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Coming Back: Return Migration to Newfoundland's Great Northern Peninsula

PETER R. SINCLAIR and LAWRENCE F. FELT

INTRODUCTION[1]

THE HOME-MADE SIGN hung outside the ferry terminal in Port aux Basques, Newfoundland. It read simply: "Tariff: Goin' away, free. Comin' back, forget it." The sign had been erected by residents frustrated with the recent closure of local fish processing plants and cutbacks in marine and ferry services. The intent was to mock a government policy of offering financial assistance for relocation to more central urban areas, while appearing to do little to establish viable local employment. A brief discussion with a demonstrator offered the following elaboration:

> Hell, lots of us have had to go away for work, but we felt the government was at least trying to do something to create jobs here... I guess they'd like us all to move to Toronto or some place.

Many Newfoundlanders do leave their old homes, but many come back. This paper is about these return migrants and their significance for the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland. Our study includes migrants who remained within the province as well as those who ventured to other parts of Canada.

Based on a general population survey in 1988, we shall demonstrate that migrants return for a variety of reasons that include failure to find permanent, satisfying jobs in their destination areas. However, many are also pulled back to the Peninsula by the attraction of their families, friends and even the belief that they will find a better job there. Much of the analysis involves comparison of return migrants with those who have never moved, on such dimensions as employment, education, and attitudes to life in the area.

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For most comparisons we report significant differences that suggest the experience of migration has been generally positive. However, we also bring out critical gender variations in this experience. Next, we consider the impact of return migrants on the development of this peripheral area by comparing their social characteristics with those of non-migrant residents. While our findings support other researchers in suggesting that most returners acquire neither significant vocational upgrading nor savings from their migration, some potentially important attitudinal differences between migrants and non-migrants are discovered. These differences may be relevant for future economic development in the region. Overall, it is likely that migration patterns such as we observe for people from the Great Northern Peninsula reinforce spatial aspects of social inequality in the larger society.

Return Migration

Even without the support of formal government policy, migration has been a long standing strategy for inhabitants of economically marginal regions such as Newfoundland. Given this salience of out-migration, it is not surprising that a considerable research inventory has emerged in the last 100 years establishing the magnitude of movement, the factors "pushing" and/or "pulling" migrants, the experiences of migrants at their destinations, and the consequences for sending regions of losing substantial numbers of residents – particularly the young and better educated.

Much less thoroughly examined has been the return of numerous migrants, typically rural dwellers, after a significant period in another reasonably distant area (King, 1986). Beginning in the late 1960s, however, researchers increasingly focused their attention on return migrants as economic growth began to taper off in the United States, Australia and Canada. The best known of these studies are Hernandez-Alvarez's (1967) examination of return migration from the United States to Puerto Rico, Cerase's (1967; 1974) analysis of those returning to Italy from the United States, Richardson's (1968) work on British immigrants returning from Australia, and Richmond's (1966; 1968) study of British return migration from Canada. Analysis of return migration in Europe also swelled coincident with the slowing of economic growth in France, West Germany and other northwest European countries in the 1970s. As Western European countries reduced their intake of migrant workers (guest workers) and pressures for repatriation mounted in the host countries, return flows increased dramatically and so did the number of social scientists eager to examine the underlying dynamics and consequences. The result is that today there is a considerable literature on return migration.

Some authors are concerned with clarifying concepts. Thus King (1986), among others, distinguishes return migration from "visits" on the basis of time spent at the destination. Visits are considered to be periods less than one year

unless they are linked to a seasonal cycle of labour mobility. The research reported in this paper identifies someone as a return migrant if s/he reported *residence* as an adult outside the region, regardless of the duration. Since only 12 of the 202 individuals we classified as returners claimed to have spent less than a year away and only three of these reported no employment, few in our sample could be defined as visitors rather than migrants. Return migration may also be distinguished from repatriation in which the return is forced upon migrants by host governments. None of our sample have been repatriated in this sense.

One obvious topic that has intrigued researchers is why people return. Consequently, subjects have often been asked for their reasons, based on the belief, usually implicit, that the stated reasons adequately explain the action of returning. Although it is tempting to expect that most people would give work-related reasons (either an unacceptable experience in the destination or the attraction of work or self-employment in their old home), recent social research points instead to the priority of personal or family ties unconnected to work. In a study of people who had returned to Malta from Australia, Lever-Tracy (1989:440) stresses "home-sickness" and family obligations, although she does record that work-related reasons were important for the men. Baerga and Thompson (1990) show that family matters, health status of the respondent and dislike of the general social conditions in the host country are important in the case of Puerto Ricans moving back from the United States. In French Polynesia, Lockwood (1990) concludes that most respondents returned for cultural and social reasons or to escape the high urban cost of living by becoming one's "own boss" in farming. White (1983:482) claims that social and cultural rather than economic factors draw migrants back to Appalachian Kentucky. Economic reasons were provided by only 13 per cent of a sample of return migrants to the Italian mezzogiorno (King et al., 1986).

In a comparison of western Ireland with northeast and western Newfoundland (Gmelch, 1983; Richling, 1985; Gmelch and Richling, 1986), respondents were asked how much they had been influenced by each of 12 possible motives. Gmelch found similar patterns in both places with "patriotic-social" and "familial-personal" pull factors scoring highest (although economic motivation was not uncommon). That is, people tended not to be driven out of their destination, but to be attracted home because of a sense of belonging and the need to be with kin. Most respondents indicated they were influenced by more than one factor, which led Gmelch to conclude that the motivation for return migration is complex and cannot be considered as a purely economic matter.

Researchers have attempted to determine in what ways migration has been a positive or a negative experience. Do returners represent "failures" in any sense? Do returning migrants acquire new occupational skills, job experience or education while away, and can they be applied? This evaluation of the migration

experience may involve a comparison of returners with their compatriots who remained away or with others who did not leave. Overall, the findings are mixed. King (1986:17-18) summarizes the evidence by concluding that there is "negative selection" of return migrants to southern Europe, while Latin American returners tend to be "better educated and more skilled" than local populations or those who never come back. Gmelch (1980:141) concludes that most return migrants cannot be classified as either successful or failures.

More recent research still leaves the question unsettled. Thus, returners to Malta from Australia were neither unsuccessful settlers nor successful "guestworkers" (Lever-Tracy, 1989). King et al. (1986) report that most returners to the Italian mezzogiorno have low education levels and that few obtained qualifications while away. Return migrants to Greece have been recognized as relatively skilled, but are unable to find suitable industrial employment in the local economy (Petras and Kousis, 1988), a conclusion that Rhoades (1978) also reached in his study in Andalusia. When Hiscott (1987:591), however, compared return migrants with immobile residents of Atlantic Canada in 1981, he found remarkable similarity in educational and occupational status for both men and women. Non-returners were more successful in that they were better educated and were more likely to hold professional or technical jobs. In Barbados, Gmelch (1987) discovered that migrants who had left as students were in professional or white collar jobs on their return, whereas worker migrants found little opportunity to apply any skills they might have acquired. A study of southern blacks reports that return migrants, compared with immobile residents and non-returning migrants, had the lowest education and were less likely to be employed, even with age controlled. Younger returners had higher average income than those who were immobile, but less than non-returners (Li and Randolph, 1982). An earlier study of southern blacks in the 1950s and 1960s was more positive about the returners. Thus Long and Hansen (1977) show that out-migrants were better educated than non-migrants and that those who had returned tended to be better educated than the average for all who leave. Yet returners frequently had lower incomes than non-migrants, although their position improved from the 1950s to the 1960s. Perhaps the failure to translate better education into an income advantage was the result of initially high unemployment on return or low seniority (Long and Hansen, 1977:327). Even so, by the 1960s, younger return migrants were earning more than non-migrants. Out-migrants who stayed in the north were best off.

Related to the success and failure of individual migrants is the question of the impact of returners on local socio-economic development. There are several ways in which substantial levels of return migration might enhance economic development. Some are tangible, such as bringing back capital for local investment. Yet most research suggests only a modest contribution of return migrants to such development. They tend to have little capital and to invest what

they do have conservatively in real estate or personal consumption goods, such as automobiles, that provide no more than a short-term stimulus to the local economy (Athukorala, 1990; Baerga and Thompson, 1990; King, et al. 1986; Lewis and Williams, 1986; Lockwood, 1990; Rhoades, 1978; Took, 1986). Those who do form businesses tend to do so in the service sector or agriculture (Athukorala, 1990; Lewis and Williams, 1986; Gmelch, 1986; Gmelch and Richling, 1986). Against the conclusion that return migrants make little contribution to local economic development some counter-evidence does exist. Thus Lawless (1986) shows that some migrants who returned from France to Algeria after 1974 established small industrial enterprises in state-designated development areas, but they did not contribute to economic development of areas outside these zones. Gmelch (1987) also demonstrates that students returning to Barbados were innovative and King (1986:21-22) finds evidence of a positive impact in some third world contexts.

Explanations for the return of migrants usually are limited to a statement of their reasons. With a similar focus on characteristics of the individual person, explanations of the limited impact of returners on local socio-economic development point to their low levels of education and accumulated capital. Some neo-marxist writers, however, provide a "deeper" structural explanation of out-migration and return migration as a part of the larger process of underdevelopment through which dependency is reproduced. For example, in refuting the theory that out-migration is a net benefit to impoverished areas of west Africa, Amin (1974:104) argues that there are only rare instances of returning migrants who "have given proof of initiatives in the direction of change," for example, by setting up stores or small agricultural enterprises. Amin believes that migration works to prevent progressive change by impoverishing the regions, which react by emphasizing traditional adaptations that allow them to survive. "The form that this development then takes is that of a degenerated agrarian capitalism, corrupted and poor" (Amin, 1974:104). For Atlantic Canada, where our research is located, Veltmeyer (1980; 1990) and Sacouman (1980) have been the main neo-marxist interpreters of underdevelopment. Recently, Veltmeyer has reiterated the view that capitalist development benefits from the existence of an industrial reserve army of partially proletarianized labour in the periphery (Veltmeyer, 1990:99-100). From this perspective return migration must be understood within the larger process of capitalist reproduction. The movements away from and back to peripheral areas reflect changing demands for labour in core industrial areas. Out-migrants and returners are therefore best seen as part of a larger industrial reserve labour force (a "floating surplus population") responding to the market demands of more powerful urban cores.

In our analysis, we propose to add to this literature by examining return migrants to the Great Northern Peninsula of Newfoundland with special concern for their stated reasons, their social characteristics compared with immobile

residents, and their likely impact on regional development. In so doing we address the adequacy of existing theories of return migration. First, however, we shall briefly describe the region and the survey, which is our primary data source.

The Research Site

The Canadian province of Newfoundland and Labrador offers a useful site to explore some of the above issues relating to return migration. Newfoundland and Labrador is Canada's most recent and poorest province. Most of its people live along the coast of the rocky, almost barren island of Newfoundland, long known for its fishing grounds. Among the most isolated are the 25,000 inhabitants of the Great Northern Peninsula, which stretches northeast from Bonne Bay for 300 kilometres. The population is scattered among more than 60 coastal settlements of which the largest is St. Anthony, a service centre and fishing port with slightly more than 3,000 people. Although a few permanent residents have been traced back to the late eighteenth century, settlers were discouraged as long as France exercised treaty rights that gave French fishermen exclusive access to the region's fish (Thornton, 1977). It is thus an area of recent settlement and one that remains sparsely populated.

The Great Northern Peninsula suffers from a harsh climate, with long snowy winters and harbours closed for months by ice. The growing season is short and soils are poor. The region's forests used to produce timber for the pulp and paper industry, but the pulpwood was carried south to Corner Brook for processing, a pattern typical of underdeveloped regions. The old rocks of the Long Range Mountains may contain valuable minerals, but only zinc has actually been extracted, and that mine has now closed, the readily accessible sources of zinc having been exhausted. Marine resources, especially cod and shrimp, are the main basis of the regional economy.

Despite several pockets of relative prosperity, the Great Northern Peninsula is characterized by numerous indicators of marginality. Unemployment is painfully high on the Peninsula - more than three times the national rate in 1986, although the labour force participation rate was higher than for the province and about the same as the national average. Reflecting the importance of the inshore fishery is the relatively high percentage of men who are self-employed (13.5 per cent compared with 4.8 per cent for Newfoundland). The service sector is less well developed, whereas relatively more people are found in primary industry (mainly fishing) and manufacturing (almost exclusively fish processing). In 1986, 22.9 per cent of the labour force was engaged in primary industry and 20.8 per cent in manufacturing compared with Canadian figures of 6.6 and 16.8 per cent respectively. Incomes are low even by Newfoundland standards and, relative to Canada, male incomes are especially depressed. The 1986 median income for men was $11,489 (58 per cent of the Canadian median) and for women it was $6,957 (72.9 per cent of the Canadian

median). Finally, the dependence on transfer payments in our research area is particularly high with 32.2 per cent of total income coming from this source compared with 21.2 per cent in Newfoundland and only 11.1 per cent in Canada.[2]

METHODOLOGY

Our research on return migrants is based on a survey of all persons 18 years or older in 250 households on the Great Northern Peninsula. The census clusters Northern Peninsula households into 36 communities and unincorporated districts. We first sampled 10 of these communities and districts, with the probability of inclusion being proportionate to the unit's population, and then randomly selected 25 households in each centre such that each household on the Peninsula had an equal probability of appearing in the sample. The communities chosen were Rocky Harbour, Parson's Pond, Port au Choix, Flower's Cove, Cook's Harbour, St. Anthony, Main Brook, Englee, Roddickton, and Census Subdivision D (which includes unincorporated communities) on the northern tip of the Peninsula. After extensive investigation we decided that the best sampling frame of households was provided by the 1988 telephone directory up-dated to August 1988 where possible. There are hardly any unlisted numbers on the Peninsula, but we recognize that a small percentage of households with no telephone are excluded. For an analysis of return migration our sampling procedure is superior to surveys that attempt to interview only return migrants for whom no adequate sampling frame can be constructed.

The interviews were conducted by six persons familiar with the communities concerned. If no response could be obtained from any person in a selected household, interviewers were asked to substitute from our randomly selected list. Only 12 households were substituted in this way. Once permission was obtained to interview one adult in the household, that household became part of the sample. Of course, other adults in the household might be impossible to contact or refuse to take part. Perhaps because we paid respondents $10 per completed interview, this did not prove a serious problem. It appears that the interviewers failed to complete 39 interviews at this stage,[3] giving a response rate of 93.4 per cent. Because the same questions were being asked of different household members, we stressed that each interview should be conducted in private. In total, 554 interviews were completed between late August and early December, 1988.

While the general focus of the survey was to examine how individuals and households manage to survive in such a harsh physical and economic environment (see Sinclair and Felt, 1990, 1991), we collected information on current and last three occupations, including location, duration and reason for leaving. Along with residential histories and birthplace, this information allowed us to examine the process of return migrations. Respondents were asked if they had ever lived anywhere else, even for a few months. If so, they were asked for up to three locations, the time spent in each, and their main reason for leaving.

Migration Patterns

A major survival strategy for young people in a discouraging economic environment like that of the Great Northern Peninsula is to leave. To estimate youth out-migration, the 10 to 14 and 15 to 19 age cohorts for the years 1951, 1961, 1971 and 1981 were followed for ten years. Since mortality is extremely low until at least 30 years old, changes in the sizes of these cohorts up to that age provide good measures of net migration. The outflow of young people was astonishingly high in some periods, particularly 1961-1971 when the 10-14 cohort declined by 43.0 per cent for men and 39.8 per cent for women (mostly between 1966 and 1971). For the 1951 cohorts, out-migration for women was substantially higher than for men. However, for later cohorts, beginning in 1966, there appear to be no clear and consistent differences in out-migration between males and females (table 1).

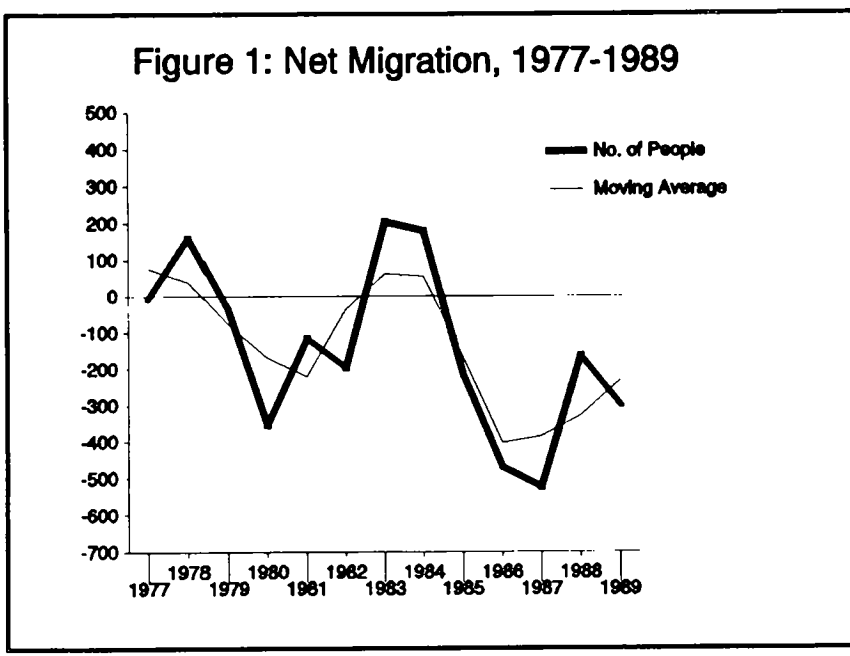
Table 1: Percentage Change in Age Cohorts

	Age in Base Census Year			
Period*	10-14		15-19	
	Males	Females	Males	Females
1951-56	-3.0	-8.0	-0.2	-10.9
1951-61	-20.4	-33.7	-15.8	-23.6
1961-66	-7.9	-9.2	-22.1	-23.1
1961-71	-43.0	-39.8	-31.1	-25.6
1971-76	-5.3	-8.7	-15.0	-18.1
1971-81	-24.5	-21.7	-21.6	-21.7
1981-86	-6.4	-6.0	-22.5	-12.2
1981-91	-31.5	-30.2	-32.6	-22.2
1986-91	-5.1	-7.6	-26.9	-25.7

* The year on the left is the base census year. The second year is the year when the number of this cohort is recorded again. E.g., the number of males who were 10 to 14 years old in 1951 are compared with males 15 to 19 years in 1956. This cohort was 3 per cent smaller in 1956.

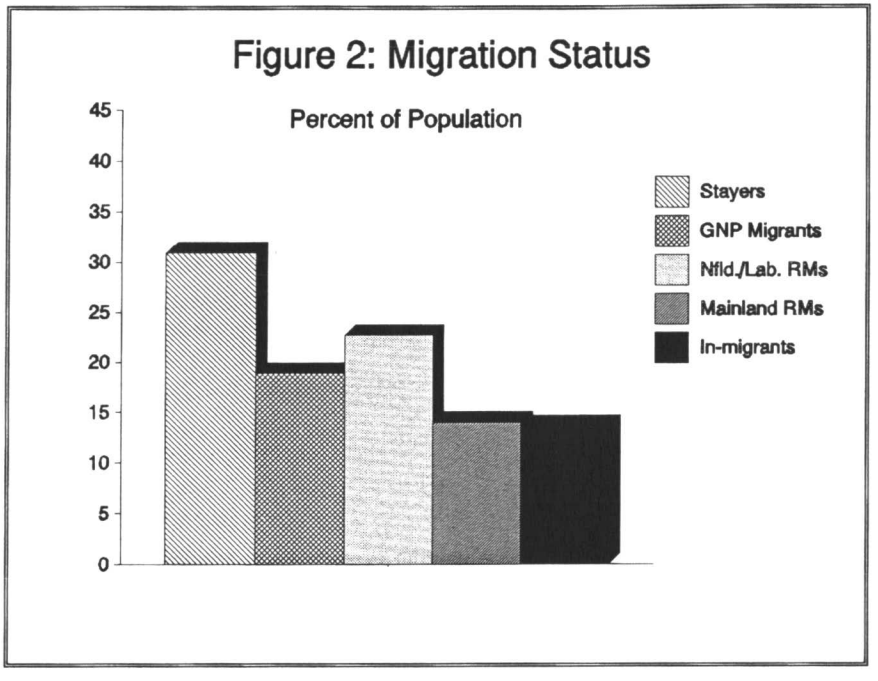
Source: *Census of Canada*, 1951, 1956, 1961, 1976, 1981 and 1986, 1991

Despite the high rate of youth migration, the net loss of population through migration is usually quite small and, in several years since 1977, there has even been a net surplus, as estimated by Statistics Canada (figure 1). The ratio of return migrants to non-native, in-migrants is 2.7:1 in our sample, which means that the population decline suggested by the outflow of youth is partially checked by the return of many earlier migrants. It is this group on whom we now focus.



We have classified all respondents into five migration categories based on community of residence: 1) life-long residents; 2) local migrants, i.e., those who had lived elsewhere on the Great Northern Peninsula; 3) return migrants who had remained within Newfoundland and Labrador; 4) return migrants from outside the province (all from mainland Canada); and 5) in-migrants, of whom four came from outside Canada (figure 2). A total of 202 out of 551 individuals (36.7 per cent) on whom we have information were return migrants. They included 89 women and 113 men. In most of our analysis we compare those who have never left the Peninsula (categories 1 and 2) with those who have gone away and come back (categories 3 and 4).

A number of different migratory paths or patterns have been identified in previous research. Thus, two people who had returned from the same



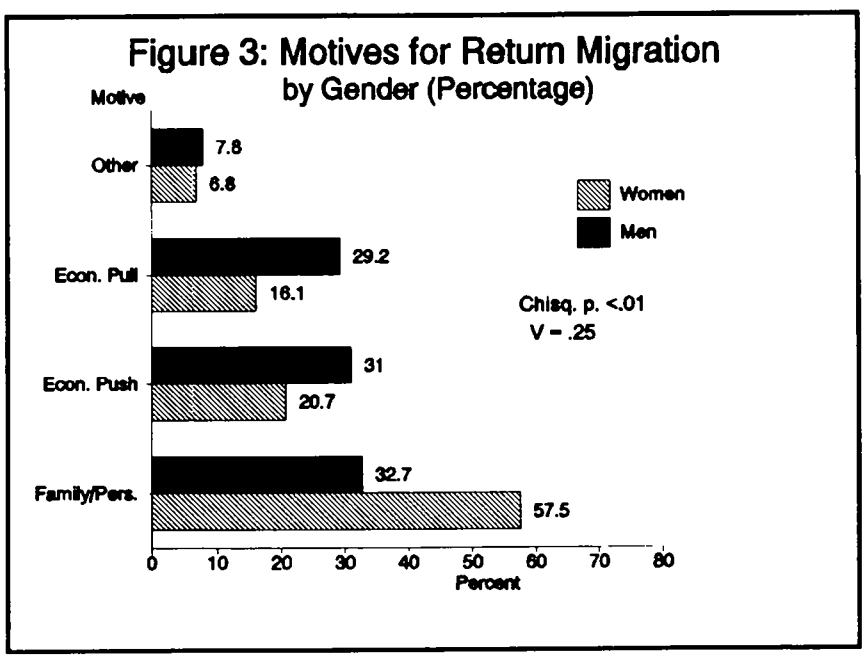
geographical location, e.g. Western Canada, might well have travelled different paths to get there and back. Having considered previous research, we expected to find the following three types of migration pattern:

1) *simple* return migration involving one destination;
2) *transient* return migration in which migrants try more than one area before returning;
3) *circulatory or seasonal* migration characterized by regular or cyclical movements back and forth to the same or different destinations. This category included respondents who had returned more than once.

For 61.9 per cent of the return migrants, their experience conforms to the first pattern, simple return migration. Even when substantial distances of several thousand kilometres are involved, we are struck by the preponderance of the simple return migration pattern. Where intermediate, transient stops are involved, the average number is just over one. Finally, given the attention in the literature to circulatory migration (King, 1986), the small number of return migrants (six cases or three per cent) in this category is surprising, given that this area is one of high unemployment.[4]

WHY PEOPLE RETURN

Each respondent who indicated a previous place of residence was asked an open-ended question as to why s/he had left. Figure 3 presents the frequency distribution we obtained. The "family/personal" category includes people who said they moved to be closer to family, to get married, to raise children in a better place, and for several other kin-related reasons. Personal reasons include 5.6 per cent who claimed to be homesick and several individuals who moved for educational or medical reasons. "Economic push" factors include being laid off (the most common), being transferred, or escaping the high cost of living. "Economic pull" refers to any person who returned to "get a better job" or to fish.



It is notable that family-related and personal reasons together account for 43.5 per cent of all returners, which is less than the combination of economic push and pull (51.0 per cent). This result differs from most previously published research, although it does correspond better with some economic analyses; for example, Canadian research by Grant and Vanderkamp (1986), who demonstrate that disappointment with incomes at the destination is a significant variable in predicting both onward and return migration. We considered the possibility that an explanation for the pattern in our results lay in the fact that many of the

migrants in our sample moved between the Peninsula and other parts of the province – relatively short distances within the same general cultural and physical environment. Occasional visits to maintain contact with friends and family should have been relatively easy. If so, economic factors might have been more central in their decisions to return home. However, a comparison of motives for return by destination showed no significant relationship.

Figure 3 presents striking gender differences in reasons offered for returning to the Peninsula. Thus the men are much more likely to give economic reasons, while women are almost twice as likely to report family or personal factors as the basis for their move. As 70.8 per cent of return migrants are married and women are less likely than men to be employed upon return, this difference may be explained in part by women following husbands, who are moving mainly for economic reasons. As we noted in reviewing the previous literature, this type of account leaves unexplained the source of the gender-based attitudes. In being more likely to move for family/personal reasons, the women of the Great Northern Peninsula show attachment to (or at least acceptance of) a conception of women's role as centred in the family, the provider of care and protector of relationships, rather than personal career seeker or main supplier of material goods. Such an interpretation is consistent with earlier research on migrating Newfoundland women (Martin-Matthews, 1977) as well as a recent analysis of gender roles in the region (Sinclair and Felt, 1992). Of course, there are exceptions in this group of return migrants and we expect that changes in role expectations of women will eventually alter their migration patterns so that gender differences are reduced. Even now, about one-third of the men do not give an economic reason as their primary motive and a substantial minority of women (36.8 per cent) do offer economic reasons.

Why people move is more complex than can be tapped fully in a single survey question. Consider, for example, the following person, whose reason for returning would probably have been classified as family-related on our survey. This person moved first to Dartmouth, N.S. and was tempted to move on to Alberta for employment prospects, yet ended up back on the Peninsula:

> I got a cousin in Fort McMurray that I knows real well. I called him and he said to come out. Phil and I were considering it too until her mom got very sick. She didn't want to move that far away and I have to admit that I didn't relish the prospect much either. We talked about Ontario. We decided, however, to first go back home to help her mother and father. We've been here ever since (interview by Sheila White).[5]

Thus family ties interacted in this case with the economic pull of distant places and eventually drew the couple back to the Peninsula.

To develop the point further, we know from our own research experience and that of others (House et al., 1989) that many young people, especially males, return after a job in Labrador or elsewhere has ended. This was the single most

common reason offered by our respondents. Although they may appear on our survey to be moving for economic reasons, it is likely that many are also attracted by life on the Peninsula and never intended to leave permanently. We may characterize these youths as "testing the waters." The underlying rationale for coming back is clearly indicated in this comment by a young male recently returned from Labrador:

> There's nothing to do here. Lots of my friends have to go away... But it (the Northern Peninsula) is home and great for hunting, fishing and just getting away. A lot of people, particularly the younger ones, hedge their bets a bit. They don't go too far away and if things don't work out you can always come back. Maybe you goes away again, but it all depends on whether there are jobs here at home.

While some of these returners may once again migrate to the same or different destinations, it is clear that this first test also serves a sort of legitimating function for those who remain. This conclusion is supported by the following remarks from another young man back from Labrador:

> It's kind of expected, especially for males, that they go somewhere else to find a job if they can't find nothing here. If you lose the job or find something better here at home, it's all right, because at least you went away. My parents encouraged most of us to move away at least for a year or so to look for work and maybe try to save something before we would be welcomed back. Even the UIC (Unemployment Insurance Commission) people seem to treat you better if they knows you've been away to look for work. I knows that some people who never have left had it thrown up in their face when they go to stamp workers to try and get on make work projects so they can qualify for UI (interview, Sheila White).

That first move appears as a kind of *rite de passage* legitimating one's place in the local moral order and perhaps even the local bureaucratic outpost of the state. Thus returning home should not necessarily be considered as evidence of a failed migration.

Success or Failure

As indicated previously, a considerable part of the return migration literature focuses upon the issue of whether returners should be judged as successes or failures. Our strategy for assessing the experience of migration is to compare return migrants with those individuals who were born in the region but have never resided outside it ("stayers" in the graphs). These comparisons focus upon educational qualifications, personal incomes, employment status and occupation. In addition, several attitudinal measures assess feelings toward living in the region, sense of political efficacy and degree of optimism about personal and regional economic circumstances.

The figures summarize the comparisons with graphs and statistics. Cramer's v provides a measure of the strength of association between migration status and the other variables. It can range from zero to one, where zero means

that no relationship can be observed. The chi^2 probability level indicates how safely we can argue that a difference in our sample reflects a difference in the population. When this probability equals .05, for example, it means that there is a five percent chance that the relationship identified in our sample could have come from a total population in which there was no such relationship. By convention, we are unwilling to accept that a difference in the sample would also be found in the population unless this probability of chance occurrence in the sample is .05 or smaller. In general and in contrast with most studies in the developed world (including Hiscott's [1987] research on Atlantic Canada), we find significant differences between return migrants and life-long residents on most measures.

First, we noted that return migrants were more likely than permanent residents to be employed at the time of the survey (chi^2 p.=<.01). To check whether this indicator of success was an artifact of the male bias in the return migration population, a control for gender was introduced. As figures 4 and 5 demonstrate, the relationship between migration status and employment disappeared for women, but remained strong for men. Why migration should be positive with respect to employment for men, but not for women is uncertain and demands further investigation. One possibility is that the labour market for women on the Peninsula is so weak that it is particularly difficult for returning women to obtain employment.

Return migrants were more likely to be employed (if men) and much less likely to have low incomes (figure 6). While 44.7 per cent of permanent residents reported personal incomes under $8,000, this was true for only 30.1 per cent of return migrants. Again, caution is advised. Returners did not have high incomes on average; most were successful only to the extent that they were less poor than those who had never left. More significantly, the relationship is strongly influenced by the gender composition of the migration groups. Men have higher incomes and are over-represented in the return migrant group. When we controlled for gender, the relationship disappeared for women (chi^2 p.=.14) and was less strong for men (chi^2 p.=.02; v=.19). Neither the employment nor the income status of women is improved by having lived elsewhere; but male returners, who generally report economic motives for moving, are in better economic circumstances than men who never leave the Peninsula.

Occupational differences approached but did not achieve significance. Among men, the biggest difference was evident in fishing occupations, which accounted for 48.8 per cent of life-long residents, but only 26.1 per cent of return migrants. Contrary to the widespread impression, most men do not return to fish as an occupation of last resort.

With respect to education, a significant difference was found with return migrants much more likely to have been educated beyond high school (figure 7). Unless their needs can be met at the St. Anthony Community College, residents

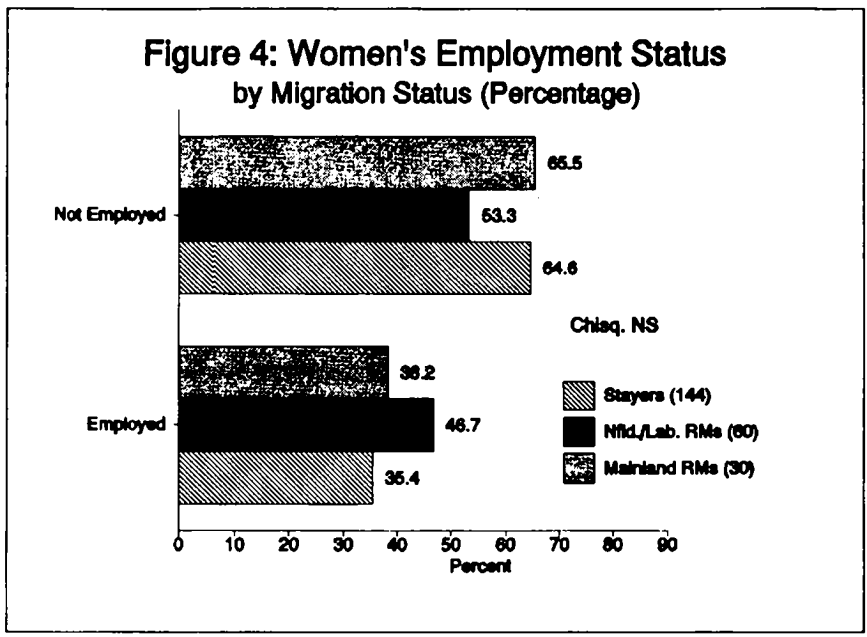


Figure 4: Women's Employment Status
by Migration Status (Percentage)
Not Employed
Employed
65.5
53.3
64.6
36.2
46.7
35.4
Chisq. NS
Stayers (144)
Nfld./Lab. RMs (60)
Mainland RMs (30)
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
Percent

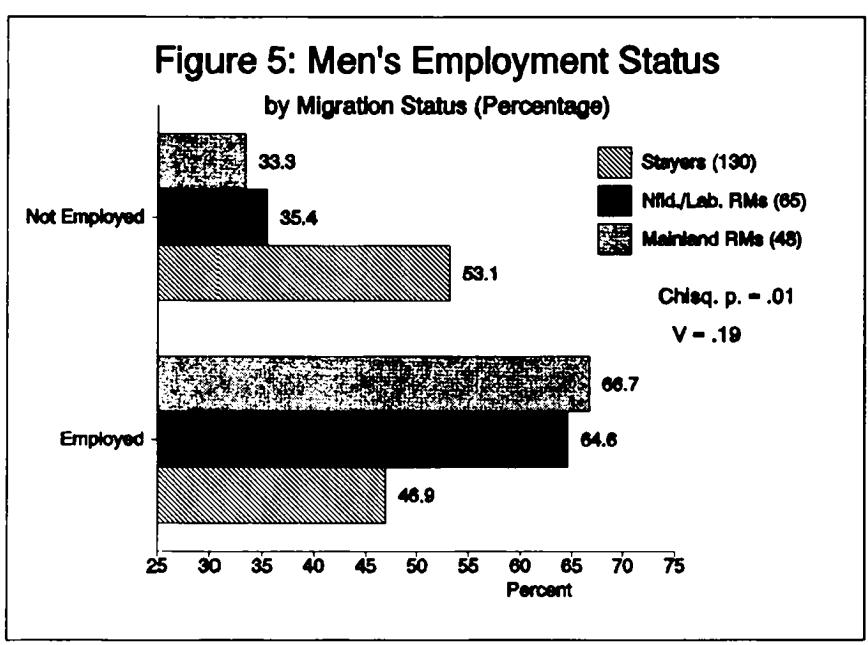
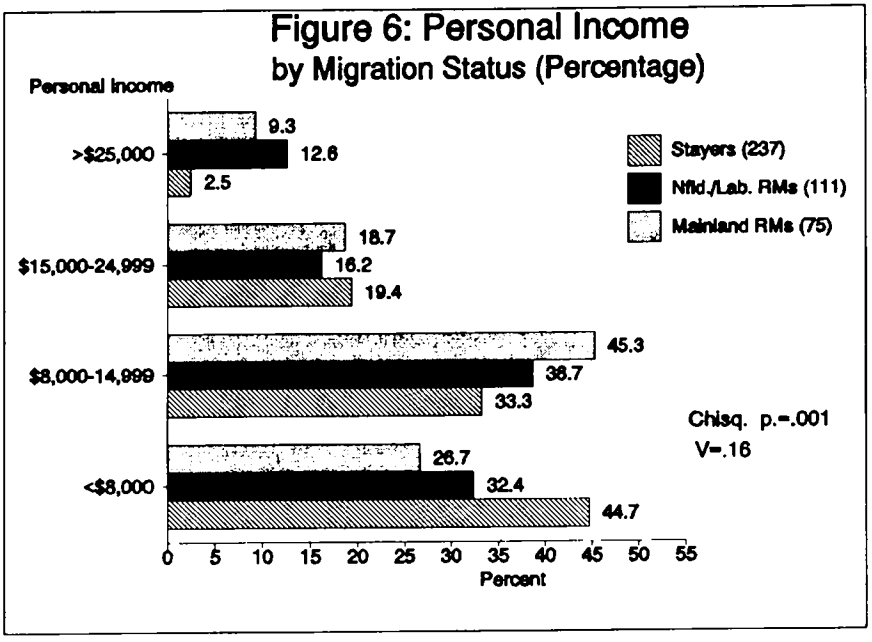


Figure 5: Men's Employment Status
by Migration Status (Percentage)
Not Employed
Employed
33.3
35.4
53.1
66.7
64.6
46.9
Stayers (130)
Nfld./Lab. RMs (65)
Mainland RMs (48)
Chisq. p. = .01
V = .19
25 30 35 40 45 50 55 60 65 70 75
Percent



of the Peninsula who want to extend their education beyond high school have no choice but to move. Our data show that at least some of this group return. Yet, it would be misleading to imply that return migrants as a whole were well educated. In fact, 69.8 per cent of returners and a stunning 82.5 per cent of immobile residents had not completed high school.

Gmelch (1986) reports that many returners to western Ireland were "unhappy and disillusioned" because their expectations of life back home had not been met. Our survey included a general question that measured overall level of satisfaction with living on the Great Northern Peninsula. Based on this data, we must reach a different conclusion for the return migrants in our sample. We found that respondents were generally content and that there was no significant difference between return migrants and life-long residents (figure 8).

Related to satisfaction is the question of confidence or optimism about one's personal future and that of the region. Respondents were asked to give their opinion on the state of the region's economy in five years with responses coded on a five point scale ranging from "a lot better" to "a lot worse." A majority had no opinion or considered the economy would be "about the same." The others were somewhat more pessimistic than optimistic. Return migrants did not differ significantly from life-long residents on this measure, but they were much more

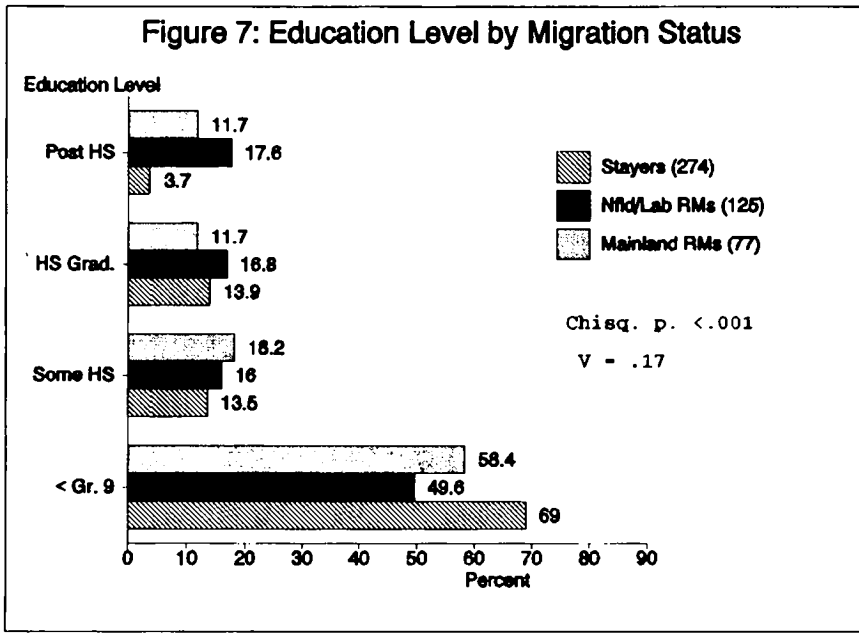


Figure 7: Education Level by Migration Status
Education Level
Post HS
11.7
17.6
3.7
HS Grad.
11.7
16.8
13.9
Some HS
16.2
16
13.5
< Gr. 9
58.4
49.6
69
0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90
Percent
Stayers (274)
Nfld/Lab RMs (125)
Mainland RMs (77)
Chisq. p. <.001
V = .17

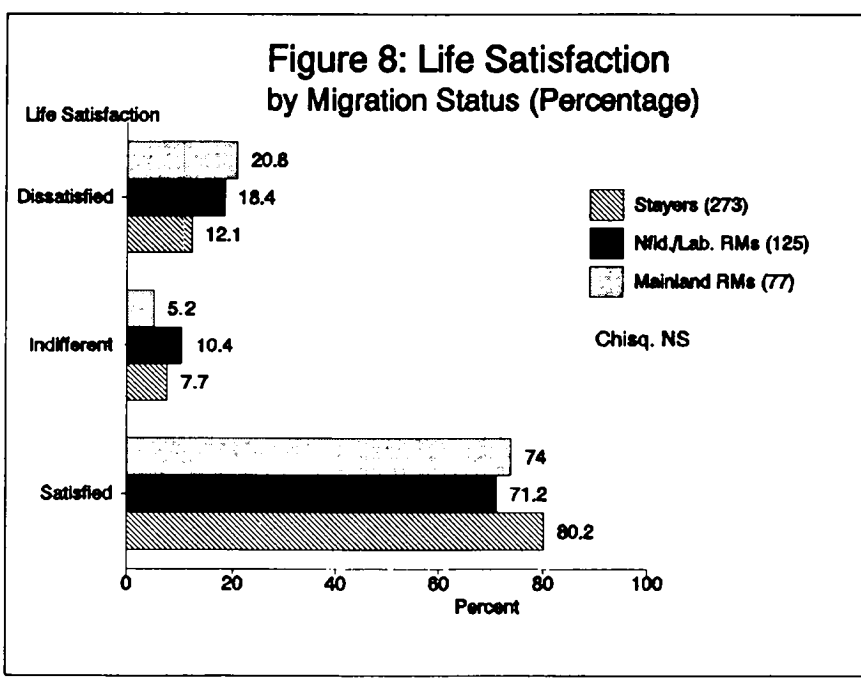
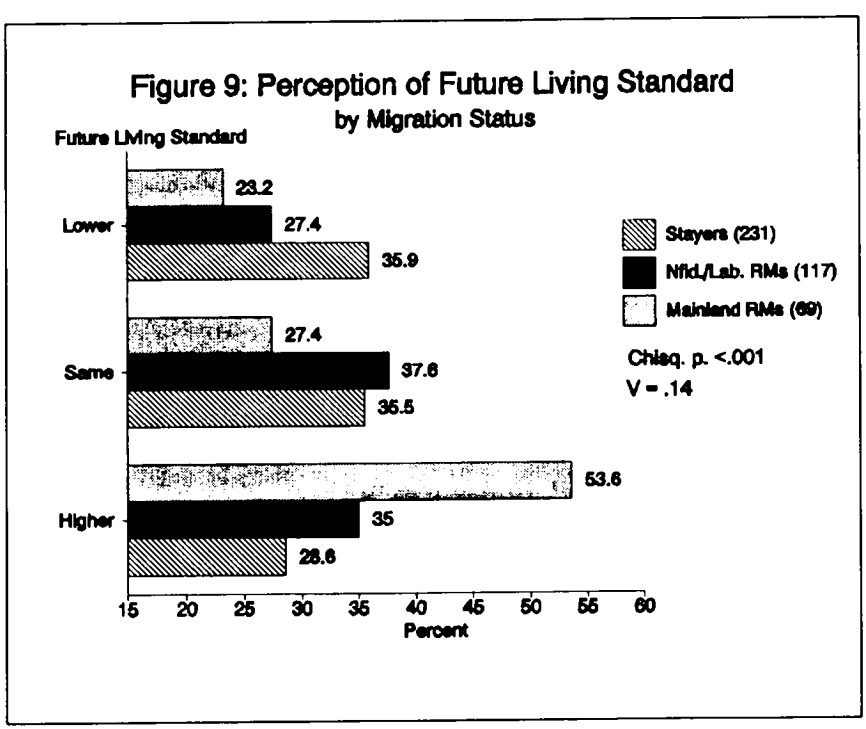


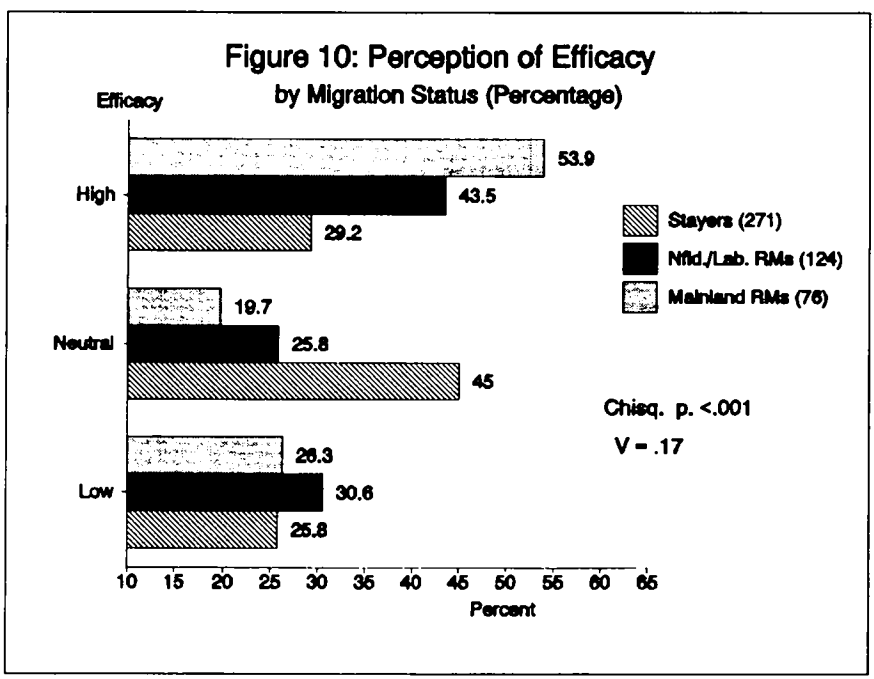
Figure 8: Life Satisfaction
by Migration Status (Percentage)
Life Satisfaction
Dissatisfied
20.8
18.4
12.1
Indifferent
5.2
10.4
7.7
Satisfied
74
71.2
80.2
0 20 40 60 80 100
Percent
Stayers (273)
Nfld./Lab. RMs (125)
Mainland RMs (77)
Chisq. NS

optimistic in replying to a similar question on their personal futures (figure 9). It is possible that this personal optimism is grounded in their relatively good contemporary circumstances. Return migrants who were employed were much more optimistic (chi^2 p.=.005) than employed "stayers," whereas there was no significant difference when those without employment were compared. In other words, the migration experience is positive with respect to optimism for one's future living standards, provided it is associated with employment on return. We also checked whether the relationship between migration status and perception of future living standards was affected by gender. In other words, was this relationship influenced by the relatively large proportion of men among the return migrants? In fact, for men the difference was not quite significant (chi^2 p.=.08), but we found that migrant women were more optimistic than those women who never moved (chi^2 p.=.009). It must be left to future research to determine whether the difference for women is based on a selection effect (i.e., on the tendency for women who leave to be more optimistic than those who remain behind) or on the positive impact of living in a new environment.

Finally, return migrants were much more likely to believe that they could personally help bring about the changes required to meet the most urgent needs of the region (figure 10). Again, we wished to check whether the relationship was



affected by the employment status and gender composition of migrants compared with the "stayers." We discovered that the relationship held with employment controlled (data not reported here). In other words, returners did not have a stronger sense of efficacy because they were more likely to be employed. However, we did find that the male gender bias of the returners compared with the "stayers" did have an influence. Migrant men were much more likely than those men who had never left the Peninsula to feel that they could bring about the changes that the region required (chi^2 <.001). For women, the comparison was not statistically significant. Again, more research is required to uncover what aspects of the experience of being away might produce a greater sense of political effectiveness upon return.



Impact on Local Economic Development

As indicated in the literature review, conflicting results have been presented in evaluating the contribution of return migration to local economic development, although most recent research is sceptical of the possibility of a positive impact. Assessing the impact of return migration on the economic development of the Great Northern Peninsula is problematic. The survey did not allow us to measure

directly any changes in attitude towards innovation and/or entrepreneurship. The closest measures relate to general optimism or pessimism about future economic opportunities for both the individual and the region as a whole. As reported earlier, return migrants were more optimistic about themselves, but not about the region. Less than one-third actually believed that the region would improve over the next five years; that is, most did not perceive the future in a way favourable to investment and innovation.

Capital repatriated by return migrants might be utilized for local productive investments. While it is possible that return migrants in our sample brought back significant amounts of capital, we feel this is unlikely in most cases for three reasons. First, we know that their employment away was overwhelmingly in the manual, service and clerical sectors. Second, the time spent away was three years or less for 72.3 per cent of the sample – too little to accumulate much capital. Third, through examining the distribution of current occupations for returners, there is little to indicate that return migrants utilized repatriated capital to initiate small businesses. Only 12.5 per cent of return migrants held professional or managerial jobs and only 5.7 per cent were self-employed outside the inshore fishery.

Although return migration apparently does little to stimulate economic development in the region, it still helps to maintain the region by ensuring it is inhabited by people who want to stay there. One person phrased it this way:

> I guess you could say we voted with our feet. We didn't have to come back but the wife and I wanted to. Life ain't easy especially with the fishery the way it is... But it's home and there's no place like it.

Gmelch and Richling make a similar point in their essay on return migration to the province:

> By settling in small communities and enduring high rates of unemployment, geographical isolation, and the lack of urban-style amenities return migrants express by their example a preference for the outport way of life – its intimate social relations, community cooperation, opportunities for home production, and affordable housing. In this respect the impact of return migration in outport Newfoundland is a beneficial one, offering an unambiguous message that rural society and culture are both vibrant and viable (Gmelch and Richling, 1986:196).

Nevertheless, our results suggest that return migrants make, at best, a modest contribution to local economic development, probably little greater than that of immobile residents.

Leaving Again?

Returning home may be temporary. Thus, in concluding our data analysis, we shall review what our respondents said about moving again (Table 2). They were asked whether they had considered leaving the Peninsula in the next five years.

In this section, we also include information about in-migrants to the Peninsula. Returners were more likely to consider leaving again than people who had been immobile, but less likely than those born elsewhere. Job opportunity was the most frequently cited reason for all who had considered leaving, though less so for in-migrants. Those who had not considered leaving, in so far as they could be specific, emphasized family connections and a general sense of being comfortable with their lives. As to destinations, central Canada, the Maritimes and Eastern Newfoundland (mostly St. John's) were the most popular. How many will actually leave, we can only guess. The point is that return migrants have not come home with a strong sense that this is where they belong, where they will stay at any cost.

Table 2: Migration Intentions

			Reasons for staying (%)	
Migration Status	% who have considered migrating	Employment as reason for leaving (%)	Family or home ties	Feel "comfortable"
Stayers	23.5	56.1	29.6	33.5
Nfld./Lab. Return Migrants	35.8	56.1	41.7	24.7
Mainland Return Migrants	36.8	71.4	26.1	30.4
In-migrants	45.3	37.1	24.3	21.6
Number	547	161	369	

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have described the complex processes of return migration to an economically deprived and geographically isolated region of a mature industrial society. Out-migration is a salient experience for a substantial minority of adults in the region. In our sample, no less than 36 per cent had returned following various sojourns outside the region. Against the evidence of most other researchers who have examined return migration, our analysis suggests that return migrants are often pushed or pulled back by economic factors, although we also found that the pull of personal or family ties is important. Gender was identified as an important source of variation in reason for returning. We found that migrants were better educated, earned more and were more likely to be employed, but we identified no economic advantage for women in migrating. Return migrants were more optimistic about their personal futures, especially if currently employed or female. The returners think they can change things more than "stayers," particularly if they are migrant men. Yet, they are also more

likely to consider migrating once more. In agreement with previous research, we reported that return migrants cannot easily be classified as either successes or failures.

The relationship between return migration and local economic development was assessed. Given our knowledge of return migrants' education, earnings and occupations while away, it seems likely that their contribution to local economic development is minimal. This conclusion is in keeping with the literature on return migration to marginal regions of advanced industrial societies.

Apart from checking the results of other research against the experience of people in our research area, we would like to stress two points of interpretation. First, it is notable and, to our knowledge, unappreciated in other studies that migration in search of work plays an important role in legitimating young men's position in the local society. Given the shortage of work, both residents and those who staff government bureaucracies expect that individuals, particularly males, should make a symbolic trek outside the region as part of the informal qualifying process for government subsidized economic support. This process requires clarification and elaboration in future research.

The second point relates to underdevelopment. Our data indicate that cyclical movement in response to changing economic conditions in various Canadian metropoles cannot explain most of the return migration to the Great Northern Peninsula. It does seem plausible, however, to argue that migration contributes to the spatial distribution of social inequality in a more subtle way. We have reported evidence from other studies that migrants from underdeveloped areas (e.g., Atlantic Canadians, southern U.S. blacks) who do not return tend to be better educated, have higher incomes and more prestigious occupations than either return migrants or immobile residents. It may well be those who are best equipped by virtue of cultural orientation and formal education who migrate to the centre and stay there, whereas other migrants do not experience the economic success that might compensate for home-sickness and separation from family and friends. The latter are then pulled home, if not driven home. Moreover, a substantial number believe that they will actually find a better job on their return. The corollary of these decisions is not that migration causes regional inequality, but that it reflects a complex process through which those with the most resources and the most innovative capacities congregate at the developed core and help to keep the core economically ahead.

Notes

[1]The research reported here was made possible by a grant (no.410-88-0775) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada for whose support we are grateful. We owe a great deal to our research assistant, Cynthia Layden, who co-

ordinated the interviewing, processed the data and has assisted with the analysis. We participate equally in all phases in this project, which is reflected in our practice of alternating the order of authorship with each paper. This is paper #4-1.

[2]All data in this paragraph refer to the 1986 census and are based on Statistics Canada (1988).

[3]We compared the number of adults reported by respondents with the number of interviews actually completed. The uncertainty is caused by the fact that occasional discrepancies appeared because household members sometimes disagreed on the number of residents. Apart from recording errors, this could well arise as a result of disagreement over whether a family member working or studying away was still part of the household.

[4]Because we asked for information on only three previous locations, we might be missing persons with a longer history of circulatory migration.

[5]We are grateful to Doug House and Sheila White for permission to quote from interviews conducted by Ms. White on the Northern Peninsula in 1987-88.

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