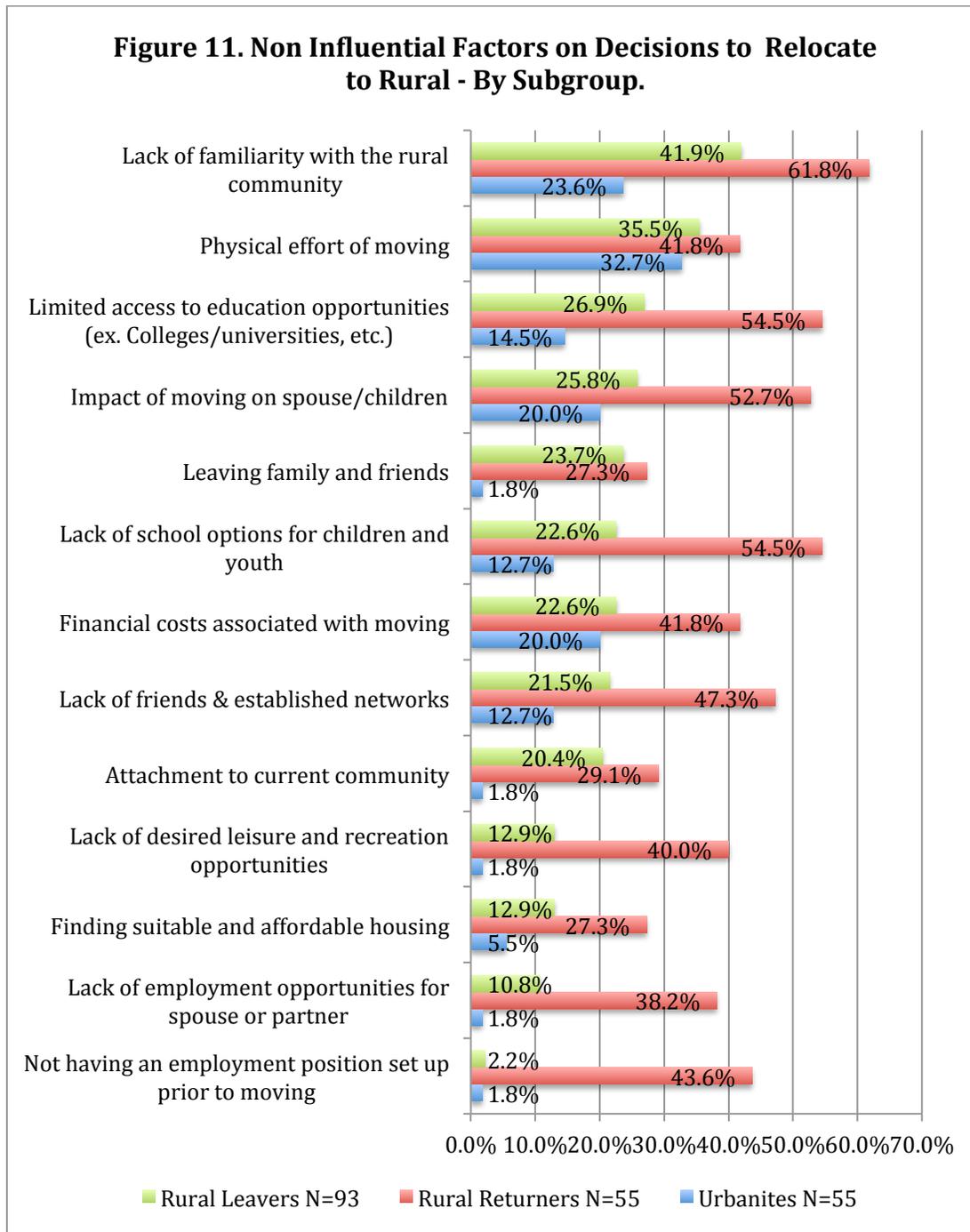
Barriers & Unattractive Features of Rural.

Also in terms of migration characteristics, Rural Returners were unique in the way in which respondents indicated the various factors that made it difficult to relocate to a rural community. In the main section of this chapter the various factors that made it difficult for respondents to relocate into a rural community were examined. However, it is important to highlight the various characteristics that made Returners unique from the other two subgroups – Leavers and Urbanites – that were also examined. Unlike respondents in the Leaver and Urbanite subgroups where the majority of factors listed were identified as major factors preventing location, Returners frequently ranked the factors as not being a barrier to relocate at all. For Returners, it was easier to analyze the data based on what didn't affect their migration than what prevented it. For instance, as

highlighted in *Figure 11*, close to or over half of all Returners indicated that certain factors did not make relocating difficult. As seen, most Returners indicated that the *lack of familiarity with the rural community* (61.8%) potentially hunching at the fact that either Returners knew where they were relocating to or were open to different communities. *Leaving family and friends* (27.3%) may have been difficult for more Returners as they may have started to build a community and social networks with people in their new community even though Returners were still drawn to living rurally. *Finding suitable and affordable housing* (27.3%) was one of the factors that provided to be the largest constraint for Returners to relocate rurally. It is interesting to recall that when Returners relocated to an urban centre, housing in rural areas was not a highly influential factor on their decisions to leave rural living, however, as seen in *Figure 11*, it became a constraint making it difficult for Returners to relocate back into a rural community. This is important to note as it suggests that just because a factor isn't influential on one's decision at a specific point in time it doesn't mean it won't affect the individual's migration choices later on.

Overall, especially as seen in *Figure 11*, it became evident that Returners' connection to rural living was strong, and factors such as family, friends, attachment to rural life, as well as lifestyle and employment opportunities were often influential on respondents' relocation decisions. Although not all Returners were planning to stay in their current communities, the majority planned to continue living rurally for the long-term. Interestingly however, it became evident not all Returners were necessarily focused on living in a specific community for long-term residence. While settling down (7.1%) or finding a community to live in on a long-term basis (10.7%) was the priority of some, other Returners had different current focuses such as those relating to establishing their careers or pursuing their post-secondary goals. Returners had the highest number of respondents indicated that they were focused on settling or finding a community to establish long-term residence. Similarly, Returners also had the most respondents indicate their desire to *maintain their current lifestyle* (23.2%) and focused on *travelling and exploring* (8.9%). Examining Returners' current focuses at the time of completing this study helped to understand the factors that motivate Returners to relocate. Although Returners had left their rural community and returned, it appears that not many

respondents were settled, rather they were in the process of settling in a community or they were focused on employment or education rather than focused on identifying their long-term residence.



Returners also had some unique perspectives that differed from the other subgroups in terms of identifying the unattractive features of rural living. Other than when asked specifically about the features that could be changed in order to improve the

attractiveness of their communities, it was less common for Returners to discuss the negative aspects of rural living, compared to Rural Leavers or Urbanites. The negative attributes discussed by Returners often related to the lack of employment, services, and social opportunities, as well as the characteristics of a community such as being unwelcoming to newcomers. Respondents often indicated the need for more things to do within their community, such as access to recreation classes, cultural activities, nightlife related activities, community events, farmers markets, events for families and those targeted specifically towards young people. Returners commonly discussed the need for social supports as in many cases their friends were at different stages of their life with kids or married and they were not, or there was not enough young people within the community to socialize with.

In addition to social supports, a handful of Returners discussed that the physical infrastructure of a community's character as a negative element of rural living; these respondents often discussed how their community needed to be updated. A number of respondents indicated that their community was in need of being cleaned up, as it was run down, had falling apart infrastructure or had housing and rental options that were in poor conditions. On the opposite spectrum, some respondents also discussed their desire for rural their rural community to stay rural and many Returners indicated that they didn't want their community to change at all. These respondents often discussed how they didn't want to see their town expand in terms of population density and didn't want their community to turn into a community that was modeled after urban inspired influences. These respondents often indicated that they found true rural characteristics to be appealing such as dirt roads, low population densities and access to space.

Summary.

Overall, it was clear that Rural Returners had a strong connection and attachment to rural living. It was also very evident that the intangible cultural amenities such as family and friends, strong social connections, community character and appearance were all features in which Returners found to be highly attractive. Although Returners were able to return to rural areas and 85.3% of Returners indicated their desire to live in a rural community in the future, it is important to acknowledge that less than half (40.7%) of Returners indicated that they focused on settling down, identifying a community to

establish long term residents or maintain their current lifestyle. This indicating as just because Returners have returned doesn't equate to the fact that they will stay in one particular rural community or in rural environment in general as many Returners, open to opportunities, especially those based rurally.

Rural Stayers

Introduction

Out of the subgroups, Rural Stayers had the strongest connection and attachment to rural living. Stayers' love for the rural lifestyle was deeply intertwined in Stayers' comments about rural living it was apparent that they had a strong sense of identity attached to rural living. Although this sense of identity existed in the other subgroups as well, it was most present amongst Rural Stayers. Rural Stayers did have unique characteristics specific to their subgroup. It was common however, for Stayers to have similar characteristics to the other subgroups but often these traits were amplified by the Stayer subgroup, especially when it came to their connection or attachment to rural living. This section focuses on the unique characteristics of Rural Stayers that were not discussed in the main section of this chapter.

Table 3. Summary Table of Rural Stayers Overview

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender N=38		
Male	12	31.6%
Female	26	68.4%
Age N=56		
20-23 years old	32	57.1%
24-26 years old	15	26.8%
27-29 years old	9	16.1%
Mobility N=43		
0 moves	15	34.9%
1-2 Moves	12	27.9%
3-4 Moves	10	23.3%
5-6 Moves	5	11.6%
7-8 Moves	1	2.3%
9 or More Moves	0	0.0%
Current Education Level N=38		
Some high school	0	0%
High School Diploma	5	13.2%
Some College	5	13.2%

Some University	7	18.4%
Post-secondary certificate/diploma	14	36.8%
Bachelors degree	6	15.8%
Master's degree	1	2.6%
Doctorate, law or medical degree	0	0.0%

Total Valid Responses for Rural Stayers: N=56

Stayers' Unique Characteristics

Rural Stayers were the smallest of the subgroups, equating to 16.4% of the total sample (N=56). Stayers were also highly representative of a younger age group. As seen in *Table 3*, over half of respondents (57.1%) in the Stayers subgroup were between the ages of 20-23 while 26.8% were between the ages of 24-26. The smallest age group of respondents (16.1%), in the Stayer subgroup was the 27-29 age category. Similar to the other subsample groups, Stayers had a higher representation of female respondents (68.4%) than male respondents (31.6%).

In terms of mobility, Rural Stayers were the least mobile of the subsample groups. With a large number of young respondents, it wasn't surprising to see that many of Stayers had not yet moved (34.9%). However, a large portion of Stayers had moved between 1-4 times (51.2%). Next to Urbanites, Stayers had the largest number of respondents indicate that they had moved more than 5 times (13.9%). It was interesting to note as it indicated that Stayers that didn't necessarily stay in one particular community. This mobility characteristic helped to validate Stayers' strong connection and attachment to rural living. When examining Stayers' past and future mobility decisions and intentions it became evident that there were a cluster of Stayers that had unique migration behaviour that didn't appear amongst respondents in the other subgroups. These respondents, could be classified into two groups, one being respondents who were inclined to remain living in the community in which they grew up and two, the respondents who indicated that they would only live in a rural location but were open to relocating to other rural communities based on opportunities that arose. Many times when Stayers indicated their desired to living in the community in which they grew up, they discussed how they planned to take over their family farm. Of the respondents who had a strong desire to stay within their community, indicated that they would take any job or a series of jobs within their community in order to stay. This again highlights the strong

sense of attachment and connection Stayers had towards their communities and towards rural living in general. Below are a few quotes highlighting the perspectives held by these types of Stayers:

“I have plans to take over the family farm, which will involve returning to Sibbald, AB. However until then I will be focusing on my career, finishing my degree, and my relationship with my significant other, in which I will remain in the Hanna, AB area until I am ready to return to the farm – RS”

“I would like to continue to live rurally in Nova Scotia. I will have to go wherever there is work, but if I can help it, I'd like to stay rural – RS”

“Plan to stay on our farm or at the least always live in a rural area – RS”

“Pretty much just want to stay within a rural community. Exact locations do not matter too much though, if possible, staying near family would be nice – RS”

While the quotes above depict a strong view of Stayers' perspectives on rural living, further insight of Stayers' motives to remain living rurally was gained when their current focuses at the time of completing this study were examined. When doing so, it became evident that respondents within the subgroup were focused on different activities. In comparison to the other subgroups, Rural Stayers had the most respondents indicated that they were focused on finding a partner or significant other (13.2%) and settling down and identifying a suitable community to live (10.5%). The latter of the two highlights that just because Stayers reside rurally doesn't mean they will stay in their current community for a long-term basis. Stayers had the second largest number of respondents, second to Returners in both cases that indicated their desire to maintain their current lifestyle (13.2%) and identify a community for long-term residence (7.9%).

Many Stayers, similar to Rural Returners, were also employed in agriculture (23.7%). As well, a number of Stayers were also employed in banking, accounting, or finance (15.8%) and medical services (10.5%). Career paths in the non-profit, business

management, traditional trades and animal health sectors were also common among Stayers. Employment in the service sector such as in retail, tourism, and recreation as well as government service was uncommon amongst Stayers, as was being employed in the natural resource industries. Similar to the other subgroups, Stayers also discussed how their career choices could depict one's ability to find viable employment with a rural community. Although the majority of Stayers planned to live rurally well into the future, there were a small number of respondents (4.7%) that indicated their desire or need to relocate to an urban centre for education or employment reasons. The quotes below highlight the struggle between Stayers' desire to remain living rurally but the need of potentially relocating to an urban centre:

"I would love to live in Nelson BC, where I grew up, and have kids there. I plan on furthering my education and this may require me to move to an urban setting - but I know in my heart I would not remain there for long! – RS"

"No idea, would like to stay rural but there are few jobs in my field and commuting is difficult and tiring – RS"

"I certainly love rural living, however, with the career that I am in, I may have to consider moving urban in the future – RS"

As highlighted in the quotes above, the complexity involved with Stayers strong connection and attachment to rural living and their need to pursue education and find viable employment was troubling. In terms of education, Stayers had the smallest number of respondents that held a Bachelor's degree (15.8%) and the highest number of respondents that did not attend post-secondary school (13.2%). Tied with Urbanites, Stayers had the largest number of respondents complete a certificate or diploma (36.8%) program. Stayers discussed the need for employment opportunities within rural communities but didn't discuss employment in the same way as the other subgroups. While a number of Stayers indicated the need for employment positions, few indicated the need for employment positions that utilized their education, which was common among Leavers and Urbanites.

Perspectives on Attractiveness of Rural Living

Amongst the subsample groups Rural Stayers had the most uplifting view of living in rural areas. This wasn't surprising as out of all the subgroups, Rural Stayers had the highest number of respondents (95.4%) indicated their desire to live rurally well into the future. It was common for the respondents in the Rural Stayer subgroup to comment on the benefits of living in rural communities as well as the attractive features of rural culture. For instance, respondents often discussed the positive elements of their community such as being close to family and friends, having access to employment opportunities, and being connected to rural living. As well, in terms of Stayers perspectives towards rural living, it became evident that Stayers often saw the potential in rural areas and perceived rural to be a place to try new things, engage in new experiences, to be challenged by the lifestyle and to enjoy the natural beauty in which rural locations offer. A small number of Stayers mentioned the great opportunities rural communities can offer if one works for them and know how to attain those opportunities.

Similar to Rural Returners, Stayers as previously mentioned, often saw the potential in the rural lifestyle and were keen to discuss the positive aspects of rural living. Unlike Rural Returners however, Stayers were less likely to discuss specific challenges that exist. Although it was less common for Stayers to discuss, it was evident Stayers had a clear understanding about the challenges in which rural living presents. For instance, regularly Stayers commented on how living rurally is much more work than living in an urban centre. It was interesting to discover that Stayers seemed to view the challenges associated with rural living in a different light than respondents in the other subsample groups. Stayers seemed to view these challenges as a normal part of rural life and enduring those challenges on a daily basis seemed to embed as sense of pride and contribute to their rural identity. When discussing the challenges of living rurally, Stayers rarely commented on the various attributes as being negative features of rural living, rather respondents brought them up in a context where they were suggesting what others may find unattractive about rural living. The quotes below highlight this perspective:

"It may be a harder life, but that's why stronger people live out here – RS."

"Life is hard but rewarding – RS"

“It is an amazing experience, but A LOT more work than urban areas – RS.”

This difference in perspective as seen in the quotes above, also appeared in the way they looked at specific features of rural living. For example, rather than stating that lack of privacy in rural communities is as a negative attribute, as the other subsample groups did, Stayers often discussed the attractiveness of the close-knit everyone knows you type of culture. No respondent within the Stayers subsample group indicated that lack of privacy was a negative feature of rural living. One respondent stated, *“It's a close knit kinda group. If you cant handle everyone knowing you or knowing of you then it's not for you – RS.”* This quote represents the common tone that a significant number of respondents used to identify the attributes that others may find to be unattractive in terms of living rurally, but didn't necessarily indicated that they thought the attribute was a negative feature of rural living.

Another characteristic that made Stayers unique was the importance they placed on being connected to ones community. Although this was important to respondents in the other subgroups, it was particularly highlighted when Stayers were asked to provide advice for other young people thinking about living rurally. In their responses, Stayers emphasized the importance of new residents becoming apart of the community by often suggesting that new residents should get to know their neighbours, attend as many community events as possible, and to network with other people in the community. Stayers often noted that initially it can be challenging to make connections with rural residents, however Stayers were the only subgroup that did not indicate the need for social supports for newcomers.

Although agricultural settings are a type of natural amenity, many Stayers indicated that both the appearance of agricultural settings and the access to farming were attractive attributes of rural living. Many Stayers indicated that farming was a large part of why they were motivated to live rurally. Stayers' strong attraction to farming was another characteristics that made the subsample group unique.

Unattractive Features

Often when discussing affordability, respondents expressed the need for access to financial supports such as those to help secure farmland or farming acreages or to help young people move out on their own in a rural area. Respondents also mentioned the general need for a lower cost of living. Commuting distance and gas prices were also brought up by a few respondents who were commenting on the challenges of high gas prices and having to commute long-distances for employment purposes as quality positions were not available closer to where they lived.

Community Revitalization Needed

The most common negative attribute Stayers discussed about their communities related to the need to revitalize their towns. Stayers regularly discussed the need for their communities to deal with vandalism, the updating of old or falling apart vacant buildings, as well as the need for a general clean up and updating of their communities. Community appearance and character were indicated by Stayers to be important community attributes. When these were not in place, Stayers indicated that they were unattractive features of their communities that could be changed increase their overall attractiveness. Stayers had the highest number of respondents to indicate that their communities had no unattractive features, nothing needed to be changed in order to increase their attractiveness and that nothing needed to be in place help them to remain living rurally.

Summary

Overall, Rural Stayers were strongly connected and attached to rural living. The strength of this attachment and connection made Stayers unique from the other subgroups, as they were the most likely discuss the attractive features of rural living rather than the unattractive features. Stayers were also unique from the other subgroups in the sense that they had always lived rurally but similar respondents in the Returner subgroup, many Stayers indicated that they were mobile and didn't necessarily plan to stay living in one rural community.

Rural Leavers

Introduction

Rural Leavers were a complex subsample group. Unlike the other rural subgroups, many Leavers were in the middle of establishing their migration intentions and carrying out their migration decisions. This created a dominant theme of uncertainty and hesitation

towards the possibility of returning to living in a rural location. Due to this uncertainty and the diversity of perspectives within the Leavers subgroup, overall Leavers had fewer dominant characteristics than Returners, Stayers, and even Urbanites, as the diversity of Leavers' perspectives were immense. However, with that being said there were prevailing characteristics that made Leavers unique. This section focuses on Rural Leavers unique characteristics that were not discussed in the main section of this chapter.

Table 4. Summary Table of Rural Leavers Overview

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender N=92		
Male	21	22.8%
Female	70	76.1%
Age N=128		
20-23 years old	55	43.0%
24-26 years old	41	32.0%
27-29 years old	32	25.0%
Mobility N=110		
0 moves	1	0.9%
1-2 Moves	61	55.5%
3-4 Moves	37	33.6%
5-6 Moves	7	6.4%
7-8 Moves	2	1.8%
9 or More Moves	2	1.8%
Current Education Level N=92		
Some high school	0	0%
High School Diploma	2	2.2%
Some College	2	2.2%
Some University	23	25.0%
Post-secondary certificate/diploma	14	15.2%
Bachelors degree	40	43.5%
Master's degree	10	10.9%
Doctorate, law or medical degree	1	1.1%

Total Valid Responses for Rural Leavers: N=128

Leavers' Unique Characteristics

Rural Leavers, defined as: “young adults who were raised rural but left to live in an urban centre for reasons such as those related to school or employment” was the largest of the four subsample groups (N=128). As displayed in *Table 4*, despite the large number of respondents represented, similar to the other subsample groups, Leavers were

represented by more female respondents (76.1%) than male (22.8%). Also highlighted in *Table 4* 43.0% of Leavers were between the ages 20-23, 32.0% of respondents were 24-26 years old, while the smallest number of Leavers (25.0%) were between the ages 27-29.

Respondents within the Leavers subgroups pursued a variety of career paths. In comparison to the other subgroups, Leavers had the largest number of respondents indicated their employment was in the arts and entertainment industry (13.0%), medical services (ex. Nurse, Doctor, etc.), and not-for-profit, volunteer, or social services sectors (9.8%). As well, Leavers had the highest percentage of respondents indicate that they were currently a student (15.2%). Education (7.6%) and business, management, and advertising (7.6%) were the career focuses of a smaller portion of Leavers. Out of the rural subgroups, Leavers had the fewest respondents employed in the agricultural industry (4.3%). Leavers also differed from the other subgroups by their level of education achieved. Leavers had the highest number of respondents indicated that they attained a Bachelors Degree (43.5%) and had the most respondents (25.0%) indicate that they had some university or Leavers a Master's degree (10.9%).

Similar to Urbanites, one of the unique characteristics of Leavers was the subgroups focus on employment and education. Leavers (38.5%) had more respondents than Urbanites (32.7%) indicated that they were currently focused on pursuing their education goals, while Urbanites (36.4%) had more respondents than Leavers (29.7%) state that their focus was on establishing their careers. As the Leaver subgroup had a higher number of respondents in the youngest age group 20-23, it wasn't surprising to see that more Leavers than Urbanites were focused on pursuing post-secondary education. Interestingly, the majority of Leavers had moved between 1-2 times (55.5%), which may relate to Leavers moving away for education purposes, as this was the highest percentage of respondents out of the subgroups. Also in comparison, Leavers had the second largest group of respondents indicated they moved 3-4 times (33.6) behind Returners, while Rural Leaves had the smallest percentage of respondents move 5 or more times.

On the note of mobility, similar to Rural Returners, Rural Leavers perceived that it was important to move away from one's community, even if for only a short period of

time. Only a few Leavers indicated that leaving contributed to their perspectives on how much more they value rural living, whereas this was a more dominant theme among Returners. The quote below represent the perspective held by a few Leavers:

“Young people usually want to experience urbanized life with the action and entertainments, and then as they grow older they see the positives of rural life and then want to return to it –RL.”

“I loved my rural community growing up, I appreciate it even more now that I live in a city. I never felt that we went without the opportunities or services that we really wanted. That said, city life isn't as bad as I thought it would be. The two biggest things in the place I want to live is 1 finding a job and 2 access to nature based recreation – RL.”

Unlike Returners, when discussing the importance of leaving, Rural Leavers more commonly discussed how they perceived rural areas as being a place to return to later in life, especially when one is ready to settle down. A significant number of respondents discussed the draw to an urban centre when they were young and the attraction to rural communities once they had a spouse and were ready to start raising a family. The following quotes highlight the perspectives held by a number of Leavers:

“I loved my community growing up, and I would want the social perspective that living in a small town can give, for my children as well. However, currently, as a single person, the lack of social networks and lack of employment in small towns are factors that I would need to consider seriously... – RL.”

“As long as I am single and do not plan to have children I want to keep living in the city but when I plan to settle down with my family I definitely will move to a more rural area again – RL”

“I feel like there are more opportunities in larger communities for work and meeting other young people, so for those reasons I would probably gravitate to

larger communities in the short—term...in the long-term, however, I would love to live in a rural community or in the country. I would want to ensure that I had a stable and fulfilling job in a rural community before I moved there, as well as the potential to connect with other people my age in that community – RL”

“I hope to stay in a small community with easy access to an urban center. I would much rather my kids (when I have them) grow up in a small town (for safety, community, values, etc) but as a young adult on my own I prefer the convenience of living in the city – RL”

It became evident that the majority of Rural Leavers were not focused on settling down in a community or relocating for the purpose of establishing long-term residence. Rather, the majority of Leavers were focused on completing their education goals and establishing their careers. Rural Leavers had the most respondents out of all of the subgroups to indicate that they were currently focused on completing their educational goals (38.5%) and had the second highest number of respondents indicated that they were working on their careers (29.7%). Interestingly, Rural Leavers had the smallest number of respondents indicated that they wanted to *maintain their current lifestyle* (2.2%) or to *settle down and identifying a community* (2.2%). A small number of Leavers were focused on *travelling & exploring* (5.5%) or working to identify a community to establish long-term residence (7.7%). Examining Leavers current focuses helped to identify that the majority of subgroup wasn't focused on relocating to a community for long-term residents, rather they had other focuses related to completing or pursuing various opportunities. This hints at the fact that Leavers, similar to the other subgroups would be motivated to relocate based on the opportunities available within the particular community rather than by relocating for the purposes of establishing long-term residence.

Building on this, when asked about their motivations to relocate rurally, a large portion of Leavers either directly or indirectly discussed the need for opportunities to present themselves in order to relocate. Needing an opportunity to relocate wasn't necessarily a surprising theme as over 68.4% of Leavers indicated that they planned to live rurally in the future. While a small number of respondents within this 68.4% indicated

that they would be returning as soon as possible to a specific community, a great majority of respondents indicated their draw to live rurally but were open to various opportunities that arose. While being motivated to relocate based on opportunities was a shared trait by all the subgroups, Leavers were definitely the most vocal about needing an employment opportunity in order to relocate rurally. This differed from Returners, who were more open to take opportunities as they came, yet they were already living in a rural location, whereas many Leavers indicated that they would need an opportunity to make their relocation to a rural community a viable option. The quotes below highlight Leavers' motivations to relocate based on opportunities, especially those that related to employment:

“I will be in an urban area until my second round of schooling (law school) begins 1-2 years from now. That puts me at staying in an urban area until 2018 at least. After that, if an opportunity presented itself in a rural area, I would seriously consider it – RL”

“I am planning to move to New Market permanently as there are more teaching employment opportunities. I would move back to a rural community if I received a teaching contract in one – RL”

“Go with the flow to see where life takes me- ideally would like to settle down in a rural area but limited employment opportunity prevents that – RL”

“I see both positives and negatives to living in rural and urban communities. I haven't ruled either out for where I will live when I graduate university, so I may remain in an urban centre or relocate to a rural area depending on what career opportunities are available at the time – RL”

In comparison to the other rural subgroups, Leavers often discussed that in order to relocate to a rural community, one needs to make a compromise in order to do so. Respondents indicated that this compromise could involve moving away from friends or family, their current community, to a location with less services, but especially in terms

of employment. Many respondents stated the need to either give up their employment ambitions and enjoy their desired lifestyle or be able to live in an area that achieves their desired lifestyle and compromise with their employment prospects. The quotes below highlighted this point well:

“When I am ready to buy a house, I hope it can be in a rural or semi-rural area, but I will also have to have adequate employment there as well. It has always been a challenge deciding where to live, and I feel a struggle having to choose between my career and my home life – RL.”

“I want to return to rural, but there are not as many job options, so that may not be totally possible. I am really trying to aim my career towards a rural base and lifestyle though. I would not like to permanently live in a city - RL

While respondents in the Rural Leavers and Urbanite subgroups also discussed The challenges of respondents career relatability to the employment options available within rural areas was commonly discussed by respondents across the subgroups, however, Leavers discussed this challenge the most. The quotes below highlight Leavers perspectives on the challenges of relocating to a rural community because of the lack of opportunities that related to their career path:

“I intend to see where life takes me...there are more opportunities in my field in a large city than in a rural area. I would welcome the opportunity to live on PEI if I could find work in my field in the future – RL”

“Based on the career I have chosen, I will most likely have to remain in Urban areas, however, if I could have the career I want and do it successfully in a rural area, then I would – RL”

“I would choose to live in a rural community if my career path didn't overwhelmingly place me in an urban environment – RL”

As seen in the quotes above, many Leavers were interested in relocating into a rural area but were unable to do so due to the lack of employment opportunities within their career path. Also relating to employment, another unique trait among Leavers was the fact that a small number of respondents indicated that they were currently living in an urban area focusing on gaining experience, education or working to save financially to be able to relocate to their desired rural location later in life. This trait was unique to Leavers and did not appear among respondents in the other subgroups.

“For the most part, I plan to just go with the flow. However, my vague plan is to finish school in Montreal, find a job in either Edmonton or Calgary and work there for about 5 years to get experience, and then start my own organization back in rural east central Alberta – RL”

“I expect to live in an urban area long enough to get the required experience for a comfortable job in a rural setting. I was unable to move forward in my career due to a lack of job prospects for young, inexperienced and educated young people in my rural community – RL”

Although Rural Leavers were employment focused and strongly motivated to relocate based on employment opportunities, only 14.0% of respondents indicated that they would relocate solely for employment related reasons. While this was the highest number of respondents amongst the subgroups to indicate that they would relocate for the purposes of employment related reasons, a larger number of Leavers (24.7%) indicated that they would relocate for lifestyle based reasons even if it meant they had to take a pay cut. Similar to the other subgroups, the most Leavers indicated that they would only move to a rural community if there were a balance between lifestyle and employment opportunities. This suggests that while employment opportunities are a strong motivation for Leavers to relocate, respondents are likely to consider other factors such as those relating to the available amenities or lifestyle opportunities within a community when making their relocation decisions. Identifying that Leavers' relocation decisions were influenced by lifestyle related factors was not surprising as respondents had a strong attraction to rural communities for the lifestyle in which they can promote.

When examining Leavers mobility preferences, it became evident that Leavers highly valued the importance of things to do within a community. Like Urbanites, it was common for Leavers to emphasize the importance of having access to different amenities and services that provided a number of things to do within a community; this theme was more common among Leavers than respondents in the Rural Returner or Stayer subgroups. Leavers valued access to leisure and recreation opportunities, and indicated the importance to have access to a recreation centre, pool, and fitness classes, as well as access to green spaces and parks. Rural Leavers indicated that having a lively art scene and cultural amenities were important features of attractive communities; art amenities, including a museum and a venue for local concerts or live theater, were also commonly discussed. The value Leavers placed on art amenities was much higher than respondents in the other rural subgroups; the majority of respondents within the Rural Returners and Rural Stayers subgroups did not indicate the need to access to art amenities. Leavers also discussed the attractiveness of having a vibrant community, with a lively and active walkable downtown core and access to community events and festivals. Leavers also commonly discussed the need for events and things to do that were specifically targeted to young people.

Negative perceptions of rural areas

Out of the rural subgroups, Leavers were most likely to discuss the negative features of rural living. Similar to Urbanites, oftentimes the negative features that were identified related to the negative perceptions an individual held about the residents within rural areas or even their rural communities themselves. For instance, respondents commonly commented on the personality and character traits of rural community. Leavers often commented on the lack of investment rural communities often place on their young demographic and heavily discussed that residents' negative attitudes towards young people, change, new ideas, or different points of view were a highly unattractive feature of rural living. Oftentimes, Leavers described rural communities to be closed minded, judgemental and unaccepting to new residents. Additionally, Leavers also commented on how there are little opportunities for young people to feel empowered, engaged, or have their ideas taken seriously and valued by older residents. These respondents often indicated the closed mindedness of communities and lack of

investment in young people were influential in their decisions to leave or were deterrents preventing or making them hesitant to return.

Out of the subgroups, Leavers most commonly discussed the need for other young people in rural areas. Oftentimes, respondents indicated that one of the draws to an urban centre was the amount of young people, especially for those who were looking for a romantic partner. Leavers more than the respondents in the other rural subsample groups were also concerned with the lack of young people within rural areas, especially in their home communities, as their social networks were dismantled as their friends had out-migrated as well. On this note, respondents often discussed the perception of loneliness that would exist if one were to return to a community that lacked a young demographic. Leavers indicated that the lack of young people within rural areas created the perception that rural communities were socially isolating, lonely and had little for young people to do. The quotes below showcase the perspectives that were held by many Leavers who indicated that rural communities can be socially isolating:

“It would be challenging to stay [living rurally] because all the people our age leave. I have the perception that it would be lonely to stay. I grew up in a town of 2000 people (plus surrounding farms & acreages) and there were few people that stayed after high school. Some do stay and some return after they have married and started their families. But I imagine that it would be lonely for a single, young adult in the community in which I grew up. – RL”

“A challenge in attracting new residents can also be that rural communities are close knit and it is therefore difficult to feel accepted. Because most people already know each other, you feel like an outsider. I think community groups and activities specifically for young adults would help to avoid this problem – RL”

Summary

Rural Leavers perceived rural living in a number of different ways from the Returner and Stayer subgroups. While they shared many traits with Returners and Stayers, Leavers in many ways were similar to Urbanites. Among Rural Leavers, there were respondents who highly valued rural living and those that despised it. As well, there

were respondents who were attracted to rural living but also willing and open to opportunities located elsewhere. It was clear that Leavers more so than Returners and Stayers were employment focused and motivated to relocate based on opportunities such as those relating to employment, education or pursuing one's desired lifestyle.

Urbanites

Introduction

Urbanites were defined as “young adults who were raised in an urban setting, never lived rural or moved rural later in life.” Urbanites differed from the other subgroups, as the respondents in this group did not grow up in a rural location. However, within the subgroup there were respondents who were living in urban centres and those who were living in rural communities. Out of the subgroups, Urbanites had the smallest number of respondents that indicated their desire to live rurally in the future. Similarly, Urbanites differed from the other subgroups as they were less attached and connected to specific rural communities and rural living in general. Urbanites naturally had many characteristics that differed from the other subgroups.

Urbanites' Unique Characteristics

Overall, Urbanites were the second largest subsample group with a total of N=80 respondents. In comparison to the other subgroups, as highlighted in *Table 5*, Urbanites had the smallest portion of male respondents, as 87.5% of the subgroup was female. In terms of age, Urbanites had the largest representation of respondents between the ages of 27-29 (41.3%) in comparison with the other subgroups. 28.8% of respondents were 24-26 and 30.0% of Urbanites were 20-23 years old.

Similar to the other subgroups, Urbanites had a high percentage of respondents complete some level of post-secondary school. The majority of Urbanites held a Bachelor degree (53.6%) and had the most respondents (16.1%) of all the subsample groups to hold a Masters degree or held a doctorate, law or medical degree (1.8%). Urbanites were employed in a variety of careers. The most frequent career paths pursued by Urbanites included education (14.5%), business, management, administration (12.7%), the non-profit, volunteer sector, and social services (9.1%), medical services (9.1%), and tourism and recreation (9.1%). Out of the subgroups, Urbanites had the smallest percentage of respondents employed in the agricultural industry (5.5%). Careers in traditional industries

such as natural resources, trades and the service industry were commonly pursued by Urbanites. At the time of completing this study, 10.9% of respondents were a student.

Table 5. Summary Table of Urbanites Overview

Characteristic	Frequency	Percent
Gender N=56		
Male	7	12.5%
Female	49	87.5%
Age N=80		
20-23 years old	24	30.0%
24-26 years old	23	28.8%
27-29 years old	33	41.3%
Mobility N=60		
0 moves	5	8.3%
1-2 Moves	22	36.7%
3-4 Moves	19	31.7%
5-6 Moves	8	13.3%
7-8 Moves	5	8.3%
9 or More Moves	1	1.7%
Current Education Level N=56		
Some high school	0	0%
High School Diploma	1	1.8%
Some College	1	1.8%
Some University	8	14.3%
Post-secondary certificate/diploma	6	10.7%
Bachelors degree	30	53.6%
Master's degree	9	16.1%
Doctorate, law or medical degree	1	1.8%

*Total Valid Responses for Urbanites:
N=80*

In order to understand what type of Urbanites were represented in this study, respondents' exposure to rural living was examined. The majority of Urbanites had some level experience with rural communities. Only 5.1% of Urbanites indicated that they had no experience with a rural environment. Urbanites most frequently indicated that they had some level of experience with rural communities (52.6%), while many respondents a lot of experience with visiting or living in rural communities (25.6%). 16.7% of Urbanites indicated that they had little exposure to rural communities. Respondents, who had experienced rural communities, frequently indicated that they did so because they visited

friends and family (82.9%), went camping (78.6%), or traveled (75.7%) in rural areas. Respondents also indicated that they were exposed to rural communities through participating in recreation activities (60.0%) or by visiting a cabin/second home (60.0%). Both employment (42.9%) and education related reasons such as field trips, field schools, internships, or exchanges (42.9%) also ways Urbanites were exposed to rural areas.

It was interesting to note that the majority of Urbanites represented in this sample were some extent familiar with rural places and formed some level of relationship with rural areas. This made the subgroup unique as the majority of Urbanites within the sample some level of experience with rural communities and their views are not necessarily reflective of those who grew up in Urbanite centres and have had no exposure to rural areas. One characteristic that made Urbanites unique from the other subgroups was their level of attraction to rural areas. As previously highlighted, not only were respondents in the Urbanite subgroup the least to indicate their desire to living in a rural location in the future (36.9%), they were also the least likely to indicate their attraction to rural communities was based their connection and attachment to rural living. While Urbanites were not strongly attracted to living in rural communities like many of the respondents within the other subgroups, it was interesting to note many respondents had positive perceptions of rural living. Urbanites often discussed the attractive features of rural areas similar to those identified by respondents in the other subgroups such as the increased access to the outdoors, close knit culture, community character, lower housing costs, a slower pace of life and friendly residents to name a few.

In terms of past mobility behaviour, Urbanites most frequently indicated that they moved to various communities 1-2 times (36.7%) or 3-4 times (31.7%). Other Urbanites indicated that they had move to different communities more than 5 times (23.3%) while 8.3% indicated that they had not yet moved. Urbanites, like Rural Leavers, were focused on establishing their careers and completing their education goals. At the time of completing this study, Urbanites (74.6%) were either working on furthering their careers and pursuing their educational goals. Out of all the subgroups, Urbanites had the most respondents indicated that they were current focused related to employment or education. Also in comparison to the other subgroups, Urbanites had the smallest number of

respondents indicated that their focuses were on *finding a partner or significant other* (1.8%), *identifying a community for long-term residence* (5.5%), and on *travelling and exploring* (0.0%). Urbanites also had the second smallest number of respondents indicate that they desired to maintain their current lifestyle (7.3%). Overall, similar to the rural subgroups, Urbanites were motivated to relocate to take advantage of particular opportunities rather relocating for the purposes of finding a community to settle in for long-term residence.

When examining Urbanites future migration intentions, it became evident that Urbanites were also unique from the other subgroups in the way that their positive perceptions of rural areas didn't necessarily translate into a desire to relocate rurally. For instance, when asked about the ideal size of the community Urbanites wanted to settle in on a long-term basis, only 36.9% of respondents indicated their desire to reside in a rural community, of which 28.1% indicated their desired to still be in proximity to an urban centre. Although only a small number of Urbanites indicated that they would like to live in a rural location on a long-term basis, a number of Urbanites discussed how they would be willing to experience living in a rural community on a short-term basis. For example, one respondent said, *"I'm happy where I am in an urban setting, but if an opportunity arises in a rural setting I'd be open to it. Do I envision myself living in a rural setting long term? No. But I would love the experience – U."* Similarly another respondent expressed the feelings of being open to living rurally if the opportunity arose, *"My perception of a rural lifestyle would be somewhere remote, peaceful and isolated. I don't think it is for everyone but would be interesting and an enjoyable experience to live somewhere rural –U."* In terms of the extent to which Urbanites were attracted to living in rural communities, out of all the subsample groups, Urbanites were the most uncertain about living in rural communities. While many respondents found rural living to be undesirable, there were a small number of Urbanites who indicated that they found rural living to be attractive.

Although Urbanites, like Leavers were employment focused, it became evident that lifestyle related factors influenced Urbanites relocation decisions. Overall, only 16.1% of Urbanites indicated that they would relocate to a rural community for

employment based reasons. This low percentage suggests that while it was evident that Urbanites would be motivated to relocate to a rural community for an employment opportunity, it is clear that other factors, such as those relating to lifestyle opportunities would also influence their decisions to relocate. Similar to the other subgroups, the highest percentage of Urbanites (55.4%) indicated that they would move to a rural community if it could offer a balance between employment and lifestyle related opportunities. The following section discusses the various features in which Urbanites identified to make rural communities unattractive to live in or the factors in which made Urbanites hesitant to relocate rurally.

Unattractive Features

While Urbanites commonly discussed the attractive features of rural living, like Leavers, Urbanites often discussed their negative perceptions associated with rural areas. Many respondents stated that they felt rural communities were too quiet, boring, and slow. Similar to Leavers, Urbanites held a number of negative perceptions of rural areas, that often represented a perspective that was opposite of how both Returners and Stayers viewed rural areas.

Loss of Urban Conveniences

It was common for Urbanites to discuss the benefits of living in an urban centre for reasons such as those relating to the increased access to employment opportunities, services, entertainment facilities, well developed public transportation services and walkable downtown cores. Oftentimes, respondents referred to as urban conveniences. These conveniences also were discussed as having more stores with later hours of service, the ability to travel places quickly and without a vehicle, as well as the ability to have a variety of options for things to do. Out of the subgroups, Urbanites most commonly discussed that moving to a rural community was unappealing due to the fact that respondents would lose access to urban conveniences and this loss was a strong deterrent for many Urbanites to relocate rurally. Highlighting this point well, one respondent discussed their biggest hesitation to relocate to rural areas was, *“Missing the opportunities for work, and missing the more luxurious things, such as: Outlet malls, speciality stores, entertainment, etc. – U.”* The lack of urban conveniences in rural areas lightly discussed by rural respondents who had lived in an urban centre, but this deterrent was most common among Urbanites.

Social & Geographical Isolation

In addition to the features described above, many Urbanites had concerns or perceptions related to the social and geographical isolation associated with rural living. For instance, respondents often discussed hesitations about the distance rural areas can be from friends, family, services and urban living. Respondents often discussed how they would be hesitant to relocate rurally because of their perception that living rurally would be lonely, disconnected socially, and that it would be challenging to develop a social network. Out of the subgroups, Urbanites most commonly indicated the need for supports for newcomers and events for young people that could help newcomers' transition into a community. As well, respondents often expressed their concerns for being disconnected from events or activities happening elsewhere such as those in an urban setting. The quotes below highlight some of the perspectives held by Urbanites on the topics of distance and social isolation:

“I would be far from easy connections to be able to visit the family and friends that are scattered across Canada. I would be afraid that no one would visit me – U.”

“I moved to my rural community one year ago, and I have no friends. It has been difficult to meet people my age with similar interests. Youth gatherings would be extremely beneficial to a newcomer – U”

“For me to feel comfortable moving to a rural community, I would need to have some sort of connection there - a pre-existing tie to the community – U”

“I have no motivation nor reason to move at this point, may it be to a rural or an urban community. If I would get a project or job come up in a rural area, then I would move – U”

Lack of Opportunities

Although many Urbanites commented on the positive aspects of rural living, many respondents perceived rural areas to be suffering from a deficit of opportunities. Respondents often discussed how rural areas lacked services, employment and things to

do. Unlike the majority of respondents in the rural subgroups, the majority of Urbanites believed that rural communities were unattractive environments to raise children. Respondents often indicated that this was because of the lack of opportunities for recreation and sports, quality schools and the perception that rural communities offered less overall opportunities in general and were less cultural diverse than an urban centre. Similar to Leavers, Urbanites also held the perception that the lack of young people within rural communities was an unattractive feature of rural living. The quotes below showcase a few respondents' perspectives of rural areas:

“Lack of jobs, very few young people (25-35), lack of amenities... – U”

“Boring, remote, will miss modern life style – U”

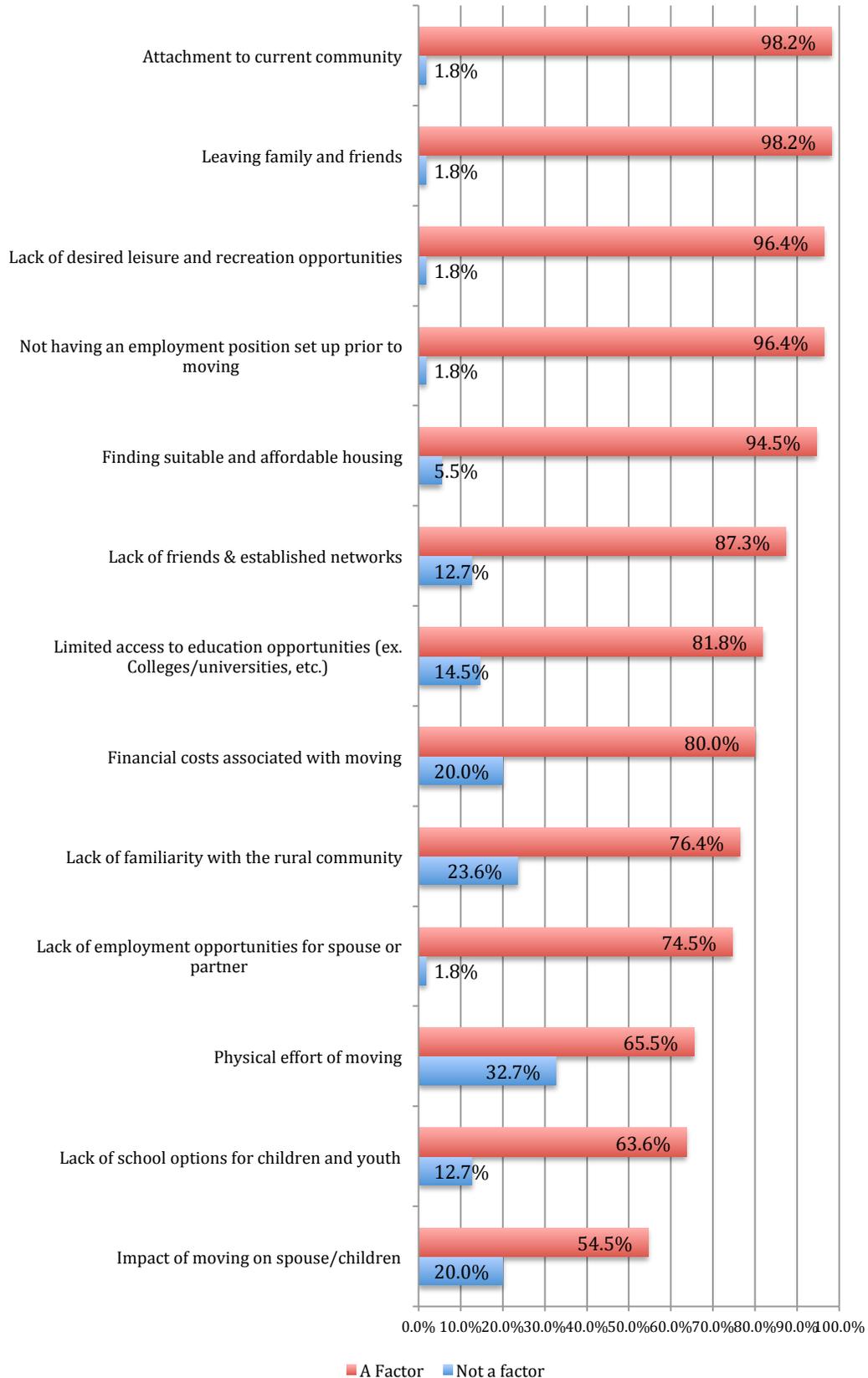
“Isolated and inconvenient – U”

“Less opportunity, one or two industry towns. Fewer options in terms of lifestyle choices (gyms, grocery stores, sporting activities to play and watch, usually a longer commute in order to participate in [various activities]) – U”

Barriers to Relocating Rurally

As discussed in the main section of this chapter, a number of barriers were examined to identify the factors making it difficult for respondents to relocate rurally. Urbanites were different from the rural subgroups, as almost all of the factors listed made it difficult to for Urbanites to relocate. *Figure 12* highlights factors that Urbanites found to make relocating to rural areas difficult. As highlighted, the two most frequently cited factors by Urbanites were their attachment to their current communities and leaving their family and friends. Employment, housing, and recreation were also factors in which made it difficult for Urbanites to relocate. There were very few factors that Urbanites indicated were not a barrier to relocating rurally, almost an opposite perspective from Rural Returners.

Figure 12. Factors Making it Difficult to Relocate to a Rural Community. N=55.



Summary.

Similar to the respondents in the other subgroups, especially Leavers, Urbanites were motivated to relocate for opportunity based reasons. As respondents in the Urbanite subgroup were less attached to a particular rural community and to rural living in general, respondents often indicated that they needed a reason to relocate. Many respondents commonly indicated that an employment opportunity would be strongly influential on their decision to relocate; yet it was evident that the lifestyle a community promotes was important to respondents as well. Unlike the respondents in the rural subgroups, Urbanites had strong perceptions about the social and geographical isolation and disconnect that is present in a rural community. As discussed, Urbanites differ from the rural subgroups in a number of ways and are in need for similar but different supports to motivate them to relocate to rural areas.

Findings Summary

Overall, it became evident that young adults are not a homogeneous group. This particularly became apparent when trying to represent the most common themes that emerged from respondents' perspectives. This presence of diversity also became clear when working to understand the extent in which respondents are attracted to living in rural communities. The complexities that are intertwined with respondents' decision-making processes were immense. However, the examination of respondents' migration decisions and intentions provided valuable insight into the motivations that drive respondents to relocate. It was evident that the factors related to both employment and lifestyle opportunities were influential on respondents' relocation decisions. The intricate details and complexities involved with respondents' migration decisions are the focal point of the individual sections examining the four main subsample groups.

Overall, this study strongly indicated that young adults are indeed attracted to living in rural communities. While the extent of this attraction varies, even those within the same subgroup desire to live in different types of rural communities. While a number of attractive features of rural living were identified, employment was a dominant theme that was cited as a barrier preventing a large number of respondents from relocating rurally. A majority finding of this study was the ability to identify that the mobility decisions of many of the respondents within this sample were motivated by opportunities

such as those relating to employment, education, and lifestyle. Employment was often explained as a catalyst that would entice respondents to relocate to a rural location. However, while employment was important to many respondents, it became evident that a number of factors such as those relating to lifestyle opportunities or access to certain amenities were influence on respondents' decisions to relocate as well.

As seen in the sections examining the subgroups individually, respondents within the subgroups held various perceptions of rural living and were motivated to relocate for different reasons. Identifying mobility differences such as Returners and Stayers being more motivated by lifestyle related factors, where as Leavers and Urbanites were more motivated to relocate based on employment related factors was extremely valuable in terms of advancing the current understanding of young adult migration to rural areas. The identification of the emerging typology that reclassifies respondents based on their future migration intentions identified the extent to which respondents were attracted to living in rural communities.

Chapter 5 - Discussion

Introduction

“Rural communities vary vastly...there is no one thing you can...change in all communities to attract people...it will all depend on the type of people communities wish to attract – RR”

Rural communities need to stop placing urban centres on a pedestal. While it is common to associate young adult out-migration with the perception that rural communities are unattractive, there is ample evidence in this study that indicated young adults' are attracted to living in rural communities. Furthermore, the diversity of perspectives indicates that certain types of individuals find certain types of rural communities more attractive than others. This is because young adults are not a homogeneous group. Although this diversity was immense, respondents commonly identified similar attractive attributes of rural communities as well as the features that contribute to attractive community in general. While there is strong evidence that showcases respondents' attraction to rural communities, there is laundry list of barriers and deterrents preventing a significant number of young adults from relocating to rural communities. Until these barriers and deterrents are addressed rural and small town communities are limited in their capacity to experience an influx of young residents and families. The findings of this study identified potential ways that rural and small communities can attract and retain young adults to ensure they remain resilient.

Reframing Young Adult Mobility.

The central focus of this study was to further understand why rural communities were not experiencing an influx of young residents if there is evidence that suggests young people desire to live rurally. The purpose of this study was to examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural Canadian communities. To examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living rurally, respondents' mobility decisions and motivations were investigated. This approach was used as rural communities are limited in their capacity to attract young residents and families, until more is know about young adults' mobility motivations and preferences.

It is challenging to compare the findings of this study to existing literature, as youth and young adults are often used interchangeable terms. As well, a number of scholars define both youth and young adults by different ages. While this study examined young adults ages 20-29, existing research will be used to examine the similarities and differences between the findings. This will highlight the new insights that contribute to the advance the understanding of young adult mobility forward.

The out-migration of young adults can often be perceived as an indication that young people do not find living in rural communities to be attractive. The findings of this study, however suggests that this perception isn't necessarily true. While a number of respondents indicated that they found rural living to be undesirable, the majority of respondents were attracted to residing in a rural community. Other studies (Garasky, 2002; Glendinning, et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008) support this point, as they too found that young people were attracted to living rurally. The difference is that the studies conducted by Garasky (2002), Glendinning, et al. (2003) and Easthope, & Gabriel (2008) were not specifically examining young adult attraction to rural living. These scholars did find that mobility decisions were complex and a number of factors contributed to this complexity. This study furthered the understanding of the complexity involved with young people mobility decisions by identifying the level of influence specific factors had on respondents' relocation decisions. As a result, it was found that certain factors were more influential on respondents' relocation decision than others. Similarly, certain factors were more influential for certain types of respondents. This study examined young adult mobility by understanding the factors that influence young adults to relocate out of and into rural communities. While these two processes are rarely examined as an overlapping phenomenon (Siegel, 2006), it provided valuable insight into the complexities involved with young adult mobility.

Relocating to an Urban Centre

In terms of leaving ones community, the two most cited factors that influenced respondents' decisions to leave were increased opportunities for post-secondary education and employment. Previous research also indicated these two factors as being influential on young peoples reasons to leave rural living (Argent, 2009; Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; D'Amico, 1996; Davies, 2008; Garasky, 2002; Glendinning, 2003;

Jones, 2004; Malastest & Associates Ltd, 2002; Stockdale, 2004; Stockdale, 2006). As well, the perception that leaving was the next step in life strongly influenced the relocation decisions of Rural Returners and Rural Leavers. This supports the findings of many studies including Argent (2009), Eacott & Sonn (2006), Garasky (2002), Jackson et al. (2006) and Stockdale (2004). Other attractive features of an urban environment proved to be influential on respondents decisions as well; these factors included the increase of services, one's desire to experience an urban lifestyle, and the increased opportunities to make new friends, meet a potential partner or spouse. A valuable contribution of this study is its ability to identify the level of influence respondents indicated that various factors had on their decisions to relocate.

While there were a number of factors that attracted respondents to living in an urban centre, there were also a number of unattractive features of rural living that contributed to respondents' decisions to leave. The most frequently cited factors that pushed respondents out of their rural communities were the perception that leaving was the next step in life, rural living was boring or had a lack of things to do, and the lack of other young people remaining in the community. Similarly, other studies have identified that the lack of things to do within a community (Argent, 2009) and the lack of other young people remaining in a community (Eacott & Sonn, 2006) are influential on young peoples reasons to leave rural living.

Young adults are a highly mobile demographic and are relocating out of and into various communities both in rural and urban environments. Urban environments are less likely to feel the impacts of the out-migration of young adults as urban centres see a higher rate of young people moving into the community than rural communities experience (Dupuy et al., 2000). If out-migration is taking place in rural and urban environments, one must pose the question of *"is out-migration simply explained by young people desiring to live the city life more than living a rural area?"* The mass exodus of young adults and can be seen as a major threat to the sustainability of rural communities, but scholars such as Stockdale (2006) suggests that leaving ones rural community can be a pre-requisite for rural economic regeneration. Similarly, Brown (2002) emphasized the importance for communities to attract young adults who had left

or are from outside of the community as they can often bring entrepreneurial, political, and leadership skills to the communities in which they move. While scholars such as Stockdale (2006) and Brown (2002) argue the importance of young people leaving their communities and attracting residents from elsewhere in, many communities continue to ask “*How do we keep our best and brightest children from leaving and never coming back?*” (D’Amico, et al., 1996)” The main argument of this study and the response to the question above is for communities to focus on the attraction of young adults and families.

Oftentimes a solution to address this mass exodus of young residents can be to focus on retention of the youth that grow up within a community, such as highlighted by D’Amico, et al. (1996). However, it is important to note that in many communities even if a 100% of the young people remained, the young demographic would still not be large enough for the community to thrive (Siegel, 2008). As well, while the retention of a community’s young demographic is important, the process of retention takes place after young residents to relocate in. Therefore, communities looking to develop a surplus of young people need to focus their attention to the attraction of young adults and families.

The findings of this study suggest that young adults are likely to leave their rural community for numerous reasons. Although respondents decisions to leave were strongly influenced to attain employment and post-secondary education, there were a wealth of other factors that played a role in their decisions to leave as well, some as simple as wanting to experience an urban lifestyle. Since many young adults are predicted to leave their rural communities and this trend is expected to continue (Dupuy et al., 2000), it is crucial for communities to focus on the attraction of new young residents. It is important for communities to stop viewing out-migration as the threat to the longevity of rural areas as it allows their young demographic to gain skills and experience that can be highly utilized in rural areas. Rather, the threat should be seen as the lack of young people returning or migrating into the community.

Relocating Rurally

Using attractiveness as a measurement tool helped to gain further insight into whether or not young adults perceived rural communities to be attractive places to reside. Despite the large numbers of young people leaving rural communities, this study provides

evidence that young adults are attracted to living in rural communities and a large number of young people who left their communities desire to return. One major attraction to rural living indicated by respondents, was the intangible cultural amenities relating to their connection to rural living, attachment to a specific community, having shared values or family or friends close or in the community. Other amenities such as increased access to the outdoors, recreation and leisure activities and farming opportunities were all indicated by a significant number of respondents as being influential on their attraction of relocating or remaining to live rurally. Both Dupuy et al. (2000) and Malastest & Associates (2002) indicated that young people relocating away from an urban centre and into a rural environment are influenced to do so for reasons such as to start a family and have a desire to escape the pressures and stress of urban areas, both were influential factors on respondents decisions in this study.

As this was a pro-rural sample, it was interesting to note that while many attractive features of rural areas drew respondents towards living rurally, a number of unattractive features of urban centres were identified and indicated to be highly influential on their decisions as well. The limited exposure to nature, the high cost of urban living, and the congestion of traffic within an urban centre were all frequently cited as being influential on respondents decisions to relocate to a rural community. This supports Reimer (2013) who indicates that urban environments are not always as healthy as the urban idyll makes them seem; urban areas can suffer social ills such as overcrowding, loneliness, and lack of green spaces which were all cited by respondents as unattractive features of urban centres that were influential on respondents decision or desire to relocate rurally.

Bringing it together

It was interesting to note that the majority of attractive features of rural living had a stronger influence on respondents decisions to relocate rurally than the unattractive features of urban living that pushed respondents out of living in urban centres. In both situations, when respondents relocated from a rural environment to an urban one and from an urban environment to a rural one, it seems that respondents were more drawn to the area in which they were going to than pushed out of the area they were leaving. This supports Siegels (2008) point that suggested people tend to migrate from areas of less

attraction to those of higher attraction. Similarly, Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) highlighted amenities such as those relating to nature, outdoor spaces, recreation infrastructure and services, entertainment facilities, community character as well as friends and family can attract residents. As seen in the mobility choices of respondents, various amenities such as those named above were taken into consideration when respondents were making their relocation decisions. The attraction to certain amenities and the level of influence certain factors had on respondents' relocation decisions are important to acknowledge because they highlight the individual attributes that are perceived by respondents to make up attractive communities. The common misconception is that out-migration of young adults indicates that young people find rural communities to be unattractive places to live, was dismissed by the perspectives collected in this study. While there were a number of respondents who indicated that they left because rural living was unattractive, the study found that among the respondents who did leave, many wanted to return.

One of the contributions of this study was the ability to identify the importance of understanding young adults mobility behaviour in terms of their mobility motivations to leave rural living and to relocate to a rural community. Understanding why young people leave and why they want to return helped to better identify how to help young people relocate into a rural community. This understanding was gained by the factors that influenced respondents to leave rural living, to relocate into a rural community and the barriers that made it challenging for respondents relocate were compared. This provided insight into the fact that young adults can be influenced by different factors at different stages of their migration process. For example, the access to affordable housing in rural communities was least frequently cited by Rural Returners and Rural Leavers as being influential on their decisions to relocate to an urban centre. However, when they ranked the factors that made it difficult to relocate rurally, finding suitable and affordable housing was the most frequently cited barrier making it difficult to return, next to attaining employment for ones self or their spouse.

Addressing the Barriers Identified By Young Adults

“What is going on within rural towns and regions that is making so many young people ‘vote with their feet’ to seek their futures elsewhere? Have young rural people’s perceptions of their current lives and their future aspirations changed such that so many of them now wish to leave their places of birth and childhood for larger, relatively unknown urban settings (Gibson & Argent, 2008)?”

The findings of this study provide insight into the questions posed by Gibson & Argent (2008). After examining both the out-migration and in-migration of young adults to and from rural communities, it became evident that respondents’ relocation decisions were influenced by numerous factors. As continuously highlighted, it is important to acknowledge that just because young people relocate out of their rural community doesn’t necessarily indicate that they don’t want to relocate back to a rural area later in life. While young peoples’ aspirations may have changed from their parents (MacDonald, 2013), many respondents within this study indicated their strong attraction to rural living because of factors relating to their identities, attachment to the communities in which they grew up, and their desire to reside close to family and friends. This study also found that while the majority of young adults’ were attracted to living rurally not all of them were able to ‘vote with their feet’ and relocate rurally as there were a variety of barriers and deterrents that were preventing them from doing so. This section examines the barriers indicated by respondents that were cited to prevent or deter rural relocation.

Employment

The lack of employment opportunities available within rural communities proved to be a major barrier for the significant number of young adults who desired to relocate to a rural environment. Out of all the barriers and deterrents, employment was the most commonly discussed by respondents. Respondents in the Rural Leaver and Urbanite subgroups frequently indicated that not having an employment position set up prior to moving as a major barrier making it difficult to relocate.

While it became evident that many respondents across the subgroups needed employment to make relocating to a rural community a viable option, respondents rarely indicated that they would relocate to a rural community based solely on employment

related reasons. Rather, the majority of respondents indicated that they desired to relocate to a rural community if it could strike a balance between lifestyle and employment related opportunities. This is an important contribution of this study as it suggests that young adults take a variety of factors into consideration when relocating to a community. This places even more importance on the need to further understand the various amenities in which young people value and want in the communities in which they reside. The perception that rural living promoted a certain lifestyle was definitely a driver and strong migration influence for many respondents. While some respondents' migration decisions were strongly influenced by employment opportunities, others were motivated to relocate for lifestyle related reasons. An interesting finding was while many respondents indicated that they were motivated to relocate for lifestyle related reasons, it was very evident among a large group of respondents that they needed employment in order to allow one to pursue their desired rural lifestyle. As discussed throughout the findings section, a large number of respondents were able to find employment that allowed them to live their desired lifestyle. For instance, respondents indicated that they were employed through a family business, living in proximity to a larger community or urban centre, or were working in an urban setting to save up to return to living rurally.

The relatability of ones career to rural areas was a dominant theme among respondents when discussing the challenges of relocating rurally. Many respondents who desired to relocate rurally were unable to do so because of limited or no opportunities related to ones career path. Many times respondents indicated that employment in their field was mostly based in an urban centre preventing them from relocating. However, a small number of respondents, many in the Rural Returner and Stayer subgroups indicated that they catered their career path so they could continue to live their desired rural lifestyle. Urbanites and Leavers seemed to be less likely to cater their careers in order to be able to live rurally. The barrier of career relatability is important for communities to acknowledge, as oftentimes respondents would indicate how their careers are in areas such as in agriculture, the non-profit sector, business, finance, tourism/recreation and natural resource industries that are often cited as being needed in rural areas (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011; Frid et al., 2008; Eley & Baker, 2005) As well, many of the careers held

by respondents were in media services, education, and arts and culture, which are not unheard of to exist in rural areas (Duxbury & Campbell, 2011).

As highlighted in the findings section of this study, the perception that rural areas lack employment opportunities may also be preventing young adults from relocating rurally, even if this perception doesn't necessarily reflect reality. Davies (2008) found a similar finding in her study that examined youth in-migration in rural Western Australia and the role of perceptions of rural employment and lifestyle opportunities on the migration of young people. Davies (2008) concluded by noting that respondents' willingness to relocate rurally, were strongly influenced by their perceptions of both the social and employment opportunities that exist regardless if these perceptions are representative of reality. Davies (2008) also found that the aesthetic and environmental condition of a region was less influential than respondents' perceptions of the social and employment situations of rural areas. While the focus of this study was on the attraction of young adults to rural areas, it was evident that aesthetics, environmental conditions, as well as the social and employment opportunities with an area were all strongly influential on respondents past and/or future relocation decisions.

Lack of Things to do

Communities working to increase the number of young residents that reside within their communities need to ensure to position themselves in order to attract young people but also to be able to provide the amenities and services desired by young adults. Many of the young adults represented in this study indicated their desire to be living in communities that other young people reside and in communities that support young people and have events for young people and things to do. Many respondents indicated the need for things to do beyond sports related activities. As well, a number of respondents also indicated that the city was attractive because it was less socially isolating in the sense that there are a number of different activities one can choose to be involved in providing ample opportunities to connect with other like-minded young adults. The study conducted by Glendinning et al. (2003) found that youth perceived rural communities to be good places to grow up but poor places to remain as a young person. While this study examined youth between the ages of 11-18, the findings correlate with

the findings of this study were respondents from across the subgroups commonly indicated the need for things to do within rural communities.

Social Inclusion

In terms of the attractiveness of rural areas, one of the major themes that emerged from the perspectives of respondents across the subsample groups was the attraction to rural communities because of their close-knit culture, strong community ties, knowing your neighbour, and the sense of feeling connected to the community. Overall this desire of being connected to a community was threaded throughout many of the comments provided by respondents.

While acknowledging this theme is important, it emphasises the importance for communities to implement or provide integration supports or social supports to help new incoming residents integrate in to the community or help returning residents re-establish their social circles and networks. Scholars such as Forsythe (1981), Glendinning, et al. (2003) and Easthope & Gabriel (2008) indicated the importance of developing social supports for newcomers and even for young people returning to their home communities as often times their previously established social networks may have been disabled by the out-migration of their friends or simply have lost touch with those who remained in the community. Although the connection and close-knit culture that can exist within many rural communities was identified an attractive feature of rural living, many respondents discussed the challenges of establishing connections within rural communities, meeting new people and becoming a part of the close-knit culture. It was clear that respondents were attracted to young vibrant communities that had things to do such as events targeted towards young adults. As community character, ambience, social and community connections were also valued by the young adults represented in this study, communities need to recognize the importance of balancing a close-knit culture with the ability to welcome incomers and new residents. Moving forward, communities need to be cautious of creating a culture that does not create a welcoming environment to newcomers and new residents. Being aware of the culture a community is creating is important as many respondents indicated that labels that create the perception that rural communities a place for retirement, were close-minded or unwelcoming to newcomers, or lacked opportunities

for employment, education, or personal growth or other young people were strongly indicated as unattractive features of rural living (Davies, 2008; Siegel, 2008).

Negative Perception of Rural Living

Rural Communities need to move beyond the deficit way of thinking. The consistency of out-migration can make it seem that urban areas are the more desirable than rural areas, however the findings of this study suggest that rural communities are highly valued by young adults as well. With that being said, respondents often indicated how negative perceptions of rural living influenced their desire to relocate. Some of these perceptions included that rural communities lacked overall opportunities or had close-minded residents that were not open to new ideas, new residents and ideas of change. While respondents discussed their negative perceptions of rural living in two ways, some respondents described their perceptions while other describe their experiences, both of which usually affect the respondents view of rural living in a negative way.

Although the majority of young adults were attracted to living rurally, there was a dominant perception that living rurally involved having to compromise or give something up, such as employment opportunities. A significant number of respondents, especially those in the Urbanites subgroup indicated that the overall lack of opportunities available within rural areas made rural living unattractive and unappealing. Interestingly, respondents mostly in the Rural Returner and Stayer subgroups indicated that this perception was inaccurate and that rural communities need to work at changing the perceptions associated with rural living. Previous studies have examined the negative perception of rural living and the affect it has on migration behaviour, and these studies (Easthope & Gabriel, 2008; Gibson & Argent, 2008; MacDonald et al., 2013; Markey et al., 2010) that found that not only is this perception of rural areas an unattractive feature contributing to the out-migration of young people from rural areas, it is also deterring young people from returning or relocating in a rural community. To build on this point, Hajesz & Dawe (1997) state that the perception of being disadvantaged economically, socially, and culturally that has been established if one has grown up in a rural community contributes significantly to the way young people formulate their career and relocation decisions. Hajesz & Dawe further explained that this perception contributes to the mass exodus that takes place in rural areas around the time of high school graduation.

It is important to recognize that this perception of rural areas plays a key role in how attractive rural living appears to potential returning and in-migrants.

The out-migration of young people from rural areas can often be associated with terms such as the “bright lights syndrome,” “growing the best and brightest to leave,” or “lured by big city living and better paying jobs,” which littered the literature examining young adult mobility and essentially place urban areas on a pedestal. While young people may be leaving for reasons associated with the terms described above, the terminology does not paint an attractive picture of rural life nor do they represent an accurate picture of urban life. Urban life that isn't always as healthy as the urban idyll makes them seem, as urban environments can suffer from social ills such as overcrowding, loneliness, and lack of green space to name a few (Reimer, 2013), yet rural areas continue to idolize urban centres. Interestingly, it became evident that in the perspectives of the young adults represented in this study did not highly valorised living in an urban centre. These terms also prove to be a problem, as they can become a scapegoat to explain why there are only small numbers of young people relocating to rural locations. This common misconception (Artz, 2003) is a problem as it takes the focus off of the core route of the problem, which the findings of this study suggest is the lack of an influx of young people to rural areas is related to the constraints, barriers and deterrents that prevent young people from relocating rurally, rather than young peoples primary attraction to urban living.

Brain Drain: Growing the Best & Brightest to Leave

While many studies refer to the mass exodus of youth as the ‘bright lights of the city syndrome’ the findings of this study suggest that the relocation to a rural area isn't so cut and dry. A large number of respondents indicated that they left rural living for many reasons including because it was the next step in life and because they wanted to experience an urban lifestyle. It is important to recognize that these draws to an urban life doesn't suggest that these respondents are not interested in returning to rural living later in life.

While brain drain, is a real concern for many rural communities, it does not necessarily help rural communities appear attractive to incoming migrants, especially when rural communities have a negative perception attached to them. As well, challenges

surrounding that saying of “growing the best and brightest to leave” almost acts as false solution in trying to target the cause of the lack of young people within rural communities. While this saying describes a community’s feelings towards youth migration behaviour, it leaves out the rest of the story. While it is understandable that this term is used to explain the loss of a significant portion of a community’s human and social capital, the findings of this study suggest that there is more to the argument. Overall, in this study respondents were well educated, many respondents held a bachelor degree (44.2%), a masters degree (10.3%), a diploma or certificate (19.8%) or completed some university (17.8%). While not all of these respondents desired to relocate to a rural community, the majority of respondents wanted to continue to live rurally or relocate rurally in the future. These well-educated respondents desired to relocate to a rural community, and while some were able to return, a great majority were unable to. The respondents who were unable to relocate rurally often discussed how employment was the very factor that was preventing their return or employment in their chosen career path. Therefore it is a bit presumptuous of communities and researchers alike to assume that the young people are leaving and don’t want to return or that other young people from other communities aren’t interested in relocating rurally when the desire to relocate rurally really isn’t the problem. Bollman and Clement (2008) state that the out-migration of young adult takes place in urban communities as well, and because urban areas see a constant flow of young in-migrants, out-migration isn’t a problem. Out-migration is a long lasting challenge for rural areas because rural communities have been unable to create an influx of young in-migrants. While this saying doesn’t literally depict a negative image of rural areas, it can contribute to a misinformed perception that urban areas are more attractive than rural communities. While young people are leaving, the findings of this study suggest that it is not based on the sole reason that young people find urban areas more attractive than rural communities.

A Community’s Influence on the Perception of Rural

Another perception that was found to affect respondents perspectives on the attractiveness of rural living was the perception the community and its residents had on young people leaving as well as young people returning or migrating in. When discussing the out-migration of young people from rural communities, Siegel (2008) states “*Young people turning their back on the community in which they grew up is not just a figurative*

slap in the face at the old home, but it also reduces the population (p.109).” As previously discussed, one of the central arguments of this study is the perception of rural communities in general as well as the out-migration of young people is in desperate need of being repositioned. Statements such as the one highlighted by Siegel (2008) feed into an already existing perception that rural communities are unwelcoming and unsupportive as well as closed minded to the needs of young people, all in which were factors cited by respondents as unattractive features of rural living. As highlighted in the findings chapter, different respondents even from within the same subgroup discussed the deterrents of relocating, returning, or remaining in rural areas because the perception held by a community and its residents. There is ample evidence in this study that strongly suggests that ones perception of rural living influences whether or not the individual is attracted to living rurally. This finding supports the previous works by Davies (2008), Garasky (2006), Easthope & Gabriel (2008), Gibson & Argent (2008), Parkins & Reed (2013a), MacDonald et al., (2013), Stockdale (2006), Markey et al. (2010), Jackson et al., (2006), Hajesz & Dawe (1997), Young (2013) and a number of other scholars that found migration behaviour can be influenced by the perception of an area, even if that perception doesn't necessarily depict the reality of an area accurately.

Reframing Young Adult Mobility Summary

“...It has become common practice to blame this [population] decline on the migration of young people due to structural limitations (e.g. education and employment)” (Eacott & Sonn, 2006, p. 199).

Communities and researchers alike cannot solve the problems associated with the lack of young people residing in rural communities by holding young people themselves responsible for the problem. As the declining population of young residents in rural areas is a complex phenomenon (Eacott & Sonn, 2006, Stockdale, 2004; Jamieson, 2000), pointing a finger at one of the many factors involved with the phenomenon will not help a community move forward in addressing the problem. As seen in the findings of this study and as highlighted by previous studies (Argent, 2009; Davies, 2008; Eacott & Sonn, 2006, Glendinning et al., 2003; Easthope, & Gabriel, 2008), young adults' relocation decisions are based on a number of factors, rural communities can and can not control

(Parkins & Reed, 2013). For example, many young adults indicated that they leave their rural communities to attain post-secondary education but as it is unrealistic to expect rural communities to build post secondary institutions to retain a young demographic, communities can instead target improving factors such as community culture around residents leaving and new residents migrating in, availability of employment opportunities, the appearance and ambience of the community, the services and amenities available and so on. By addressing the factors that communities have control over can assist young adults to relocate and transition into the community. In understanding this, communities and their residents need to recognize their role in shaping the perception of rural living, especially amongst the young people who grow up within the community. To contribute to the increased attractiveness of rural living, contributing to the perception that suggests that rural living is a lifestyle of deficits needs to end (Markey et al., 2010). Young (2013) notes the need for rural communities to stop playing victim to the changes taking place within rural areas and instead need to take ownership of it.

New Insights Gained

Breaking down the assumed homogeneity of young adults

The findings discussed in the previous chapter showcase that fact that young adults mobility decision-making processes are complex. This complexity is highlighted by the numerous factors that influence young adults to relocate as well as the differences that exist across the sample. Interestingly, while there were clear patterns that emerged from the data, no one amenity, barrier, or factor influencing migration was ranked as being important by every respondent and yet no one amenity, barrier, or factor influencing migration was ranked as not being important by any respondent. This highlights the diversity that existed amongst the sample. Utilizing Malatest & Associated (2002) typology to classify respondents based on where they grew up and their migration behaviour helped to identify the differences that existed across the subgroups as well as among respondents within each of the subgroups.

Emerging Typology

One of the major findings of this study identified respondents' mobility motivations and preferences. While a number of studies have identified that young adults often leave their rural community to relocate to an urban centre where more opportunities exists, few studies have identified the motivations for young people to return or relocate

into a rural community. Some of the studies that have identified the factors that entice young people to relocate into a rural community included one's connection to rural living (Eacott & Sonn, 2006), attachment to one's community (Malatest & Associates, 2002), being close to family and friends (Davies, 2008; Hektner, 1995; Tolhurst, 2006), and the increased access to nature (Jackson et al., 2006; Tolhurst, 2006), to name a few. While certain features that attract young adults to rural living have been identified, there was little understanding of the level of influence each of these features had on young adults' decisions to return. While it is common for migration studies to examine return migration to specific rural communities, few studies have examined return migration in a broader context that is not specified to a particular community (Malatest & Associates, 2002) and even less have examine the in-migration of young adults ages 20-30 to rural communities. Therefore the findings of this study have contributed to the advancement of knowledge in terms of the understanding of young adults' relocation motivations and preferences that influence their decisions to relocate into a rural community.

The diversity of factors that influenced respondents' decisions to relocate were immense. The complexities that are involved with those decisions were apparent in this study. This supports Glennding (2003), Stockdale (2006), and Laoire (2007) who also stated that these complexities exist. This study was able to associate the level of influence various factors had on respondents decisions to relocate which provide valuable insight into the fact that not only are young peoples relocation decisions complex, a number of factors are influential on those decisions. Even more complex, is the fact that certain factors are more influential than others and certain factors are more influential for certain respondents than others.

The typology used to classify the respondents in this study into the four subgroups – Rural Returners, Rural Stayers, Rural Leavers, and Urbanites – helped to identify how an individuals past and present migration decisions influence their future migration intentions. This revealed that the respondents in this study could also be classified by their future migration intentions, as highlighted in *Figure 13*.

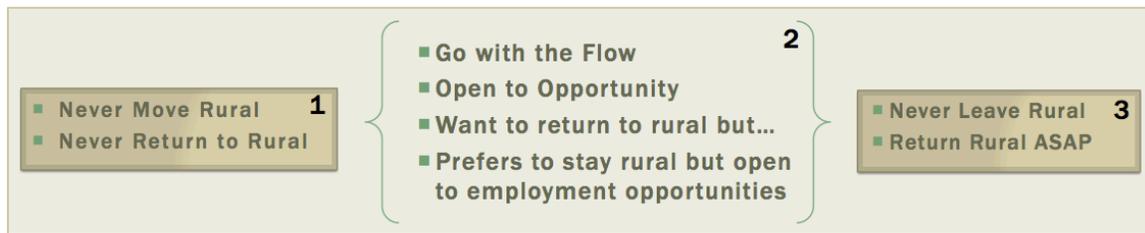


Figure 13. Respondents Classified by Future Migration Intentions

As previously discussed, respondents in groups one and three have polarized perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural communities. The respondents in group three were highly motivated by the lifestyle related factors that were identified by previous studies examining the return migration of rural young adults (Davies, 2008; Eacott & Sonn, 2006). The contribution and the value of this finding is based on the identification and the understanding gained about group two. It was evident that respondents in group two were motivated to relocate based on opportunities, such as those related to employment, education, lifestyle, and life experience. This included the respondents who indicated that their future migration intentions were based on going with the flow or that they would be open to opportunities as they arose. The majority of respondents in the group who wanted to return to rural living but couldn't were often unable to do so due to the lack of employment opportunities available within their desired community or within rural areas in general; oftentimes, these respondents were unable to find employment related to their chosen career. These respondents often discussed how employment would be a catalyst to motivate them to relocate rurally.

Not only did this finding further the academic understanding of young adult mobility but it provides communities with better insight on how to attract young residents and young families. While many rural communities are working to attract a young demographic for long-term residence, very few of the young people represented in this study (13.7%) were focused on finding a community to settle down and live in on a long-term basis. Being able to identify that these respondents were motivated by opportunities such as those related to employment, education, lifestyle or life experience is important as it is a new insight that helps to advance the current understanding of young adult migration.

It is also important to highlight that the motivations of respondents often reflected of the amenities that they found important to have access. For instance, the Rural Returners who indicated that they returned to a rural location for the purposes of raising a family many need or value different amenities such as schools or family oriented community events while an individual such as a Leaver or Urbanite that is relocating to a rural community for employment related reasons may desire social supports, events for young adults, specific recreation or leisure opportunities and so on. It is important that both communities and researchers to recognize that not only are there different types of young adults based on their past and future migration behaviour and intentions, there are also different preferences amongst young adults that relate to the access to specific amenities. This is important to note as this study identified that young peoples motivations to relocate to a community can be influenced by their desire to have access to certain amenities such as the access to nature and the outdoors, a highly influential factor on respondents decision to relocate rurally. If young adults are attracted to lifestyle based opportunities or opportunities related to life experience, than amenity migrants may be a key population of young adults to attract.

Utilizing the typology provided by Malatest & Associated (2002) helped to better understand that young adults are not homogeneous, especially in terms of their perspectives on rural living and the reasons in which they make their migration decisions. Another key finding of this study was that an emerging typology further categorizing respondents within the four subsample groups became evident. This was an important finding of the study because it identified that various smaller clusters of young adults with like characteristics exist even within the four subgroups. These differences are particularly important to note when communities are working to attract young residents and families as respondents with different goals and aspirations may need different resources or access to certain amenities. For instance, the amenities that would be needed by a young family may be different than those needed by a young professional or entrepreneur. Similarly, an individual migrating into a new community may need supports to help integrate into the community where as an individual who is familiar with the community may not.

A large number of respondents across the subgroups were not drawn to living in a specific community, rather they wanted to remain rurally but were open to opportunities located in various rural communities. The findings of this study supports Mills & Hazarika (2001) who indicated the importance of attracting young people from both rural and urban areas as both groups can be interested in migrating to rural areas and not necessarily to the communities in which the migrants grew up. It is important to recognize that young people didn't necessarily choose the communities in which they grew up, which is why Mills & Hazarika (2001) may suggest that young people may not be attracted to a specific community or the same communities they grew up. This was a common perspective held by many of the respondents within this study and although many were attached and connected to rural living, they didn't necessarily have a particular community in which they wanted to live rather they were motivated by factors such as employment or lifestyle opportunities.

The Potential Role of Amenities

“A key question then is: ‘how can rural areas develop measures to tempt young people to return’ (Kloep et al., 2003)?

The amenity typology identified by Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) proved to be a beneficial tool in identifying the various amenities that young adults represented in this study valued. Immense insight was gained by understanding respondents desire for access to certain natural, cultural, and system amenities. The most dominant characteristic of the sample was the diversity that existed among the respondents from the four subgroups and even amongst those within the same subgroup. This diversity was evident in respondents' perspectives on the importance of having access to various types of amenities. To gain a broad picture of the various amenities in which respondents valued, respondents were asked to indicate the amenities in terms of what they felt was important to have access regardless of if they lived rural or in an urban centre as this enabled the identification of almost indicators of community attractiveness, regardless of it that community was based rurally or in an urban center. Interestingly, even though there was such a range of perspectives, there were clearly amenities that the sample perceived to be more important than others.

This diversity highlights the wealth of perspectives and opinions that are represented in this study. The value of this diversity is that it alludes to the fact that different types of young adults, such as those highlighted in the emerging typology, prefer and value access to different types of amenities. The value of this diversity is that it proves a response to the question posed by Kloep et al. (2003). The response is that amenities can be used as rural development tool that can attract residents, such as young adults (Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire, 2010). For instance, proximity was an important amenity to respondents across the subgroups. Respondents' valued living in proximity to urban centre or other rural communities for reasons such as increased employment opportunities, access to additional services, entertainment facilities or urban conveniences. This supports Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010) who indicated that system amenities such as proximity to an urban centre or larger rural community can be used as an enabler for young adults to live their desired lifestyle in rural areas, as they can attain a viable employment position that may not exist within the rural community itself. The attraction of proximity as an amenity also corresponds with Bollman & Clemenson (2008) indicating the most of the growth is taking place amongst rural Canada is taking place in areas adjacent to larger urban centres. Although communities in proximity to larger urban centres are growing, urgency needs to be placed on understanding the supports needed to help young people relocate rurally as Canada's rural population is still declining (Bollman & Clemenson, 2008).

In terms of utilizing amenities to attract residents, proximity is one amenity that could be advertised as an attractive feature of certain rural communities. But, what about the communities that are not within proximity to an urban centre? Interestingly, the diversity within this study highlighted that a smaller number of respondents in each of the subgroups indicated that they did not want to live in proximity to urban areas and similarly, others only wanted to live in proximity to larger rural centres. The important point to take away is that different types of young adults exist and each type values a variety of amenities. Communities need to work at identifying and advertising their attractive attributes in combination with using their natural, cultural and system amenities to attract various types of young residents and families.

Recommendations

In order for communities to gain the ability to better attract and retain young residents and families, a number of local, provincial and federal level programs and supports should be considered.

Community Level Supports

Communities need tools to better address population instability and to attract young residents and families. Assessment tools, such as those that indicate a community's attractive and unattractive features, their demographic imbalances and the perception held by current young residents living in the community would help rural areas move forward in terms of attracting young residents and families.

As rural depopulation and the out-migration of young residents is a challenge that affects communities across the country, tools that would showcase various ways communities are working to address the lack of young residents would be beneficial. While context matters and rural communities differ greatly, many face similar challenges such as the lack of employment opportunities, service decline, aging populations and the exodus of residents. As innovative programs such as *Return 2 Rural: The Wired West*, *Voice on the Coast*, or *21Inc* are grassroots programs that continue to develop across rural Canada, it may be helpful for communities to gain access to a centralized source of information, to examine the practices taking place in other areas of the country. For instance, if a community was facing a school closure, they could examine how other communities handled the situation and the experience that particular community had.

Tools to identify and address the needs of young adults and those that highlight the differences between various types of young people would enable communities to gain further insight into how to attract young residents. As well, tools that suggest action strategies to help communities implement actions that work to overcome the various barriers and deterrents that can prevent young people and families from relocating into a rural area would be beneficial.

Communities could also use supports to help increase their visual appearance. Many of the young people in this study indicated their desire to live in well kept and

visually appealing towns, where residents showed pride for where they lived. Supports to help rural areas revitalize their communities would help communities appear more attractive to potential residents.

Provincial Level Supports

Provincial level supports need to better address the needs of communities and rural regions at the local level. While communities are working to stabilize their populations and are in need of various tools to help them do so, there is little funding available to directly address population instability and the out-migration of young residents.

Having a funding source that enabled communities to apply for educational resources would be beneficial. These educational resources could include workshops that help communities recognize that the decisions involved with sustainability planning, economic revitalization and community development play a key role in the attraction and retention of young residents and families. Helping communities to make more informed decisions and guiding them on where to invest resources could contribute to a higher success rate of attraction and retention of young residents. This funding pot could help communities develop the tools they need to become more effective at attraction and retention. Among these educational resources, having access to funding that can help communities move from planning into implementing actions would be beneficial as the changes or strategies suggested in planning documents can be challenging for communities to implement with limited financial resources. One community on Vancouver Island for example, created an attraction and retention strategy to attract and retain youth and young adults. This document is a well-rounded source of information for the community to move forward in terms of strategies to assist in increasing the number of young residents and families. However, two years after the strategy document was complete, the community continued to experience the out-migration of young residents, a growing aging population and is threatened with the closure of the local school. The community has potential solutions to prevent the school from closing, however due to limited funding the school is likely to close. Building on this example, if communities had access to an educational fund that targeted building education around forecasting

future service or school closures can help communities to become proactive about increasing their school enrolments or young resident populations rather than be reactive to service or school closures.

The identification of concrete solutions, strategies, or opportunities to help communities and rural regions to address the barriers, which prevent or deter young residents and families from relocating to rural areas, is needed. This provincial level of support would be beneficial to rural areas, as it would help rural areas to address the barriers or deterrents that can prevent young people from relocating in. For example, the creation of targeted attraction strategies that worked to attract young people into a rural area based on the barriers that are often indicated to prevent them from doing so, could be utilized. For instance, as lack of employment is commonly cited as a barrier, communities can use employment opportunities to attract young residents. This needs to be a provincial level support because this attraction strategy is already being employed by various disciplines such as health, medical services and teaching, yet these programs struggle to retain professionals in rural areas. For example, the Province of Ontario offers bursary assistance for physicians who are willing to relocate to Northern Ontario (Nestman, 1998). Yet 50% of the physicians buy out the program before completing their time requirement. While Nestman (1998) indicates the reasoning for this is unknown, the findings of this thesis revealed that only 12.8% of respondents would relocate solely for employment purposes, suggesting that the lifestyle a community can offer plays an important role in the migration decisions of young adults. Therefore, communities that are working to address the barriers and deterrents that prevent young adults from relocating rurally, are limited in their capacities to do so until more funding can be allocated to gain a better understanding of which types of young adults or professionals are prevented or deterred by certain barriers as this would help communities retain professionals and young residents.

Another provincial level support that could be utilized is the facilitation/encouragement for the formation of partnerships between stakeholders such as post-secondary education institutions, small businesses, telecommunication industries and rural communities. The facilitation or encouragement of the formation of these

partnerships can play an influential role in aiding communities to attract in young residents and families. For example, Capilano University offers a mountain bike operations program in the rural communities of Sechelt and Gibsons located on the Sunshine Coast of British Columbia. The University's main campus is located in North Vancouver but offers the mountain biking certificate on the Sunshine Coast where the mountain bike trails are world-renowned. This partnership greatly benefits the communities of Sechelt and Gibsons as both communities are working to attract young residents and have gained the opportunity to be exposed through the University. Additionally, this partnership allows the communities to showcase their mountain biking amenities to potential long-term residents. A provincial level support could increase the formation of partnerships between Universities and rural communities.

Federal Level Supports

As the depopulation of Canada's rural areas is an issue challenging communities across the country, federal level supports need to be considered. While funding for communities exists, the needs of rural communities are not fully being met. While funding opportunities at the Federal Level exist, limited programs are targeted at directly helping rural areas increase their ability to attract and retain young residents and families. The gas tax program for example, although recent changes has allowed communities to use the funds for a wider range of projects, there is no indication that these can help a increase a community's attractiveness to appeal to a larger span of young residents and families. While the funds can be used for projects relating to public transit, transportation infrastructure, broadband and connectivity, culture, tourism, sport and recreation all in which can increase a community's attractiveness, the correlation between the investments in projects involving these areas can help communities become more effective at attracting young residents needs to be communicated. Whether it is through changes made to the Gas Tax Fund or through the development of another initiative, the federal government can better support the needs of communities by allocating funding sources to help stabilize rural populations and balance the age demographics of rural areas.

Many of the respondents in this study indicated their attraction to rural areas for farming and agricultural purposes. While this was a strong attraction, many respondents indicated the need for young people to be able to secure farm mortgages and purchase

affordable acreages. These were two areas in which many respondents suggested could increase the attractiveness of living in rural areas. In terms of farming supports for young farmers, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada provides access to the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act program. This program can be utilized by existing farmers, beginning farmers, start-up farmers, farmers taking over the family farm, part-time farmers and agricultural co-operatives. Although young people may fit into many of the eligible applicants categories described above, because the loan program is not designed specifically to help young farmers, the program may not be effective in aiding young farmers to overcome the barriers that prevent them from entering the industry. While there are other federal level programs that target young and beginning farmers, identifying if the current programs that exist cater to the needs of young and beginning farmers at the local level as they may be facing a number of challenges and barriers that the existing program don't help them to overcome.

Recommendations Summary

When moving forward to address population decline and instability in rural areas, it is important to acknowledge the number of stakeholders involved and the various levels of policy implications that can be generated in order to assist rural areas to more effectively attract and retain young residents and families. As described, while program initiatives exist at all levels of government, it is important to recognize the opportunities for change and the potential policy considerations that can be utilized to benefit the needs of rural communities working to attract young residents and families.

Moving Forward: Future Research

“Rural people are not just the victims of change but also its authors, which means that ‘what comes next’ in rural Canada will have much to do with the vision and creativity of its residents (Young, 2013, p. 245)”

Moving forward, Young (2013) highlights that rural residents have an opportunity to help create a sustainable and viable future for their communities. This is important to acknowledge as rural residents can play a fundamental role in the attraction and retention of young people. As identified by the findings of this study, the majority of respondents

were attracted to rural living, but many of which were prevented from relocating into rural areas due to barriers or deterrents preventing them from doing so. While a significant number of young adults represented in this study found various ways to live rurally and hold down a viable employment position, some made employment related compromises to live their desired lifestyle. Others, lived in proximity or commuting distance to a larger centre to attain employment, while some respondents were able to work at family businesses and others were so drawn to the lifestyle promoted by rural living that employment was not indicated as a concern. As highlighted, the young people in this study had a strong attraction to living rurally, some were able to relocate while many others were not. This emphasises the need for future research to continue to identify how to increase the number of young adults relocating to rural communities. As well, future research should continue to understand the emerging typology identified in this study by further identifying how the different groups of young adults value different types of amenities and for what reasons, as this would help to gain better insight into young adults' motivations to relocate rurally. For instance, *would the migration motivations and preferences differ for a young family for a young entrepreneur? Would the migration motivations and preferences differ for a practicing professional on a university retention program differ from the motivations and preferences of a young couple looking to set down long-term residence?* Gaining answers to questions such as these will better help communities, academics, and policy makers better understand the needs and preferences of the different types of young adults. Furthering this understanding would greatly benefit rural areas in terms of how to increase the number of young residents and families residing in their communities.

When discussing the future of rural Canada and the challenges of understanding what this future will look like, Young, (2013) wrote, "When it comes to rural Canada, we know what was, we have ideas about what is, but the what will be is more troublesome" (p. 232). The depiction of not knowing what rural Canada may look like in the future emphasizes the importance of future research furthering the understanding of how to attract young residents and families to rural communities as they play a key role in the longevity and sustainability of rural areas (Stockdale, 2006). From asking simple questions like *"Does one's perception of the attractiveness of rural living increase with*

age?” to more complex question such as “*how do young adults’ migration intentions of relocating to a rural community differ from their migration actions?*” As well, there is a need to further understand the types of potential supports that can be used to help young adults relocate to rural communities. For instance, one of the common challenges among respondents who desire to relocate rurally but couldn’t was the lack of job opportunities within their chosen career path. Future research should explore the role a community could play in identifying their human resource needs and communicate those need to the young people leaving the community to pursue their careers. Which could be guided by questions such as “*If young people knew how to return to rural areas, would more young people relocate?*” or “*When young people are leaving after high school graduation are they more focused on leaving and the complexities involved than how to best make their decisions to have the ability to return later in life?*” Regardless of the approach, it is essential for future research to further understand the attraction of young residents and families to rural communities, and more specifically, placing an emphasis on “how” to get young people relocating rurally.

While the exact picture of what rural Canada will look like in the future is unknown, scholars such as Markey et al. (2012), note that while much of it has been challenging to manage, change and transformation has been an ingrained process made familiar within much of rural Canada. Young (2013) notes that although “Involuntary changes are almost always painful, but they can spur new creative and experimentation...” The changes taking place in rural Canada may be an opportunity for rural areas to position themselves by continuing to shape or reshaping an image that will better attract young residents and families.

Conclusion

As seen in the findings of this study, young adults are not a homogeneous group. The diversity that existed within the group of young adults represented in this study was immense. Although there were a number of similarities found between the subgroups and the young adults represented in this study, the identification of their differences furthered the understanding of young adults' mobility decisions, influences and motivations.

Despite this diversity, the majority of respondents perceived rural communities to be attractive places to reside. While some young adults were able to relocate rurally, it was evident that the process of relocating to rural communities is a challenging feat for many young adults. While the sample had a strong attraction to rural living, many were unable to relocate due to barriers and deterrents that made them hesitant to relocate rurally or prevent relocation altogether.

The findings of this study revealed that young adults undergo a complex decision-making process when considering and choosing to relocate from a rural community to an urban centre or from an urban centre to a rural community. Not only did it become evident that there are a number of factors that influence respondents' relocation decisions, it was also clear that certain factors were more influential on respondents decisions than others. As well, it was clear that respondents even within the same subgroups, were influenced differently by certain factors. Utilizing the amenity typology helped to identify the various amenities that young adults perceive to contribute to an attractive community. Understanding the amenities that young adults value in the communities in which they reside helped to identify that many of the young adults in this study based their relocation decisions on a number of factors that related to both employment and lifestyle related factors. Identifying the amenities that young adults value helps to better understand the lifestyle related influences that contribute to their decisions to relocate.

The diversity that existed amongst the sample attributed to the identification of the emerging typology that was identified after respondents past, present and future migration behaviours and intentions were examined. The identification of this emerging typology helps to advance the current understanding of young adult mobility moving

forward as it provides new insights into the fact that young adults are not a homogeneous group and that young adults' motivations to relocate vary based on the certain groups of young adults that emerged. The largest group, group two was motivated to relocate based on opportunities relating to employment, education, and lifestyle. This is a crucial finding of this study as the majority of young adults represented in this study were not motivated to relocate for the long-term. Communities working to attract long-term residents need to utilize opportunities relating to employment, education, and/or lifestyle to get young people relocating in, then the community can work at retaining the young adults residing within the community.

The findings of this study advance the current understanding of young adult attraction to rural communities as the finding support aspects of previous research, differed in from some of the existing research and contribute new findings and insights that help communities to better attract young adults and that further the academic understanding of youth mobility, their decisions, influences and motivations.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Types of Amenities – (Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire, 2010)

Amenity Typology Adopted from Vaugeois & Whitney-Squire (2010)		
Type of Amenity	Categories	Examples
Natural Amenities		
	Climate and Air Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperature (temperate, coastal, northern, arid) and seasons (spring, summer, fall, winter), clean air & skies, northern lights
	Land	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flora (trees, shrubs, plants, flowers), Fauna (Wildlife, fish, birds), topography (mountains, prairie, tundra, coasts, islands), Natural areas and protected areas, hunting, fishing and gathering sites, agriculture settings
	Water	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rivers, ocean, lakes, ice & icebergs (marine life, fish), waterfalls, wetlands, shorelines, beaches
Cultural Amenities		
	Heritage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built sites: Heritage sites, museums, archeological sites, sacred sites, routes Events and activities: stories, traditions, heritage related festivals and events
	Recreation and Sport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built facilities: Ski hills, trails, parks, golf courses, marinas, ice rinks, Agriculture and Fair Grounds, campsites, Equestrian centers, etc., Events and activities: outdoor recreation and nature based tourism (skiing, sledding, tobogganing, hunting, horseback riding, fishing, canoeing, skating, hiking, kayaking, wildlife viewing
	Arts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Built facilities: Galleries, Centers, Theatres Events and activities: celebrations, festivals, performances (arts, dance, music)
	Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forestry, fishing, mining, agriculture, energy, tourism, retail, services, self employment
	Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tangible: heritage buildings, food, architecture, green spaces, landscaping, cemeteries and community beautification Intangible: ambience, pace, hospitality, tranquility, spirit, values, belonging, language, religion
System Amenities		
	Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Access (highways, waterways, airports, marinas, railways, ferries), Water, waste, power, education institutions
	Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proximity to urban centers, transportation, natural and cultural amenities Communication connectivity (internet, cell, television, media)
	Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health care, schools, recreation, sport, arts and culture, religious sites (churches mosques, temples) businesses, retail, accommodations, food and beverage establishments, government services
	Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge, skills, people and governance systems

Appendix B – Survey Questions – By Subgroup

Aggregate Survey

1.) Please identify your age group.

- a. 20-23
- b. 24-26
- c. 27-29
- d. None of the above

2.) Please select the population that best suits you?

Rural Stayer (raised rural and remain in rural areas), Rural Leaver (raised rural but left for school or employment), Rural Returner (raised rural, left and then returned to a rural area) and Urbanites (raised in an urban setting, never lived rural)

- a. Rural Leaver
- b. Rural Stayer
- c. Rural Returner
- d. Urbanite

Rural Returners

3.) Which definition of a rural community do you agree with most?

- a. A rural community is defined by the size of its population; a rural community has a population of 10,000 people or less.
- b. A rural community is defined by its culture; for example close knit relationships, social networks, knowing your neighbour, etc.
- c. A rural community is defined by the types of industries that are present; for example fishing, mining, logging, farming, etc.
- d. A rural community is defined by how far it is from other communities and cities.

4.) **To help us better understand your opinions and thoughts about rural living, it is important for us to know where you have lived and the reasons you may have left. From your place of birth to your current residence, please provide the name of each community/town/city where you have lived, the duration of your stay there, and the reasons why you left (if applicable). For example: Vancouver BC, 19 years, University Nanaimo BC, 6 years, Employment Comox BC, 1 year, Current place of residence**

Community Lived in	Reason For Leaving	Length of Stay
A.)		
B.)		
C.)		
D.)		
E.)		
F.)		
G.)		

5.) **In your experience, how influential were the following factors in your decision to leave a rural setting for an urban environment?**

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
The availability of post-secondary institutions in urban areas (ex. Colleges/Universities)	1	2	3	4	5
Rural living was boring/had a lack of things to do	1	2	3	4	5
Increased number of services available in urban	1	2	3	4	5

areas (ex. Medical, Entertainment, etc.)					
Leaving the rural community was the next step in life	1	2	3	4	5
Increased employment options in urban areas	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of investment by the rural community in young people	1	2	3	4	5
Increased opportunities for making new friends & finding a potential partner/spouse in urban settings	1	2	3	4	5
Young people who remain in rural areas can be associated with a negative image: labeled as being less motivated, naïve, unintelligent, or as having a lower status	1	2	3	4	5
The lack of other young people remaining in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
The ability to attain a better and more stable career in urban areas	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of privacy in rural community (ex. Everyone knows what you're up to)	1	2	3	4	5
The quality & accessibility	1	2	3	4	5

to education opportunities for children & youth in urban areas					
Rural community had limited access to housing options (ex. owning, renting)	1	2	3	4	5

6.) How influential were the following factors in your decision to leave the urban setting to return to living in a rural environment?

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
Living in an urban setting was emotionally overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5
Connection & attachment to rural living	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging to make friends/develop networks in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Had an employment opportunity in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
High cost of living & high cost of housing associated with urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends located in or close to the rural community	1	2	3	4	5

Felt lonely and disconnected from the urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Increased entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas	1	2	3	4	5
Increased crime rate in urban areas (ex. Lack of Security & Safety)	1	2	3	4	5
Leisure & Recreation opportunities located in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
Limited expose to nature & the outdoors in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Shared sense of preferences, values, and attitudes with the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
The congestion and traffic present within an urban setting	1	2	3	4	5

7.) **Thinking about the future, what are your future plans in regards to where you want to live? For example, do you know approximately where or which community you would like to live on a long-term basis? Or do you plan to stay where you are currently living? Or are you going to go with the flow and see where life takes you? Please describe your answer.**

8.) **Thinking about the future, what size of community would you like to move to on a long-term basis? Please select the population size that best describes your ideal community.**

- a. A large urban center – population 100,000 or more
- b. A medium sized urban center – population 50,000-99,999

- c. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but not commuting distance to an urban centre
- d. A rural village or small town – population 1,000 or less
- e. A small urban center – population 10,001-49,999
- f. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to an urban centre
- g. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to other rural communities
- h. I would like to stay in my current community

9.) **Now that you have relocated back to a rural setting, what is one thing you would change in order to increase the attractiveness of your community?**

10.) **Thinking about when you returned to living in a rural community, is there anything that could have made it easier to return?**

11.) **Sometimes youth feel pressured to leave their rural community to take advantage of employment & education opportunities existing in urban centers. This can create a divide and a negative perception of those who decide to stay rather than leave. If you experienced this pressure, please describe how it has contributed to your perception of rural community living. Has this pressure changed how you view rural living?**

12.) **In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? A.) Natural & Environmental Features**

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Green Spaces (ex. Parks,	1	2	3	4	5

Protected Areas, etc.)					
Nature & Wild Life	1	2	3	4	5
Fresh water (Lakes or Rivers)	1	2	3	4	5
Salt Water (Sea or Ocean)	1	2	3	4	5
Air Quality	1	2	3	4	5
Access to clean water	1	2	3	4	5
Climate	1	2	3	4	5
Mountains	1	2	3	4	5
Prairies	1	2	3	4	5
Coasts	1	2	3	4	5
Islands	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting/fishing	1	2	3	4	5
Agriculture settings	1	2	3	4	5

13.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? B.) Recreation Services & Facilities

	Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Recreation & sports facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programming	1	2	3	4	5
Organized Sports Associations	1	2	3	4	5
Winter Sports (ex. Skiing, Snowboarding, Snowmobiling etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

Water Sports (ex. Kayaking, Surfing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Multi-Use Trails	1	2	3	4	5
Community festivals & events	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment facilities (ex. Local movie theatre, bowling ally, mini golf, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Places of interest (ex. Public Library, Museums, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Arts & culture facilities (ex. Art gallery, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Community character (ex. Ambience, Values, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Social Scene and Night life	1	2	3	4	5
Coffee shops, pubs, restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Grocery stores, farmers markets, health food stores	1	2	3	4	5
Community Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Gathering Places (ex. Churches, Mosques, Temples, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

14.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? C.) Proximity & Community Services

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
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		tant			
Connectivity to other urban centers or other communities (ex. Commuting distance)	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal/Public services (ex. Garbage Removal, Hydro, Water, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Colleges and/or Universities	1	2	3	4	5
Education & Training Facilities (ex. Adult education, first aid, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Support services for local businesses and entrepreneurs (Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Programs, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

15.) **Please name one thing (ex. service or amenity) that you absolutely need in a community if you were to relocate/remain there?**

16.) **How far would you be willing to compromise your access to telecommunications in your decision to move to a rural area?**

- a. I would move to a community without Internet access and without cellphone coverage
- b. I would move to a community without Internet access but with cellphone service

- c. I would move to a community without cellphone service but with Internet access
- d. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service & limited Internet access (ex. Dialup Internet)
- e. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service and had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless)
- f. I would only move to a community if it had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless) and cellphone service

17.) Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- a. I would move to a rural community for employment related reasons even if the community did not fit my desired lifestyle
- b. I would move to a rural community for lifestyle related reasons even if I had to take a lower paying job
- c. would only move to a rural community if there was a good balance of employment opportunities and opportunities to live my desired lifestyle
- d. Other (please specify)

18.) When you were returning to living in a rural community, to what extent did each of the following factors make it difficult to relocate?

	Not a Factor	A Small Factor	A Medium Factor	A Major Factor
Leaving family and friends	1	2	3	4
Attachment to current community	1	2	3	4
Physical effort of moving	1	2	3	4
Financial costs associated with moving	1	2	3	4
Impact of moving on	1	2	3	4

spouse/children				
Lack of familiarity with the rural community	1	2	3	4
Not having an employment position set up prior to moving	1	2	3	4
Lack of friends & established networks	1	2	3	4
Limited access to education opportunities (ex. Colleges/universities, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Finding suitable and affordable housing	1	2	3	4
Lack of desired leisure and recreation opportunities	1	2	3	4
Lack of school options for children and youth	1	2	3	4
Lack of employment opportunities for spouse or partner	1	2	3	4

19.) **Please select the statement that best describes your primary focus at this current time.**

- a. Travelling & exploring
- b. Pursuing education goals & opportunities
- c. Finding a partner or significant other
- d. Settling down & identifying a suitable community
- e. Establishing & advancing career
- f. Identifying a community for long-term residence (Buying a house, starting a family, etc.)
- g. Maintaining current lifestyle

20.) Please select which occupation/career you are currently pursuing

- a. Medical Services (ex. Nurse, Doctor, Physician, etc.)
- b. Education
- c. Business/Management/Advertising
- d. Banking/Accounting/Finance
- e. Food & Beverage
- f. Arts & Entertainment
- g. Traditional Trades (ex. Electrician, Wood working, Metallurgy, etc.)
- h. Artisan Trades (ex. Crafts, Brewing, Cheese making, etc.)
- i. Industry (ex. Natural Resources, Logging, Fishing, Mining, Oil Fields)
- j. Farming/Agriculture
- k. Emergency Services (ex. Police, Firemen, Ambulance)
- l. Public Service (ex. Clerk, Bus Driver, etc.)
- m. Government Services
- n. Animal Health
- o. Non-profit/Volunteer Sector/Social Services
- p. Tourism/ Recreation
- q. Health & Wellness (ex. Programmer, Instructor, etc.)
- r. Telecommunications/Technology
- s. Student
- t. Other (please specify)

21.) Please indicate your gender

- a. **Male**
- b. **Female**
- c. **Prefer not to share**

22.) Please indicate your level of education attained.

- a. Some grade school
- b. High school diploma
- c. Some college
- d. Some university

- e. Post-secondary certificate/diploma
- f. Bachelors degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate, law or medical degree

23.) Do you have any last thoughts or opinions on the attractiveness of living in rural communities such as the benefits/challenges, or supports needed to help young people to relocate to or stay in rural communities?

Rural Leavers

1.) Which definition of a rural community do you agree with most?

- a. A rural community is defined by the size of its population; a rural community has a population of 10,000 people or less.
- b. A rural community is defined by its culture; for example close knit relationships, social networks, knowing your neighbour, etc.
- c. A rural community is defined by the types of industries that are present; for example fishing, mining, logging, farming, etc.
- d. A rural community is defined by how far it is from other communities and cities.

2.) To help us better understand your opinions and thoughts about rural living, it is important for us to know where you have lived and the reasons you may have left. From your place of birth to your current residence, please provide the name of each community/town/city where you have lived, the duration of your stay there, and the reasons why you left (if applicable). For example: Vancouver BC, 19 years, University Nanaimo BC, 6 years, Employment Comox BC, 1 year, Current place of residence

Community Lived in	Reason For Leaving	Length of Stay
A.)		
B.)		

C.)		
D.)		
E.)		
F.)		
G.)		

3.) In your experience, how influential were the following factors in your decision to leave a rural setting for an urban environment?

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
The availability of post-secondary institutions in urban areas (ex. Colleges/Universities)	1	2	3	4	5
Rural living was boring/had a lack of things to do	1	2	3	4	5
Increased number of services available in urban areas (ex. Medical, Entertainment, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Leaving the rural community was the next step in life	1	2	3	4	5
Increased employment options in urban areas	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of investment by the rural community in young people	1	2	3	4	5
Increased opportunities for making new friends &	1	2	3	4	5

finding a potential partner/spouse in urban settings					
Young people who remain in rural areas can be associated with a negative image: labeled as being less motivated, naïve, unintelligent, or as having a lower status	1	2	3	4	5
The lack of other young people remaining in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
The ability to attain a better and more stable career in urban areas	1	2	3	4	5
Lack of privacy in rural community (ex. Everyone knows what you're up to)	1	2	3	4	5
The quality & accessibility to education opportunities for children & youth in urban areas	1	2	3	4	5
Rural community had limited access to housing options (ex. owning, renting)	1	2	3	4	5

4.) If you were to consider moving back to a rural community, how influential would the following factors be in your decision to leave an urban setting to return to living in a rural environment?

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
Living in an urban setting was emotionally overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5
Connection & attachment to rural living	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging to make friends/develop networks in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Had an employment opportunity in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
High cost of living & high cost of housing associated with urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends located in or close to the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
Felt lonely and disconnected from the urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Increased entrepreneurship opportunities in rural areas	1	2	3	4	5
Increased crime rate in urban areas (ex. Lack of Security & Safety)	1	2	3	4	5
Leisure & Recreation opportunities located in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
Limited expose to nature &	1	2	3	4	5

the outdoors in an urban area					
Shared sense of preferences, values, and attitudes with the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
The congestion and traffic present within an urban setting	1	2	3	4	5

5.) **Thinking about the future, what are your future plans in regards to where you want to live? For example, do you know approximately where or which community you would like to live on a long-term basis? Or do you plan to stay where you are currently living? Or are you going to go with the flow and see where life takes you? Please describe your answer.**

6.) **Thinking about the future, what size of community would you like to move to on a long-term basis? Please select the population size that best describes your ideal community.**

- a. A large urban center – population 100,000 or more
- b. A medium sized urban center – population 50,000-99,999
- c. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but not commuting distance to an urban centre
- d. A rural village or small town – population 1,000 or less
- e. A small urban center – population 10,001-49,999
- f. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to an urban centre
- g. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to other rural communities
- h. I would like to stay in my current community

7.) **Thinking back to when you were growing up, were you involved in community activities? From the following options below please select all that apply to you.**

- a. Volunteered for community events (ex. sport tournaments, fairs, annual events etc.)
- b. Volunteered with local businesses or Non-profits (ex. cafe, seniors home, community centre etc.)
- c. Volunteered at school events (ex. bake sales, dances, sports days, etc.)
- d. Extra-circular activities (ex. sports teams, recreation classes, etc.)
- e. Leadership activities (ex. Youth council, garbage pickup, etc.)
- f. I would have, but my community didn't have ways for me to get involved
- g. I wasn't into the activities going on in my community
- h. Other (please specify)

8.) **If you or someone you know has no desire to live in a rural community, what is it about rural living that makes you/them not want to come back? Briefly explain.**

9.) **Sometimes youth feel pressured to leave their rural community to take advantage of employment & education opportunities existing in urban centers. This can create a divide and a negative perception of those who decide to stay rather than leave. If you experienced this pressure, please describe how it has contributed to your perception of rural community living. Has this pressure changed how you view rural living?**

10.) **In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? A.) Natural & Environmental Features**

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
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	1	2	3	4	5
Green Spaces (ex. Parks, Protected Areas, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Nature & Wild Life	1	2	3	4	5
Fresh water (Lakes or Rivers)	1	2	3	4	5
Salt Water (Sea or Ocean)	1	2	3	4	5
Air Quality	1	2	3	4	5
Access to clean water	1	2	3	4	5
Climate	1	2	3	4	5
Mountains	1	2	3	4	5
Prairies	1	2	3	4	5
Coasts	1	2	3	4	5
Islands	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting/fishing	1	2	3	4	5
Agriculture settings	1	2	3	4	5

11.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? B.) Recreation Services & Facilities

	Unimportant	Somewhat Unimportant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Recreation & sports facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programming	1	2	3	4	5
Organized Sports Associations	1	2	3	4	5

Winter Sports (ex. Skiing, Snowboarding, Snowmobiling etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Water Sports (ex. Kayaking, Surfing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Multi-Use Trails	1	2	3	4	5
Community festivals & events	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment facilities (ex. Local movie theatre, bowling ally, mini golf, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Places of interest (ex. Public Library, Museums, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Arts & culture facilities (ex. Art gallery, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Community character (ex. Ambience, Values, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Social Scene and Night life	1	2	3	4	5
Coffee shops, pubs, restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Grocery stores, farmers markets, health food stores	1	2	3	4	5
Community Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Gathering Places (ex. Churches, Mosques, Temples, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

12.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? C.) Proximity & Community Services

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Connectivity to other urban centers or other communities (ex. Commuting distance)	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal/Public services (ex. Garbage Removal, Hydro, Water, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Colleges and/or Universities	1	2	3	4	5
Education & Training Facilities (ex. Adult education, first aid, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Support services for local businesses and entrepreneurs (Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Programs, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

13.) **Please name one thing (ex. service or amenity) that you absolutely need in a community if you were to relocate/remain there?**

14.) **How far would you be willing to compromise your access to telecommunications in your decision to move to a rural area?**

- a. I would move to a community without Internet access and without cellphone coverage

- b. I would move to a community without Internet access but with cellphone service
- c. I would move to a community without cellphone service but with Internet access
- d. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service & limited Internet access (ex. Dialup Internet)
- e. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service and had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless)
- f. I would only move to a community if it had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless) and cellphone service

15.) Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- a. I would move to a rural community for employment related reasons even if the community did not fit my desired lifestyle
- b. I would move to a rural community for lifestyle related reasons even if I had to take a lower paying job
- c. would only move to a rural community if there was a good balance of employment opportunities and opportunities to live my desired lifestyle
- d. Other (please specify)

16.) When you were returning to living in a rural community, to what extent did each of the following factors make it difficult to relocate?

	Not a Factor	A Small Factor	A Medium Factor	A Major Factor
Leaving family and friends	1	2	3	4
Attachment to current community	1	2	3	4
Physical effort of moving	1	2	3	4
Financial costs associated	1	2	3	4

with moving				
Impact of moving on spouse/children	1	2	3	4
Lack of familiarity with the rural community	1	2	3	4
Not having an employment position set up prior to moving	1	2	3	4
Lack of friends & established networks	1	2	3	4
Limited access to education opportunities (ex. Colleges/universities, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Finding suitable and affordable housing	1	2	3	4
Lack of desired leisure and recreation opportunities	1	2	3	4
Lack of school options for children and youth	1	2	3	4
Lack of employment opportunities for spouse or partner	1	2	3	4

17.) Please select the statement that best describes your primary focus at this current time.

- a. Travelling & exploring
- b. Pursuing education goals & opportunities
- c. Finding a partner or significant other
- d. Settling down & identifying a suitable community
- e. Establishing & advancing career
- f. Identifying a community for long-term residence (Buying a house, starting a family, etc.)

- g. Maintaining current lifestyle

18.) Please select which occupation/career you are currently pursuing

- a. Medical Services (ex. Nurse, Doctor, Physician, etc.)
- b. Education
- c. Business/Management/Advertising
- d. Banking/Accounting/Finance
- e. Food & Beverage
- f. Arts & Entertainment
- g. Traditional Trades (ex. Electrician, Wood working, Metallurgy, etc.)
- h. Artisan Trades (ex. Crafts, Brewing, Cheese making, etc.)
- i. Industry (ex. Natural Resources, Logging, Fishing, Mining, Oil Fields)
- j. Farming/Agriculture
- k. Emergency Services (ex. Police, Firemen, Ambulance)
- l. Public Service (ex. Clerk, Bus Driver, etc.)
- m. Government Services
- n. Animal Health
- o. Non-profit/Volunteer Sector/Social Services
- p. Tourism/ Recreation
- q. Health & Wellness (ex. Programmer, Instructor, etc.)
- r. Telecommunications/Technology
- s. Student
- t. Other (please specify)

19.) Please indicate your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to share

20.) Please indicate your level of education attained.

- a. Some grade school
- b. High school diploma

- c. Some college
- d. Some university
- e. Post-secondary certificate/diploma
- f. Bachelors degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate, law or medical degree

21.) Do you have any last thoughts or opinions on the attractiveness of living in rural communities such as the benefits/challenges, or supports needed to help young people to relocate to or stay in rural communities?

Rural Stayers

1.) Which definition of a rural community do you agree with most?

- a. A rural community is defined by the size of its population; a rural community has a population of 10,000 people or less.
- b. A rural community is defined by its culture; for example close knit relationships, social networks, knowing your neighbor, etc.
- c. A rural community is defined by the types of industries that are present; for example fishing, mining, logging, farming, etc.
- d. A rural community is defined by how far it is from other communities and cities.

2.) To help us better understand your opinions and thoughts about rural living, it is important for us to know where you have lived and the reasons you may have left. From your place of birth to your current residence, please provide the name of each community/town/city where you have lived, the duration of your stay there, and the reasons why you left (if applicable). For example: Vancouver BC, 19 years, University Nanaimo BC, 6 years, Employment Comox BC, 1 year, Current place of residence

Community Lived in	Reason For Leaving	Length of Stay
A.)		

B.)		
C.)		
D.)		
E.)		
F.)		
G.)		

3.) How influential were the following factors in your decision to remain living in a rural environment?

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
Living in an urban setting is emotionally overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5
Connected & attached to rural living	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging to make friends/develop networks in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Had an employment opportunity in current community	1	2	3	4	5
High cost of living & high cost of housing associated with urban living	1	2	3	4	5
To be close to family & friends	1	2	3	4	5
Urban living can be lonely and have feelings of being disconnected	1	2	3	4	5
Increased crime rate in	1	2	3	4	5

urban areas (ex. Lack of Security & Safety)					
Leisure & Recreation opportunities located in current community	1	2	3	4	5
Limited expose to nature & the outdoors in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Shared sense of preferences, values, and attitudes with current community	1	2	3	4	5
The congestion and traffic present within an urban setting	1	2	3	4	5
Able to attain desired level of education/school in current community (or school was in commuting distance)	1	2	3	4	5
An urban area is too large: there are too many people	1	2	3	4	5
Feel safe & comfortable in and familiar with current community	1	2	3	4	5
People in urban areas are unfriendly	1	2	3	4	5
Maintain community connections & networks	1	2	3	4	5
Urban environments are competitive and tense	1	2	3	4	5
Have a family & have settled down	1	2	3	4	5

- 4.) **Thinking about the future, what are your future plans in regards to where you want to live? For example, do you know approximately where or which community you would like to live on a long-term basis? Or do you plan to stay where you are currently living? Or are you going to go with the flow and see where life takes you? Please describe your answer.**

- 5.) **Thinking about the future, what size of community would you like to move to on a long-term basis? Please select the population size that best describes your ideal community.**
 - a. A large urban center – population 100,000 or more
 - b. A medium sized urban center – population 50,000-99,999
 - c. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but not commuting distance to an urban centre
 - d. A rural village or small town – population 1,000 or less
 - e. A small urban center – population 10,001-49,999
 - f. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to an urban centre
 - g. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to other rural communities
 - h. I would like to stay in my current community

- 6.) **Thinking about your rural setting, what is one thing you would change in order to increase the attractiveness of your community?**

- 7.) **Thinking about the challenges of living in rural areas, is there anything that could help you continue to reside in a rural setting?**

- 8.) **Do you have any words of wisdom relating to rural living, for other young adults who are considering moving to a rural area?**

9.) Sometimes youth feel pressured to leave their rural community to take advantage of employment & education opportunities existing in urban centers. This can create a divide and a negative perception of those who decide to stay rather than leave. If you experienced this pressure, please describe how it has contributed to your perception of rural community living. Has this pressure changed how you view rural living?

10.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? A.) Natural & Environmental Features

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Green Spaces (ex. Parks, Protected Areas, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Nature & Wild Life	1	2	3	4	5
Fresh water (Lakes or Rivers)	1	2	3	4	5
Salt Water (Sea or Ocean)	1	2	3	4	5
Air Quality	1	2	3	4	5
Access to clean water	1	2	3	4	5
Climate	1	2	3	4	5
Mountains	1	2	3	4	5
Prairies	1	2	3	4	5
Coasts	1	2	3	4	5
Islands	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting/fishing	1	2	3	4	5
Agriculture settings	1	2	3	4	5

11.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? **B.) Recreation Services & Facilities**

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Recreation & sports facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programming	1	2	3	4	5
Organized Sports Associations	1	2	3	4	5
Winter Sports (ex. Skiing, Snowboarding, Snowmobiling etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Water Sports (ex. Kayaking, Surfing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Multi-Use Trails	1	2	3	4	5
Community festivals & events	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment facilities (ex. Local movie theatre, bowling ally, mini golf, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Places of interest (ex. Public Library, Museums, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Arts & culture facilities (ex. Art gallery, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Community character (ex. Ambience, Values, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Social Scene and Night life	1	2	3	4	5

Coffee shops, pubs, restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Grocery stores, farmers markets, health food stores	1	2	3	4	5
Community Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Gathering Places (ex. Churches, Mosques, Temples, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

12.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? C.) Proximity & Community Services

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Connectivity to other urban centers or other communities (ex. Commuting distance)	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal/Public services (ex. Garbage Removal, Hydro, Water, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Colleges and/or Universities	1	2	3	4	5
Education & Training Facilities (ex. Adult education, first aid, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Support services for local businesses and	1	2	3	4	5

entrepreneurs (Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Programs, etc.)					
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13.) **Please name one thing (ex. service or amenity) that you absolutely need in a community if you were to relocate/remain there?**

14.) **How far would you be willing to compromise your access to telecommunications in your decision to move to a rural area?**

- a. I would move to a community without Internet access and without cellphone coverage
- b. I would move to a community without Internet access but with cellphone service
- c. I would move to a community without cellphone service but with Internet access
- d. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service & limited Internet access (ex. Dialup Internet)
- e. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service and had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless)
- f. I would only move to a community if it had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless) and cellphone service

15.) **Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?**

- a. I would move to a rural community for employment related reasons even if the community did not fit my desired lifestyle
- b. I would move to a rural community for lifestyle related reasons even if I had to take a lower paying job
- c. would only move to a rural community if there was a good balance of employment opportunities and opportunities to live my desired lifestyle
- d. Other (please specify)

16.) Please select the statement that best describes your primary focus at this current time.

- a. Travelling & exploring
- b. Pursuing education goals & opportunities
- c. Finding a partner or significant other
- d. Settling down & identifying a suitable community
- e. Establishing & advancing career
- f. Identifying a community for long-term residence (Buying a house, starting a family, etc.)
- g. Maintaining current lifestyle

17.) Please select which occupation/career you are currently pursuing

- a. Medical Services (ex. Nurse, Doctor, Physician, etc.)
- b. Education
- c. Business/Management/Advertising
- d. Banking/Accounting/Finance
- e. Food & Beverage
- f. Arts & Entertainment
- g. Traditional Trades (ex. Electrician, Wood working, Metallurgy, etc.)
- h. Artisan Trades (ex. Crafts, Brewing, Cheese making, etc.)
- i. Industry (ex. Natural Resources, Logging, Fishing, Mining, Oil Fields)
- j. Farming/Agriculture
- k. Emergency Services (ex. Police, Firemen, Ambulance)
- l. Public Service (ex. Clerk, Bus Driver, etc.)
- m. Government Services
- n. Animal Health
- o. Non-profit/Volunteer Sector/Social Services
- p. Tourism/ Recreation
- q. Health & Wellness (ex. Programmer, Instructor, etc.)
- r. Telecommunications/Technology
- s. Student

- t. Other (please specify)

18.) Please indicate your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to share

19.) Please indicate your level of education attained.

- a. Some grade school
- b. High school diploma
- c. Some college
- d. Some university
- e. Post-secondary certificate/diploma
- f. Bachelors degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate, law or medical degree

20.) Do you have any last thoughts or opinions on the attractiveness of living in rural communities such as the benefits/challenges, or supports needed to help young people to relocate to or stay in rural communities?

Urbanites

1.) Which definition of a rural community do you agree with most?

- a. A rural community is defined by the size of its population; a rural community has a population of 10,000 people or less.
- b. A rural community is defined by its culture; for example close knit relationships, social networks, knowing your neighbour, etc.
- c. A rural community is defined by the types of industries that are present; for example fishing, mining, logging, farming, etc.
- d. A rural community is defined by how far it is from other communities and cities.

2.) Please select the following statement that best describes your experience (ex. visiting/living) with rural areas based on a definition of having a population of 10,000 or less.

- a. A lot of experience in a rural area or community
- b. Some experience in a rural area or community
- c. Little experience in a rural area or community
- d. No experience in a rural area or community

3.) Please explain your experience (ex. visiting/living) with rural areas by selecting the activities you have participated in while in rural environments. Please select all that apply. *Rural areas are being defined as having a population of 10,000 people or less.

- a. Travelling
- b. Camping
- c. Visiting Family & Friends
- d. Visiting cabin/cottage/second home
- e. Recreation Activities
- f. Employment
- g. Education (ex. Field trips, Field schools, Internships, Exchanges, etc.)
- h. Other (please specify)

4.) To help us better understand your opinions and thoughts about rural living, it is important for us to know where you have lived and the reasons you may have left. From your place of birth to your current residence, please provide the name of each community/town/city where you have lived, the duration of your stay there, and the reasons why you left (if applicable). For example: Vancouver BC, 19 years, University Nanaimo BC, 6 years, Employment Comox BC, 1 year, Current place of residence

Community Lived in	Reason For Leaving	Length of Stay
A.)		
B.)		

C.)		
D.)		
E.)		
F.)		
G.)		

5.) How influential would the following factors be when making a decision to leave the urban setting and move to a rural environment?

	Not at all Influential	Slightly Influential	Moderately Influential	Very Influential	Extremely Influential
Living in an urban setting was emotionally overwhelming	1	2	3	4	5
Connection & attachment to rural living	1	2	3	4	5
Challenging to make friends/develop networks in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Had an employment opportunity in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
High cost of living & high cost of housing associated with urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Family & friends located in or close to the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
Felt lonely and disconnected from the urban living	1	2	3	4	5
Increased entrepreneurship	1	2	3	4	5

opportunities in rural areas					
Increased crime rate in urban areas (ex. Lack of Security & Safety)	1	2	3	4	5
Leisure & Recreation opportunities located in the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
Limited expose to nature & the outdoors in an urban area	1	2	3	4	5
Shared sense of preferences, values, and attitudes with the rural community	1	2	3	4	5
The congestion and traffic present within an urban setting	1	2	3	4	5

6.) **Thinking about the future, what are your future plans in regards to where you want to live? For example, do you know approximately where or which community you would like to live on a long-term basis? Or do you plan to stay where you are currently living? Or are you going to go with the flow and see where life takes you? Please describe your answer.**

7.) **Thinking about the future, what size of community would you like to move to on a long-term basis? Please select the population size that best describes your ideal community.**

- a. A large urban center – population 100,000 or more
- b. A medium sized urban center – population 50,000-99,999
- c. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but not commuting distance to an urban centre
- d. A rural village or small town – population 1,000 or less

- e. A small urban center – population 10,001-49,999
- f. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to an urban centre
- g. A rural community – population 10,000 or less but commuting distance to other rural communities
- h. I would like to stay in my current community

8.) **Briefly describe your perceptions and impressions of the rural lifestyle.**

9.) **If you or someone you know has no desire to live in a rural community, what is it about rural living that makes you/them not want to come back? Briefly explain.**

10.) **Thinking about moving to a rural area, what would be or what was your biggest hesitation?**

11.) **In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? A.) Natural & Environmental Features**

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Green Spaces (ex. Parks, Protected Areas, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Nature & Wild Life	1	2	3	4	5
Fresh water (Lakes or Rivers)	1	2	3	4	5
Salt Water (Sea or Ocean)	1	2	3	4	5
Air Quality	1	2	3	4	5

Access to clean water	1	2	3	4	5
Climate	1	2	3	4	5
Mountains	1	2	3	4	5
Prairies	1	2	3	4	5
Coasts	1	2	3	4	5
Islands	1	2	3	4	5
Hunting/fishing	1	2	3	4	5
Agriculture settings	1	2	3	4	5

12.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? **B.) Recreation Services & Facilities**

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Recreation & sports facilities	1	2	3	4	5
Recreation programming	1	2	3	4	5
Organized Sports Associations	1	2	3	4	5
Winter Sports (ex. Skiing, Snowboarding, Snowmobiling etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Water Sports (ex. Kayaking, Surfing, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Multi-Use Trails	1	2	3	4	5
Community festivals & events	1	2	3	4	5
Entertainment facilities (ex.	1	2	3	4	5

Local movie theatre, bowling ally, mini golf, etc.)					
Places of interest (ex. Public Library, Museums, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Arts & culture facilities (ex. Art gallery, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Community character (ex. Ambience, Values, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
Social Scene and Night life	1	2	3	4	5
Coffee shops, pubs, restaurants	1	2	3	4	5
Grocery stores, farmers markets, health food stores	1	2	3	4	5
Community Appearance	1	2	3	4	5
Religious Gathering Places (ex. Churches, Mosques, Temples, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

13.) In a general sense, how important is the accessibility of each of the following attributes in regards to making a decision to move to any community, urban or rural? C.) Proximity & Community Services

	Unimpor tant	Somewh at Unimpor tant	Neither	Somewhat Important	Important
Connectivity to other urban centers or other communities (ex. Commuting distance)	1	2	3	4	5
Municipal/Public services (ex. Garbage Removal,	1	2	3	4	5

Hydro, Water, etc.)					
Elementary, Middle, and High Schools	1	2	3	4	5
Colleges and/or Universities	1	2	3	4	5
Education & Training Facilities (ex. Adult education, first aid, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
Support services for local businesses and entrepreneurs (Chamber of Commerce, Economic Development Programs, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5

14.) Please name one thing (ex. service or amenity) that you absolutely need in a community if you were to relocate/remain there?

15.) How far would you be willing to compromise your access to telecommunications in your decision to move to a rural area?

- a. I would move to a community without Internet access and without cellphone coverage
- b. I would move to a community without Internet access but with cellphone service
- c. I would move to a community without cellphone service but with Internet access
- d. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service & limited Internet access (ex. Dialup Internet)
- e. I would move to a community if it had limited cellphone service and had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless)
- f. I would only move to a community if it had full Internet access (ex. High speed, Wireless) and cellphone service

16.) Which of the following statements do you agree with the most?

- a. I would move to a rural community for employment related reasons even if the community did not fit my desired lifestyle
- b. I would move to a rural community for lifestyle related reasons even if I had to take a lower paying job
- c. would only move to a rural community if there was a good balance of employment opportunities and opportunities to live my desired lifestyle
- d. Other (please specify)

17.) When/if you were moving to a rural community, to what extent would each of the following factors make it difficult to relocate?

	Not a Factor	A Small Factor	A Medium Factor	A Major Factor
Leaving family and friends	1	2	3	4
Attachment to current community	1	2	3	4
Physical effort of moving	1	2	3	4
Financial costs associated with moving	1	2	3	4
Impact of moving on spouse/children	1	2	3	4
Lack of familiarity with the rural community	1	2	3	4
Not having an employment position set up prior to moving	1	2	3	4
Lack of friends & established networks	1	2	3	4

Limited access to education opportunities (ex. Colleges/universities, etc.)	1	2	3	4
Finding suitable and affordable housing	1	2	3	4
Lack of desired leisure and recreation opportunities	1	2	3	4
Lack of school options for children and youth	1	2	3	4
Lack of employment opportunities for spouse or partner	1	2	3	4

18.) **Please select the statement that best describes your primary focus at this current time.**

- a. Travelling & exploring
- b. Pursuing education goals & opportunities
- c. Finding a partner or significant other
- d. Settling down & identifying a suitable community
- e. Establishing & advancing career
- f. Identifying a community for long-term residence (Buying a house, starting a family, etc.)
- g. Maintaining current lifestyle

19.) **Please select which occupation/career you are currently pursuing**

- a. Medical Services (ex. Nurse, Doctor, Physician, etc.)
- b. Education
- c. Business/Management/Advertising
- d. Banking/Accounting/Finance
- e. Food & Beverage
- f. Arts & Entertainment
- g. Traditional Trades (ex. Electrician, Wood working, Metallurgy, etc.)

- h. Artisan Trades (ex. Crafts, Brewing, Cheese making, etc.)
- i. Industry (ex. Natural Resources, Logging, Fishing, Mining, Oil Fields)
- j. Farming/Agriculture
- k. Emergency Services (ex. Police, Firemen, Ambulance)
- l. Public Service (ex. Clerk, Bus Driver, etc.)
- m. Government Services
- n. Animal Health
- o. Non-profit/Volunteer Sector/Social Services
- p. Tourism/ Recreation
- q. Health & Wellness (ex. Programmer, Instructor, etc.)
- r. Telecommunications/Technology
- s. Student
- t. Other (please specify)

20.) Please indicate your gender

- a. Male
- b. Female
- c. Prefer not to share

21.) Please indicate your level of education attained.

- a. Some grade school
- b. High school diploma
- c. Some college
- d. Some university
- e. Post-secondary certificate/diploma
- f. Bachelors degree
- g. Master's degree
- h. Doctorate, law or medical degree

22.) Do you have any last thoughts or opinions on the attractiveness of living in rural communities such as the benefits/challenges, or supports needed to help young people to relocate to or stay in rural communities?

Appendix C - Research Consent Form Online Survey

RESEARCH CONSENT DISCLAIMER

"Examining the Attractiveness of Rural Areas As a Place to Live"

July, 2013

(Purpose) I am a student taking the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University, located in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. This program has a thesis component where students are required to complete a research project. I have designed a research project to examine the attractiveness of rural communities as a place to live. To participate in this study, you must be a young adult between the ages of 20-29.

(Description) During this online survey, you will be asked to provide brief responses to questions provided. The types of questions that will be asked will relate to a.) Your perspectives on how attractive you perceive rural community living to be; b.) The types of services or amenities you desire to have in the community you live in; and c.) Your thoughts on if the place where you grew up and the other communities you have lived (if any) have influenced where you are currently living or where you would like to live in the future. You will also be asked demographic information age and your current place of residence. To recognize participation in this survey, there will be a random draw for two \$25 Amazon gift cards. The recipients of the gift cards will notified be email and the announcement will also be posted on the study's Facebook group page. There are instructions at the end of this survey to inform you how to enter the your name into the draw.

(Potential harm) There are no known harms associated with your participation in this research.

(Confidentiality) As responses will be provided in the online survey will remain completely anonymous. None of your responses will be linked to your name or email account; responses will be automatically labeled with a number, to ensure anonymity. It is important to note that the study will be conducted on Survey Monkey, a US-based

survey software service that uses US-based servers. As such, Survey Monkey is subject to the US Patriot Act, which allows US officials to access any data obtained and stored on their servers. Accordingly, confidentiality of any information provided by the participant cannot be guaranteed. All data taken off of the Survey Monkey site and printed will be kept in a locked file cabinet where only my thesis supervisor Nicole Vaugeois and myself will have access to the data. Electronic data files will be deleted and destroyed and printed files will be shredded two years – July 2015 - after the completion of this study. The results from this study will be reported in my written thesis report and in my oral thesis defense.

(Participation) Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may at any time withdraw from the study without reason or explanation. You may choose to not to answer any question for any reason. As the data collected in the online survey is anonymous, it is important to note that if you decide to withdraw from the study, the data you have provided up to the point of your withdrawal will remain and be used in research results since it is not possible to distinguish your responses from those of other participants.

(Consent) By pressing the accept button you are agreeing to the terms and conditions of this study. By doing so you will have agreed to having read the above form and agreeing that you have understood the information you have read, as well, you are also agreeing that you understand that you can ask questions or withdraw at any time.

(Concerns About your Treatment in the Research) If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

If you have any questions about this research project, or would like more information, please feel free to contact me at the e-mail address below:

Shannon Bence

Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management Student

Vancouver Island University

Shannon.bence@live.com

Appendix D – Facebook Focus Group Questions

1. “Many people state they enjoy rural areas because of their amazing outdoor environments! Thinking about living in a rural area, what do you find attractive & unattractive about rural communities?”
2. What are some of the stereotypes or misconceptions of rural living that may prevent you or other young people from moving to rural communities?
3. When thinking about moving to any community – urban or rural- would your decision be more influenced by the career opportunities that were offered in a community or by the lifestyle that exists within a community? Please explain your opinion!
4. If you had a magic wand that could change anything about rural communities or rural living, what would you change, keep the same, create, or fix in order to make rural living more attractive?

Appendix E – Research Consent Form Facebook Group Page

RESEARCH CONSENT FORM – July 2013

"Examining the Attractiveness of Rural Areas As a Place to Live"

Shannon Bence
Master of Sustainable Leisure
Management Student
Vancouver Island University
(250) 740-5010

Nicole Vaugeois , PhD, Supervisor
BCRIC in Tourism & Sustainable
Rural Development
Vancouver Island University
(250) 753-3245 Local 2772

(Purpose) I am a student taking the Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management program at Vancouver Island University, located in Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada. As this program has a thesis component I have designed a research project to examine young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of rural communities as a place to live. To participate in this study, you must be a young adult between the ages of 20-29.

(Description) During this study, you will be asked to provide brief responses to questions posted on the Facebook group page. There will be one question posted every two days, for a total of 2 weeks. Your responses to each question can be as long as you desire and can take place anytime during the week; you can also respond to previously posted questions or questions/comments posed by other respondents at anytime throughout the course of the study. Please note that all questions, responses, and comments must be respectful of all participants involved in the study. This study has a zero tolerance for offensive or disrespectful comments directed towards anyone person. Please note that if comments are deemed as disrespectful or offensive you will be removed from the study immediately.

To recognize participation in the Facebook Focus Group, there will be a random draw for two \$25 Amazon gift cards. The recipients of the gift cards will notified by email and the announcement will also be posted on the Facebook Group page. Participants in the Facebook Group will automatically be entered into the draw.

(Potential harm) There are no known harms associated with your participation in this

research.

(Confidentiality) Responses will not be confidential as other participants will be able to see your responses. As well, the Facebook Study Group will be an 'open' group which means that any Facebook user can see your response. However, I will make sure that only people who fit the requirements of the study sample will be allowed to participate in the study. For more information on what it means to be an 'open group' please see <https://www.facebook.com/help/220336891328465/#What-are-the-privacy-options-for-groups>. Respondents have the option to provide responses through the private message function on Facebook if desired. After this study is complete the Facebook group will then be deleted and only my thesis supervisor Nicole Vaugeois and myself will have access to the information. Electronic and paper data files will be deleted and destroyed two years - July 2015 - after the completion of this study. While the study is proceeding on Facebook, data provide by the study participants will be hosted on Facebook's US-based servers and, as such, will be subject to Facebook's privacy policy (provide URL link) and to the US Patriot Act. Accordingly, the confidentiality of any information the participant may provide also cannot be guaranteed. The results from this study will be reported in my written thesis report and in my oral thesis defense.

(Participation) Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may at any time withdraw from this study without reason or explanation. You may choose not to answer any question for any reason. If you decide to withdraw from the study, any data you have provided up to the point of withdrawal will be removed and not included in study results.

(Consent) In order to participate in the Facebook Group, please reply to this email. By replying to this email, stating you are accepting the terms and conditions of this study and confirm that you have read the above form, understand the information you read, understand that you can ask questions or withdraw at any time and you agree to participate in this research study.

(Concerns About your Treatment in the Research) If you have any concerns about your treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the VIU Research Ethics Officer, by telephone at 250-753-3245 (ext, 2665) or by email at reb@viu.ca.

To accept the terms and conditions of this study please reply to this email by sending a response email to Shannon.bence@live.com. All participants must confirm their acceptance of this form in order to participate in the study and qualify for the study incentives.

Thank-you,

Shannon Bence

Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management Student

Vancouver Island University

Shannon.bence@live.com

Appendix F – Facebook Recruitment Script

You are invited to participate in a research study on “Examining Young Adults Perspective on the Attractiveness of Rural Communities as a Place to Live.” This study is conducted by Vancouver Island University’s Masters of Sustainable Leisure Management Student Shannon Bence.

In order to participate in the study you have to be a young adult between the ages of 20-29. The study will be using a Facebook group to create an online focus group to collect different opinions and comments on the attractiveness of rural communities as places to live. The study will be two weeks long, with one question asked every two days. Responses can be as long as you desire and you can also answer the questions when you desire. You are also welcome to leave the study at anytime and can choose to not respond to any of the questions. There are more details about the study on the study’s group page [link to group page].

In order to thank-you for your comments, thoughts, and opinions throughout this research study, there will be a prize given away at the end of the study!! To reward participation in the Facebook Group, there will be a draw for two \$25 Amazon Gift Cards. Each respondent will get his or her name put in the random draw; each name will only be entered once regardless of how many questions are answered. The winners will be contacted via email and the winners will be announced on the Facebook Group.

To join this study, please join the Facebook Group [add link here]. After joining you will be emailed a consent form providing more details on this study. To accept the terms and conditions of the study please respond to this email and you will then be able to participate in the Facebook focus group and will be entered into the draw! Please share this invitation with your friends especially with those who may be interested in living in rural areas!!

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me, Shannon Bence at Shannon.bence@live.com or at the study Facebook page [link to page].

Appendix G Knowledge Mobilization Product

Knowledge Mobilization Strategy

The intent of this research was to gain a better understanding of how to increase the number of young people residing in rural communities. As the findings of this study provided many insights that contribute to a better understanding of young peoples' mobility motivations and preferences, disseminating the results to the appropriate audiences is important. Based on the intent of this study, it is important to ensure that rural communities are able to access the information generated. The findings of this study will also be shared with academic audiences, practitioners, elected officials, and community groups as well. Due to the wide variety of audiences the results of this study intent to be disseminated to, there are a variety of potential knowledge mobilization strategies that can be employed.

In an academic sense, the findings of this study will be shared through the form of an academic article. Few published studies have examined the attraction of young adults to rural areas, and even less have focused on the age group of 20-29 year olds in a Canadian context. The *Journal of Rural and Community Development* as well as the *Journal of Rural Studies* have been identified as potential journals to submit an article.

Also in terms of an academic contribution the findings of this study will be presented at a number of conferences. The 2014 Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation Conference, for instance will be one of the conferences where the results of this study will be presented. As the conference themes include i) restructuring of rural relationships, (ii) building capacity for organizations and governance, (iii) building economic resilience, and (iv) pursuing a high quality of life for rural communities, the 2014 CRRF conference will be a good fit in terms of presenting the findings of this study. The 2014 8th BC Rural Communities Summit is also a potential conference where the results of this study could be shared. This year's summit theme is *Creativity, Communications and Collaboration: Exploring new & innovative solutions to the challenges and opportunities facing BC's remote rural communities*. The way the conference is positioned indicated that the three day event will focus on solutions rather

than problems, which relates directly to the recommendations of this study on how rural areas should position themselves to focus on the attractive features of rural living and the potential solutions to out-migration rather than being focused on the deficits that exist.

One potential way to share the results of this study with practitioners, elected officials, and community groups would be to create a public workshop that can be held in a variety of communities. This workshop would start by summarizing the findings of this study and discuss how communities can position themselves to attract in young residents and families. Then, the workshop will involve a series of activities that will help communities recognize what their area has to offer and how they can attract in young residents and families. The purpose of the workshop is to provide insight into attracting young residents to rural areas, identifying ways the community can position itself to attract residents, and to leave the community with a series of action strategies to move forward after the workshop is complete.

Knowledge Mobilization Strategy: Detailed Description

In order to ensure the results of this study are mobilized and disseminated, a short practitioner report will be created to summarize the most important findings of the study. This report will include one or more infographics that communicate the findings of this study in a visual way. The intended audience of this practitioner report include rural communities, organizations based rurally or other stakeholders located in rural areas or those that are involved with addressing rural issues. The intended audience also includes the organizations the helped to send out the invitation to participate in the study over Facebook. The report will be accessible to the intended audience, as it will be hosted online on potential sites such as the Tourism & Sustainable Rural Development website. The infographics will be created using a variety of online infographics sites as well as Adobe Photoshop to ensure the graphics utilized depict the information generated from the study accurately.

Appendix H Reflective Chapter

As the intent of this study was to understand how to increase the number of young people relocating to rural communities, many insights were gained in terms of how attract young people to living in rural communities. The findings of this study provided many insights on the topic of young adult attraction and retention to rural communities and uncovered key insights that helped to advance the current understanding of the topic. The major research findings of the study included identifying the extent to which respondents were attracted to living in rural communities. While the extent of this attractiveness differed for each respondent, various clusters of respondents with like similarities emerged. It was identified that young adults are not a homogenous group and an emerging typology was identified when respondents were categorized based on their future migration intentions, which provided insight into how attracted respondents were to living rurally. The features that respondents found attractive and unattractive were identified. Further insight was gained on how young adults make their relocation decisions and the factors in which influence those decisions. It became evident that many of the respondents represented in this study were motivated to relocate based on opportunities relating to employment, education and lifestyle ventures. Lastly, a number of recommendations were identified to help communities move forward in terms overcoming the barriers and deterrents that can prevent young residents and families from relocating to rural areas.

After writing my thesis proposal, I learnt that what you think you might do and what you actually have to do during the various stages of the research process can differ. I found writing the literature review of my thesis to be very helpful in terms of being a guide for my study and identifying the gaps in the current understanding of youth and young adult out-migration. The development of my literature review helped me solidify the arguments in terms of why young adults' perspectives on the attractiveness of living in rural Canadian communities needed to be examined. Putting extra time into my literature review paid off in terms of the types of questions I asked in the online survey. During the development of the study methodology, I learnt the benefits and challenges of utilizing a non-traditional data collection tool. While I created both an online survey and a virtual focus group, only the findings generated from the online survey was used as the

virtual focus group did not have a high enough response rate. I learnt the value of employing a mixed method study. Data analysis took me a long time to complete. This stage of research took longer than expected. I realized that data analysis was a slow process that should not be rushed as common themes and key findings emerge after revisiting and re-examining the data collected. Writing the findings section and the discussion of my thesis also proved to be a tricky process, as I had to combine a magnitude of qualitative and quantitative data in a way that represented and clearly communicated the findings of the study. I learnt that while qualitative data is challenging and lengthy to code and analyze, it can provide a rich data set. The final stage of the research process was sharing. This process took place prior to the completion of my thesis as I shared my preliminary findings at the 2013 Canadian Rural Revitalization Conference. Closer to completion, I also shared my thesis findings with communities and during my thesis defense. During this process I learnt about the importance of catering each presentation to the audience present. In terms of changes I would have made if I did this process again, I would have changed the age in which defined a young adult to 20-35 as I had a number of people indicate that they could contribute significantly to the study but were unable to participate as they were in their early 30's and were not in the study age group of 20-29.

The practical implications of this study include communities gaining a better understanding of how to attract young adults as the findings provide in-depth insight into young adults' mobility motivations and preferences. The practical implications of this study will also help communities to position themselves to be seen as attractive places for young residents and families to reside. As well, since a number of barriers and deterrents preventing relocation were identified, communities can also use these as a guide to work towards helping young residents and families to migrate into the community.

From my proposal to the final project, I made various changes during the data collection stage of the study as well as during the data analysis stage. During data collection, I ran into a number of challenges that became present due to the technology, in which I was using to implement the study. However to overcome this, I just had to think on the spot and figure out the best way to move forward. During the data analysis stage, I

realized that my planned analysis did necessarily reflect how I needed to analyze the data I collected. In order to help during this process, I met with various professors who helped me move forward and find strategic ways to analyze the qualitative and quantitative data collected. During both stages, these were challenges in which I did not expect to run into when I was writing the study proposal.

During the research process I faced a number of challenges, most of which became present during the data collection stage of my study. Since I was utilizing an untraditional data collection tool, there was little guidance from previous studies in terms of the best way to utilize the technology. During this stage, I realized I was not as familiar with the data collection technology – Facebook – as I thought. However, I was able to overcome these challenges by moving the start date of my data collection, which enabled me to work out all the kinks before starting this stage of the research process. I managed threats to reliability and validity by combining the use of a non-traditional data collection tool – Facebook – with a more traditional approach – an online survey. By using the Survey Monkey software, I was able to ensure that the data was collected properly and that there was a smaller chance of human error. Threats to validity were overcome as the data from respondents by asking similar questions in a variety of ways, this provided in-depth insight into what exactly respondents were discussing. As well, threats to validity were overcome by ensuring respondents had numerous opportunities to state their opinions and perspectives in the survey as the purpose of the study was to gain young adults' perspectives.

Overall, I am most proud of the findings of my study. I am so pleased with the richness of the data that was collected. The rich, sincere and honest opinions and perspectives provided by such a high number of respondents made the findings of this study so valuable for communities, academics and governments. I am most proud of this aspect of my study because I feel like I did an excellent job at utilizing a methodology that made the participation in this study easily accessible for young people across the country. As well, I also feel like I really researched my topic well before formulating the questions that were asked in the online survey which allowed the findings of this study

really advance the current understanding of the topic forward as the study uncovered a new perspective that had not yet been explored.

In terms of impact, I would like my research to be resource for communities to utilize to help reshape how they are addressing the out-migration of young residents. I would also like my research to help make it easier for young adults who are interested and keen to relocate to or remain living in a rural community, as many respondents discussed how they desired to relocate or remain but were unable to for a number of reasons. As these reasons were heavily discussed as barriers, deterrents and unattractive features of rural living, I hope the research of this study can help communities, policy makers, and governments to address the challenges of relocating or remaining to live in a rural community. As described in my knowledge mobilization plan, I intend for these impacts to happen by sharing the results of this study at a number of academic conferences, implementing workshops and by writing a practitioner report that has an infographic, which will help to make the results of the study accessible for many different audiences.

Appendix I – Ethics Report



July 16, 2013

Shannon Bence
Recreation and Tourism
Vancouver Island University
900 Fifth Street
Nanaimo, British Columbia V9R 5S5

Dear Ms. Bence:

The Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board is pleased to grant approval for the project entitled "Examining the Attractiveness of Rural Areas as a Place to Live," originally submitted for review on April 4, 2013 and as revised and resubmitted July 10, 2013.

Please be aware of your obligation to carry out the research as stated in the revised proposal and to comply with guidelines as posted on the website at <http://www.viu.ca/reb/guidelines.asp>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Ruth Kirson".

Ruth Kirson, Chair
Vancouver Island University Research Ethics Board (VIU REB)

VIU REB Reference No. 2013-019-VIUS-BENCE

Date of Approval July 16, 2013

Date of Expiry July 15, 2014

Please sign the acknowledgement below, retain a copy for your records, and return the original to:

Research Ethics Officer
Bldg. 305 – Rm. 452
Vancouver Island University
Nanaimo, British Columbia V9R 5S5

As researcher(s) I (we) hereby agree to carry out the research in an ethical manner as outlined in the approved proposal submission. If I (we) need to make changes to the methodology and/or recruitment and consent procedures, I (we) will request an amendment from the VIU REB. If the project runs longer than one (1) year, I (we) will submit a request for continuing review (renewal) to the Ethics Officer one (1) month prior to the expiry date indicated above. At the end of the project, I (we) will notify the Ethics Officer to close the study.

Shannon Bence, VIU Recreation and Tourism

July 16, 2013



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world leisure organization
at vancouver island university

The Master of Arts in Sustainable Leisure Management
is an initiative of the World Leisure Centre of Excellence
in Sustainability and Innovation at Vancouver Island University.

Enter Title of Thesis Here

by
Enter student name here



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