

Immigrants, islandness and perceptions of quality-of-life on Prince Edward Island, Canada.

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ABSTRACT: This paper explores perceptions of immigrant quality-of-life (QOL) and islandness in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, and compares these perceptions to those of Canadian-born residents of the same provincial capital. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, including a household telephone survey conducted in the summer of 2012 (n=302), focus group interviews with immigrants in late 2012 and observations on preliminary results by the staff of the PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC), the primary immigrant settlement service agency on the island. The analysis of the results suggests that immigrants have a high and undifferentiated assessment of their own QOL, sense of belonging and sense of place compared to Canadian-born islanders; immigrants are also critical of the quality of education and of the range of recreational and cultural events underway on the Island. While they express positive sentiments regarding life on the Island, immigrants still feel excluded from social and economic opportunities.

Keywords: Atlantic Canada, immigrants, immigration, islandness, islands, Maritimes, Prince Edward Island, quality of life

Introduction

Many small islands have been experiencing profound economic, social and demographic change over the past generation. Immigration and the consequences of immigration both on newcomers and on island communities have been key elements of many of these changes. In this paper, it is argued that the islandness associated with these recipient island communities is linked to a number of other important social concepts, including perception of quality-of-life, sense of belonging, sense of place and perceptions of social capital. Further, it is argued that immigrants to small islands experience these dimensions of island social life in ways that are at times similar and at other times dissimilar to non-immigrants. It does so by comparing the attitudes and perceptions of immigrants and Canadian-born residents within the provincial capital of Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada.

In order to provide some context, Prince Edward Island (PEI) is Canada's smallest and only fully island province, with a population of just over 145,000 (Prince Edward Island Statistics Bureau, 2013). As is the case with Canada's other Atlantic provinces,¹ population growth on PEI has stagnated and the population is aging². Moreover, and not unlike many other small islands, PEI has a very homogenous ethnic population, with the vast majority of the current residents coming from only four ethnic groups: Scottish, Irish, English and Acadian (MacDonald, 2000)³.

Historically, the share of immigrants arriving in Canada's eastern provinces has been exceptionally low. In 1976, only 2.6% of all international immigrants arriving in Canada settled in PEI, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick (i.e., the Maritime provinces) and this figure had dropped to 1.1% by 2001 (Savoie, 2006). Over the past decade this decline had reversed with most of the new growth in immigration taking place in PEI and Nova Scotia (Akbari, 2011; Statistics Canada, 2013a). The number of immigrants arriving in PEI increased from 738 in 2006/07 to 2,609 in 2010/11 before falling back to 863 in 2012 (Prince Edward Island Statistics Bureau, 2013). Not surprisingly, almost all of these recent immigrants were destined for the provincial capital of Charlottetown.⁴

The timing of this resurgence in immigration is not coincidental. The PEI Provincial Government has aggressively pursued immigration as part of an explicit demographic and economic development strategy. An Office of Immigration, Settlement and Population was established within the Ministry of Innovation and Advanced Learning and the Minister of this Department, Allen Roach, was quoted at a citizenship swearing-in ceremony as saying "Immigration has not only been a huge boost to PEI's economy, but is an essential factor in

¹ The three other Atlantic provinces are Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland & Labrador.

² Prince Edward Island's population increased by only 0.05% from 2011 to 2012 compared to national growth of 1.16%. From 2003 to 2013, the % of PEI's population < 45 years decreased by 7.6%, while the % ≥ 45 years increased by 26.2% (Prince Edward Island Statistics Bureau, 2013).

³ According to the 1901 census, 97% of PEI's population was from one of these four ethnic groups. According to the 2011 National Household Survey, 70.4% of PEI respondents still reported Scottish or English as their ethnic origin compared to 34.2% for all of Canada (Statistics Canada, 2013b)

⁴ In 2011, 1,335 immigrants arrived in Queens County, within which Charlottetown is located, while only 44 immigrants arrived in the other two provincial counties of Kings and Prince. According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada (2012), over 90% of all new immigrants arriving in PEI in 2012 settled in the Charlottetown urban area and a representative from the Prince Edward Island Association of Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC), a Charlottetown-based public agency providing settlement services to recent immigrants to the province, indicated that the number of immigrants registering for services with the agency had increased from 1,084 in 2008 to a high of 1,851 in 2010 before declining to 1,489 in 2011 and 916 in 2012 (Mackie, 2013).

the future viability of the province ...” (Wright, 2013). One of the most significant policy mechanisms used by the PEI Government to attract immigrants to the province has been the Provincial Nominee Program (PNP). This program allows non-Canadians to ‘fast track’ the immigration process if they are willing to invest their funds in provincial companies (Akbari, 2013; Akbari & Sun, 2006; Baldacchino, 2011). Although the earlier versions of this program as applied in PEI have been quite controversial (McKenna & Desserud, 2013), it has undoubtedly contributed significantly to the surge in immigrant numbers to the province.

This paper uses this rapidly transforming island social space to explore the concepts of islandness, quality-of-life, sense of belonging and place and perceptions of social capital, distinguishing between the immigrant population and Canadian-born residents. The next section of the paper provides an overview of the literature on the assessment of the concept of quality-of-life, especially when applied to immigrants. This overview notes the research on the concept of islandness and ‘islander-outsider’ relations, focusing on the social characteristics of those living in Prince Edward Island in particular. The paper then reviews the quantitative and qualitative methods used to gather the data. The results are presented in several sub-sections, including overall perceptions of quality of life and several of its component parts, such as the quality of schools and recreational programs. Three aggregate constructs are presented as part of the results; a scale of social capital perceptions, sense of belonging and sense of place. The paper ends with a broader discussion of some of these results and concluding remarks.

Literature review

Quality-of-life (QOL) describes “the degree to which a person enjoys the important possibilities of his or her life” (Raphael, Brown, Renwick, Cava, Weir & Heathcote, 1995, p. 229). The main determinants of immigrant QOL include: education (Guhn, Gadermann & Zumbo, 2010; Klassen & Burnaby, 1993; McMullen, 2008), income (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009; Hatfield, 2003; Heisz & McLeod, 2004; Sharpe, 2011), and employment (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009; Galarneau & Morissette 2009; Tran, 2004). In terms of education, recent immigrants are twice as likely to have university-level education compared to non-immigrants (McMullen, 2008). However, there is also a large proportion of the immigrant population with low levels of educational attainment (Klassen & Burnaby, 1993). With respect to income, some research has shown that immigrants have lower median income levels and are at higher risk of becoming low-income compared to non-immigrants, contributing to a reduced quality of life (Heisz & McLeod, 2004; Sharpe, 2011). However, in Atlantic Canada, a region with smaller urban areas, Akbari (2011; 2013) has shown that immigrants, “... have higher labour force participation rates, lower unemployment rates and earn higher labour market incomes than non-immigrants.” (Akbari, 2011, p. 151). It is widely acknowledged that immigrants face a range of employment barriers including: lack of recognition of foreign training, education and work experience; lack of Canadian work experience; and low English language proficiency (Galarneau & Morissette, 2009; Tran 2004). In some regions and at certain times, these employment barriers have resulted in high rates of unemployment and underemployment among immigrants, again leading to a lower quality of life (Galarneau & Morissette, 2009; Sharpe, 2011).

A lower level of quality of life among immigrants is also associated with barriers to democratic engagement (Ginieniewicz, 2007; Moore, Swystun, Holden et al., 2010; Scott, Selbee & Reed, 2006); barriers to accessing health care (Lebrun & Shi, 2011; Newbold, 2005; Setia, Quesnel-Vallee, Abrahamowicz et al., 2011; Wu, Penning & Schimmele, 2005);

discrimination (Reitz & Banerjee, 2007); environmental exposure (Hunter, 2000; Weinberg, 1998); time constraints (Brooker & Hyman, 2010; Kamenou, 2008; Wall & José, 2004), and; crowded living conditions (Federation of Canadian Municipalities, 2009; Hiebert, 2009).

While quality-of-life may not be the explicit focus of a large body of island scholarship, research on islandness and on 'islander-outsider' relations does allow us to develop a better understanding of perceptions of island quality-of-life. Islandness has been characterized as a construct of the mind and a singular way of looking at the world (Platt, 2004), to the point where it becomes part of your being (Weale, 1991). As is the case with the quality-of-life construct, islandness is an outcome of the sum of experiences of islanders (Taglioni, 2007). The island environment is said to convey on islanders unique properties, including a closeness to nature and an appreciation of waterscapes (Conkling, 2007; Stratford, 2008)

A sense of belonging encompasses a feeling that individuals matter to one another and to the group. The islandness literature asserts those with a long history of living on an island have a strong and distinctive sense of belonging (Brinklow, 2013; Cohen, 1982; Marshall, 1999; Ronström, 2012) and a sense of closeness, solidarity and scrutiny (Péron, 2004). The implicit assumption behind this perspective is that those with a short history of living on an island, including immigrants, will have a weaker and less distinct sense of belonging. It is argued that one could substitute some characteristics of quality-of-life or sense of belonging for islandness.

There is a conceptual complementarity between a sense of belonging and a sense of place. A sense of place refers to "the attitudes and feelings that individuals and groups hold *vis-à-vis* the geographical areas in which they live. It further suggests intimate, personal and emotional relationships between self and place" (Wylie, 2009, p. 676). One of the reported dimensions of islandness is a heightened sense of place (Stratford, 2008; Vannini, 2011; Vannini & Taggart, 2013). For islanders, place is important because of the "geographical precision" associated with island boundaries, a "... deployment towards the sea and a maritime destiny that facilitates trade ..." (Baldacchino, 2005, p. 35). It is argued that newcomers to small islands, and especially immigrant newcomers, will not yet have developed this intimate personal engagement with their new island home.

Based on this rich characterization of island social life, it could be argued that islandness is as important as any other socioeconomic characteristic in determining quality-of-life. In fact, Baldacchino (2005, p. 37) argues that islandness takes upon itself the attributes of ethnicity. Characteristics that in some mainland settings might constitute barriers to a high quality of life, such as low levels of democratic engagement, poor access to health care, discrimination, and a poor physical environment may be expressed in different ways on islands where there is a heightened sense of place and belonging, where life is closer to nature, and where there is a stronger sense of closeness and solidarity among the island-born population.

The historically homogeneous ethnic makeup and socio-political networks on PEI – referred to colloquially as 'the Island' – have led to many positive outcomes, including a social cohesiveness in response to external threats and a resilience within the voluntary sector (Baldacchino, 2011). Indeed, Prince Edward Island has consistently exhibited one of the highest levels of informal and formal volunteerism in Canada (Vezina & Crompton, 2012). In a survey of 320 migrants to PEI, an attractive quality of life was reported as one of the main reasons for moving to and staying on the Island (Baldacchino, 2006a). However, this same

rich social capital has produced negative outcomes, including excluding immigrants, who find it "... bewildering, exasperating, clique-like, clannish, small-minded even racist, and invariably difficult to plug into" (Baldacchino, 2011, p. 358). This sense of exclusion, and the impact it may have on immigrants' perceptions of quality of life, may have a longer history on PEI. MacDonald (2000) suggests that immigrants to the Island in the 1980s and 1990s may have experienced overt discrimination only sporadically, but the entrenched intolerance and marginalization was often masked by characteristic Islander reticence. In the more recent Provincial Nominee Program-fed wave of immigration, the closed-mindedness of Islanders was identified as the most common single explanation for the desire to relocate among those who were actively planning to leave PEI (Baldacchino, 2006b).

The division between long-time residents and 'come from aways' is not uncommon across the Atlantic provinces (Biles, 2011). Marshall (1999) reported this for "outsiders" who moved to Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick, and Grant & Kronstal (2013) found that newcomers to Halifax were often excluded from pre-existing social and professional circles. In reference to islands further afield, both Cohen (1987; 1982) and Lowenthal (2007) argue that, without the lived experiences and kinship ties of those born on the island, outsiders cannot hope to share "islanders' immersion in the past" (Lowenthal, 2007, p. 209) and cannot "grasp the 'subterranean level of meaning' that allows them to truly belong" (Cohen, 1982, p. 11). Not all research shows such unambiguous results. For example, on Grand Manan Island Marshall observed that "from away" spouses and those who brought jobs and capital to the island often received a relatively positive reception. Lowenthal (2007) asserts that "Islanders assimilate the odd newcomer, but the energy and zeal of sizable alien groups antagonize and supplant locals." (p. 209) and Ronström has noted that the notions of islanders and outsiders (or 'we' and 'them') are in constant flux (2012) and that newcomers to Gotland, Sweden have actually created new narratives and cultural representations that have ultimately placed them at the centre of shaping an island identity (2008). Finally, and albeit not on an island setting, Yoshida & Ramos (2012) have suggested that immigrants' values are similar to those of Canadian-born residents.

Given the majority of the research referred to above, we might expect to find that in general island immigrants' self-assessment of their quality-of-life, sense of place and belonging to be low in absolute terms and significantly lower than the Canadian-born group's perception of QOL. However, there may be specific circumstances for certain individuals where the perceived differences in perception of quality of life, sense of belonging, sense of place and perceptions of social capital are not apparent.

Methods

This paper explores the perceptions of quality-of-life (QOL) and islandness among immigrants to Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island, Canada, and compares these to perceptions of Canadian-born residents of the same locale. The study was part of a larger project on immigrants' quality of life and adaptation in three second and third-tier Canadian cities, including Hamilton, Ontario and Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Comparison of results to these other cities is mentioned only briefly in this paper. The study used a mixed-methods approach, including a household telephone survey conducted in the summer of 2012 (n=302), three focus group interviews with immigrants in late 2012 (n=20), and observations regarding the preliminary research outcomes by the staff (n=9) of the PEI Association of Newcomers to Canada (PEIANC), the primary immigrant settlement service agency on the island.

A comprehensive household survey (comprising 73 questions) was administered by a survey research company via telephone to a random selection of households in the City of Charlottetown (census subdivision) between May and August 2012. These survey questions have been tested and validated over the past 10 years in several Canadian city contexts to ensure that they are an accurate reflection of residents' perceptions of QOL (Dunning, Janzen, Abonyi et al., 2006; Dunning, Williams, Abonyi & Crooks, 2008; Kitchen, Williams & Simone, 2012; Kitchen & Williams, 2010; Muhajarine, Labonte, Williams, & Randall, 2008; Williams, Muhajarine, Randall & Kitchen, 2008; Randall, Kitchen & Williams, 2008). The survey asked respondents questions related to a number of topics including perceptions of QOL, neighbourhood and city conditions, health and belonging, sense of place, and respondents' socio-demographic information. In order to adequately gauge immigrants' QOL, the sample consisted of randomly selected households where the primary respondent was at least 18 years old and was either Canadian-born or an immigrant (defined as a person who was not born in Canada). A total of 302 surveys were completed, representing a response rate of 10.2%. Although this response rate is relatively low, the triangulation approach described below provides us with greater confidence in the results. Of the 302 respondents, 50 (16.6%) identified themselves as immigrants.

A series of tests were carried out to verify the accuracy of the overall survey sample. This was achieved by comparing the socio-demographic characteristics of the sample to data available from Statistics Canada's 2006 census (Statistics Canada, 2013b). The tests revealed a high degree of accuracy with respect to level of education, marital status, employment status, housing tenure and years lived in Canada for immigrants. The 'lincom' command (linear combinations of estimators) in Stata 13 was used to compare the proportions displayed in Figures 1 to 7 and to test for statistical significance.

As shown in [Table 1](#), the majority of immigrants have a post-secondary education (67%) are married (46%) and have lower household incomes than the Canadian-born population. A lower proportion of immigrants (52%) own their own homes compared to the Canadian-born (75%). Also noteworthy is that the proportion of immigrants who describe themselves as unemployed is much higher (6.0%) than that of Canadian-born residents (2%) and incomes of immigrants are lower. Not surprisingly, given the recent growth in the numbers of immigrants to the province, only 36% of the Charlottetown immigrants have lived in Canada for more than 10 years compared with the approximately 70% for Canada as a whole (Statistics Canada, 2013b). This is also a factor in the relatively lower levels of home ownership among the immigrant population.

Table 1: Charlottetown telephone sample survey characteristics.

| | Immigrant sample (n=50) | | Canadian-born sample (n=252) | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------------|
| | N | % | N | % |
| Age | | | | |
| 18-24 | 7 | 14 | 11 | 4 |
| 25-44 | 8 | 16 | 60 | 24 |
| 45-64 | 19 | 38 | 110 | 44 |
| 65+ | 16 | 32 | 71 | 28 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Level of education | | | | |

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| | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----------|------------|------------|------------|
| less than high school | 1 | 2 | 9 | 4 |
| high school | 5 | 10 | 38 | 15 |
| some post-secondary | 10 | 20 | 35 | 14 |
| post-secondary | 33 | 67 | 170 | 68 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Household income (\$) | | | | |
| less than 20,000 | 7 | 14 | 25 | 10 |
| 20,000 to 40,000 | 8 | 16 | 34 | 14 |
| 40,000 to 80,000 | 16 | 32 | 81 | 32 |
| 80,000 or over | 8 | 16 | 69 | 27 |
| not stated | 11 | 22 | 43 | 17 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Marital status | | | | |
| single | 12 | 24 | 53 | 21 |
| married | 23 | 46 | 144 | 57 |
| other | 15 | 30 | 55 | 22 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Living arrangement | | | | |
| unattached | 21 | 42 | 89 | 35 |
| couple with child | 9 | 18 | 57 | 23 |
| couple alone | 15 | 30 | 86 | 34 |
| Other | 5 | 10 | 20 | 8 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Employment status | | | | |
| work full-time | 14 | 28 | 119 | 47 |
| work part-time | 9 | 18 | 31 | 12 |
| unemployed | 3 | 6 | 4 | 2 |
| retired/other | 24 | 48 | 98 | 39 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Gender | | | | |
| male | 23 | 46 | 108 | 43 |
| female | 27 | 54 | 144 | 57 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Housing tenure | | | | |
| Ownership | 26 | 52 | 188 | 75 |
| rental | 24 | 48 | 64 | 25 |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>252</i> | <i>100</i> |
| Years in Canada | | | | |
| 5 years or less | 23 | 46 | na | na |
| 6 to 10 years | 9 | 18 | na | na |
| more than 10 years | 18 | 36 | na | na |
| <i>Total</i> | <i>50</i> | <i>100</i> | <i>na</i> | <i>na</i> |
| Unemployment rate (%) | | 13 | | 8.5 |

Source: Compiled by authors; na = not applicable

Survey data were complemented with qualitative data in two forms: focus group interviews undertaken during November and December 2012, and observations by the staff of the PEIANC based on a presentation of the preliminary results. A total of three focus groups were conducted in Charlottetown, each with between 6 and 8 participants (n=20 in total). Given the large proportion of immigrant Mandarin-speaking Chinese in Charlottetown, two of the three focus groups consisted of this ethnic group.⁵ One was held in Mandarin with Mandarin-speaking Chinese who have lived in Canada between one (1) and up to six (6) years. The second was held in English with Mandarin-speaking Chinese who were more established in the country, having lived in Canada between six (6) and ten (10) years. The first focus group was facilitated by a researcher who was fluently bilingual in English and Mandarin. In Charlottetown, Iranian immigrants have become the most recent, fastest growing immigrant group to the province. Therefore, the third focus group consisted of recent Farsi-speaking Iranians to Canada, who had lived in Canada for between one and six years. This focus group was also facilitated by a researcher fluently bilingual in Farsi and English. Focus group questions were constructed to obtain responses in three broad areas; perceptions of quality of life (e.g. “How would you describe your quality of life? Has your quality of life changed since coming to Charlottetown?”), integration (e.g. “Do you feel that immigrants are engaged members of Charlottetown? By engaged, I mean involved in, for example, neighbourhood activities or volunteering.”) and acculturation and adaptation (e.g. “To what community or group of people do you most identify? For example, ethnic, religious, etc.”). Focus group interviews were translated, transcribed and analysed. Following data analysis of the telephone surveys and the focus group interviews, preliminary findings were presented to staff at the PEIANC who have provided services and programs directly to newcomers to PEI for many years. The results could therefore be cross-checked to provide a deeper understanding that would not be readily apparent from other sources of data.

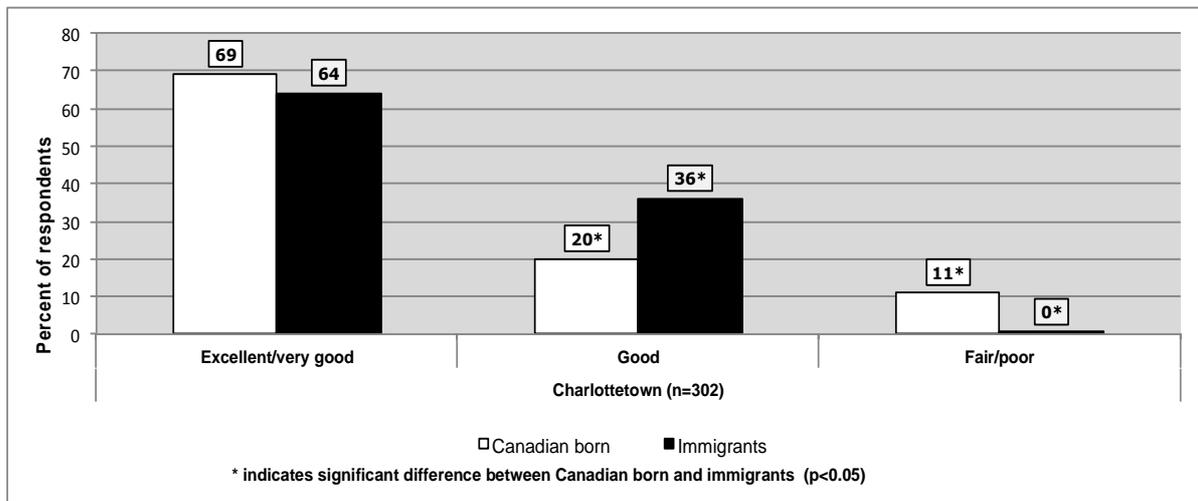
Results

Perceptions of quality-of-life

Respondents to the telephone survey were asked to assess their overall perceptions of quality-of-life. [Figure 1](#) shows that a smaller share of immigrants (64%) described their QOL as ‘excellent/very good’ compared to the Canadian-born group (69%) but this difference is not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. However, there was a significant difference in the proportion of the two groups who described their QOL as both ‘good’ and ‘fair/poor’ with immigrants being more likely to assess their quality of life as good and less likely to describe their QOL as fair or poor.

⁵ According to the 2011 National Household Survey (Statistics Canada 2013c), the immigrant population in Charlottetown was 3,435 (about 10% of the total). The top source countries were China, Iran, the United Kingdom and the United States. Recent immigrants (those arriving between 2006 and 2011) totalled 1,850 in 2011 with the top source countries being China (960), Iran (270), the UK (45) and Turkey (45).

Figure 1: Perceptions of quality-of-life (%).



Source: Compiled by authors.

As shown in [Figure 2](#), the survey asked respondents if they felt ‘things’ were moving in the right or wrong direction in terms of ‘quality of life’ in their city. Encouragingly, about 70% of all respondents felt things were headed in the right direction and there was virtually no difference in this assessment among Canada-born and immigrants (69% and 70% respectively).

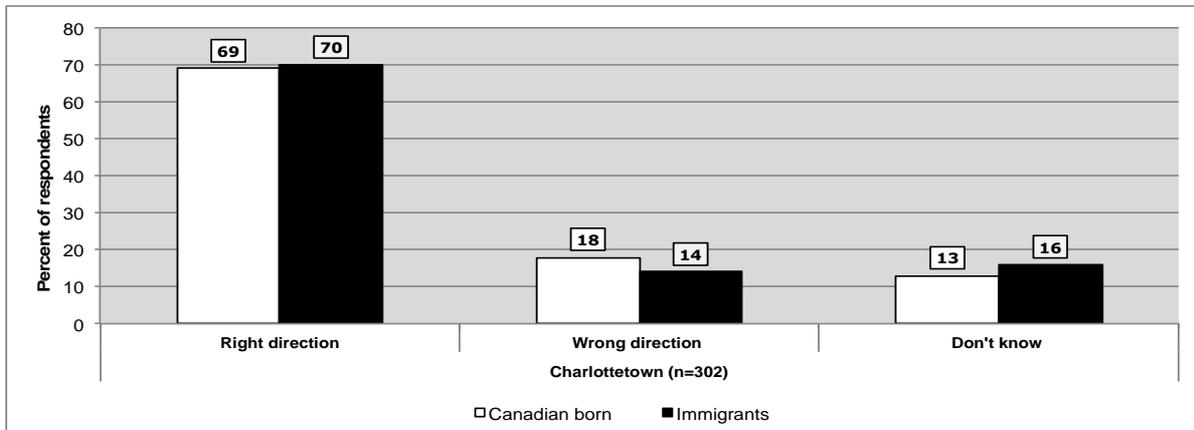
The focus group discussions with immigrants, representing one of the qualitative elements of the research, reinforce these overall positive perceptions of QOL, especially when it pertains to personal liberty and security, but were less positive with respect to ability to generate meaningful employment and income. A recent Iranian immigrant to Prince Edward Island described this distinction as follows,

If we divide the answer into financial and spiritual lives, I can say financially we had a better life in Iran. We had better living facilities there. We don’t have jobs here. But spiritually, our life is much better here. I can say better weather, culture, social freedom, etc. is much better here. For social, peace, culture and education aspects, quality of my life has been improved (Iranian Immigrant Participant - Recent).

Another focus group respondent was more pointed in expressing his/her concern,

My worry at present is that my quality of life may decrease due to lack of income (Iranian Immigrant Participant - Recent).

Figure 2: Response to question: ‘With respect to quality-of-life, do you think things in your city are moving in the right or wrong direction?’(%).

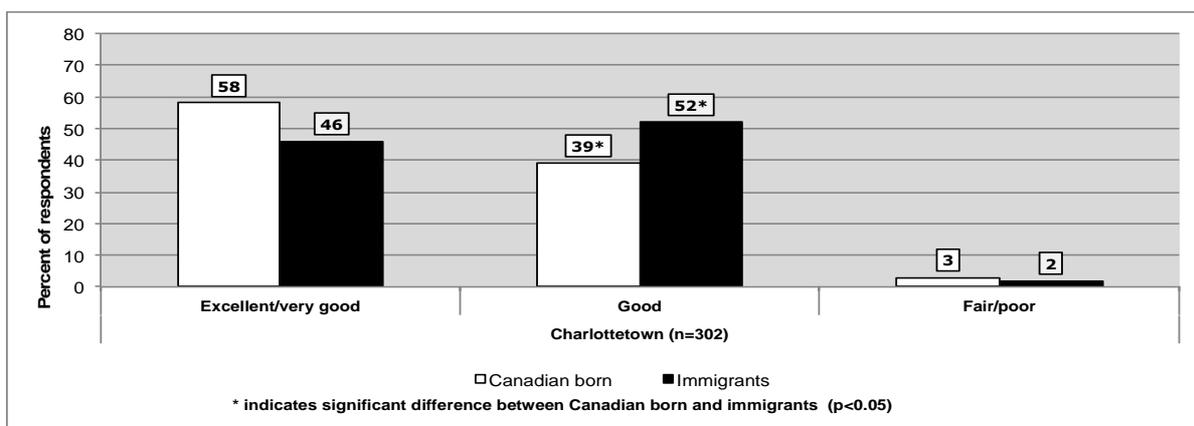


Source: Compiled by authors

Schools and recreational programs

Two of the most important elements of quality-of-life among both groups were the perception of quality of schools and the quality of recreational programs and services in their neighbourhoods. Figure 3 shows that both Canadian-born and immigrants have a fairly positive view of their schools, with 58% (Canadian-born) and 48% (immigrants) describing their schools as either excellent/very good, and only 3% and 2% respectively describing the schools as fair/poor. In only one category of responses, i.e., those who view the quality of their schools as ‘good’, was the difference in response between Canadian-born and immigrants considered statistically significant. This positive assessment overall comes as somewhat of a surprise, given that the standardized assessments for 15-year old students at Prince Edward Island schools undertaken by the Programme for International Student Assessment, or PISA, consistently shows that children in Island schools score near the bottom of the provincial and national rankings in reading, maths and science (Knighton, Brochu & Gluszynski, 2010).

Figure 3: Perception of the quality of schools in the neighbourhood (%).



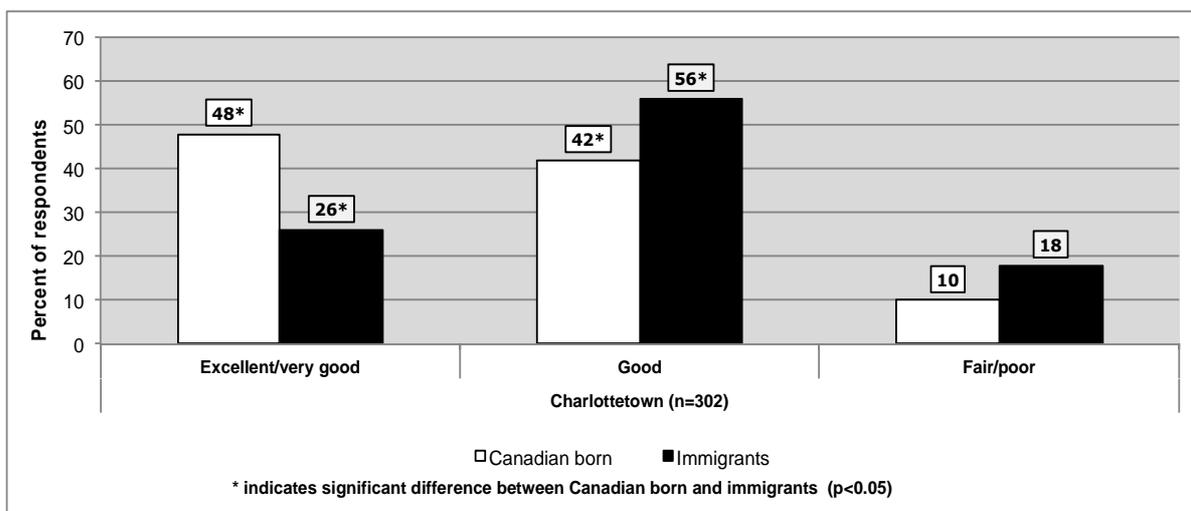
Source: Compiled by authors

The concerns regarding school quality that are not evident in the telephone survey results did become apparent in the focus group responses. The observation by this established Chinese immigrant is indicative of the comments voiced during the focus group sessions,

What makes me even more concerned is that they not even acknowledge the issues or try to address it. And every time we looked at the PISA, the Program for International Students Assessment, they are at the bottom! And still, we think we are pretty good! That attitude, I think it's concerning to me. And when I think about it, that's when I think I should move. This is one of two reasons, if I decided to move (Chinese Immigrant Participant - Established).

Immigrant involvement in leisure and the arts has been shown to positively influence quality of life (Stodolska, 2000). With respect to recreation programs and services in the neighbourhood, Figure 4 shows that immigrant respondents to the telephone survey had a much less positive perception of the quality of these facilities and services than Canadian-born residents of Charlottetown. While 48% of the Canadian-born viewed these services and programs as 'excellent/very good', only 26% of the immigrant respondents provided the same responses, a statistically significant 22 percentage point difference.

Figure 4: Perception of the quality of recreational programs and services in the neighbourhood (%).



Source: Compiled by authors

Comments by the Chinese and Iranian immigrant focus group participants provided more details regarding their dissatisfaction with local recreational services and programs,

And one other thing that may be the answer to next questions as well but could help the quality of life is having recreational and entertainment facilities. A big swimming pool, a casino as a place to bring friends together, a good cinema. It's not good to think we don't have anything in our city and have to go to other cities to get entertained (Iranian Immigrant Participant - Recent).

While the previous quote might reflect the smaller scale of the community relative to the immigrant’s previous home, the quote by the following focus group participant suggests that this aspect of quality of life may be a cultural and social phenomena that allows the individual to feel connected to his or her new community and neighbours,

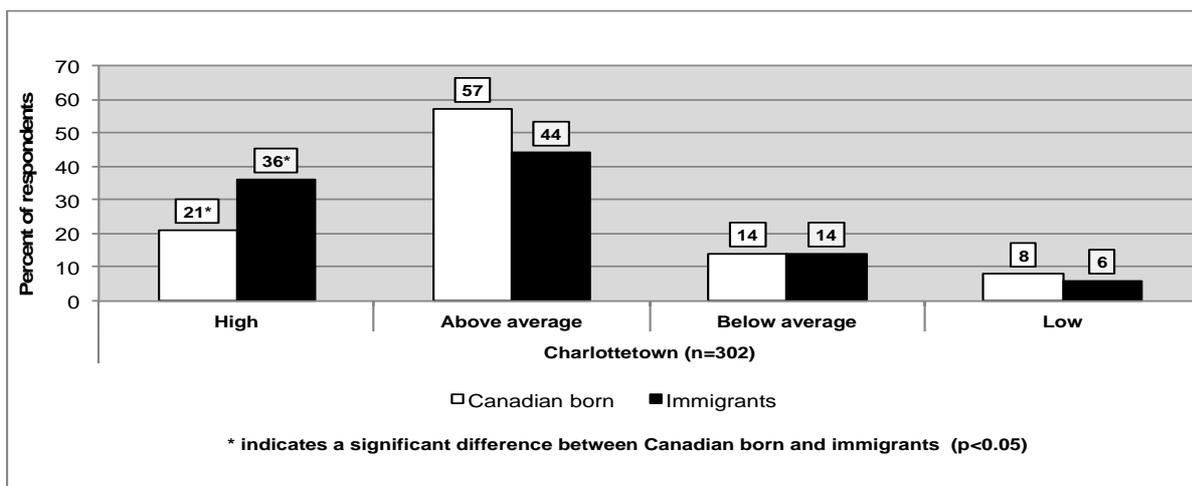
We Iranians need an outdoor life. I have lived in many cities in Iran, whether I was a university student, or working somewhere, whenever we were feeling tired, we had the chance to go out, go shopping, have a walk in the streets and see people and enjoy the night life. I miss the night life very much here (Iranian Immigrant Participant - Recent).

The staff at the immigration services agency (PEIANC) suggested that this frustration was not about the availability of these kinds of services for the children of immigrants but rather with the kinds of programs available for adults, and particularly adults who may not have access to private transportation or for whom there is a language difficulty.

Perceptions of social capital

A section of the telephone survey fielded questions that collectively might be referred to as ‘perceptions of social capital’. This set of questions was intended to provide a relatively simple measure of individual and group-level social capital based on respondent perceptions around issues of trust, safety, help from friends and multiculturalism. This same measure has been used in previous research (Kitchen, Williams & Simone, 2012) and was derived from responses to four survey questions; “Do you feel safe walking down your street after dark?”, “Do you agree that most people can be trusted?”, “Can you get help from friends when you need it?”, and “Do you think that multiculturalism makes life in your area better?”. Based on responses to these questions, a four-level scale (high, above average, below average and low) was developed to measure individuals’ perceptions of social capital. More than one-third (36%) of the immigrants to Charlottetown would fall in the ‘high’ category on the perceptions of social capital scale, compared to one-fifth (21%) of the Canadian-born residents (Figure 5).

Figure 5: Perception of Social Capital (%).



Source: Compiled by authors

This comment by a focus group respondent illustrates the importance of safety and security,

I think the Charlottetown is known for a family place. I didn't know much about Charlottetown before I moved here either. And, so I think that safety and a family friendliness, I think definitely is the most valued characteristics of Charlottetown. And that's probably one of the most important reasons we stayed. I have been here for over six years now (Chinese Immigrant Participant - Established).

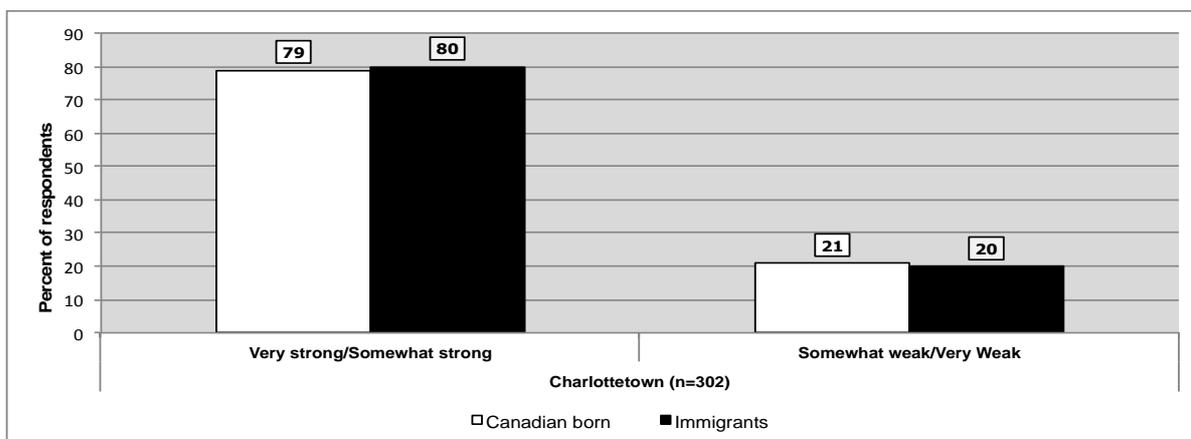
Although immigrants may have felt safer and more secure in their new surroundings, several of them expressed dissatisfaction with the cultural homogeneity of Island life and suggested that this leads to social class distinctions. This recent Chinese immigrant expressed it best.

The island's multicultural community is poorer than the bigger cities such as Toronto, there are various people and many immigrants. On the island, there are fewer immigrants. Locals are not used to immigrants, makes me feel a sense of loss; like immigrants are at a level below (Chinese Immigrant Participant-Recent)

Sense of belonging

As described in the literature review section, a sense of belonging is seen to be a powerful identifier of islandness; something that would appear to be difficult for immigrants to obtain in short order. The telephone survey posed a question on the respondents' sense of belonging to their local community. Most (79%) Charlottetown Canadian-born respondents indicate that they have either a very or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community (Figure 6). It is no surprise that Islanders expressed a stronger sense of belonging than Canadian-born residents of mainland cities such as Hamilton (73%) and Saskatoon (72%). What was unexpected was the equally strong sense of belonging articulated by immigrants to Charlottetown: eighty percent (80%) claimed a very strong or somewhat strong sense of belonging to their local community. This positive sense of belonging spills over to most of the focus group responses to this question. Yet, some disquieting undercurrents emerge.

Figure 6: Sense of Belonging to Local Community (%).



Source: Compiled by authors

For example, a recent immigrant stated,

In general, I find the people in Charlottetown are very friendly! If you are stuck in a street, if you cannot find the way, sometime people can come up to say “Hi” to you and to help you out; to point you in the right direction to find the place you are looking for? But, on the other hand, I personally don’t feel it’s very easy to be very close with them! Like, how should I describe that? ... For example, they always consider like the Islanders first? And always try to ask where you are from? Like from East end? Or West end? And who are your parents? (Chinese Immigrant Participant - Recent).

A Chinese immigrant who works in a customer service-oriented position provided the following perspective,

I work at the store⁶, especially on this topic, when a customer is in line, they should have their turn for services, but he [the customer] would rather continue to wait, so that a counter person at the store who is local, is able to serve him. Some people’s speaking attitude is not very friendly. If there is no problem with the service, then it is fine, but if there is a little bit of a problem, they immediately will give you a bad face, very ugly, and be impolite. It has little effect on my quality of life. But if they do not change their attitude, we can’t integrate (Chinese Immigrant Participant - Established).

Sense of place

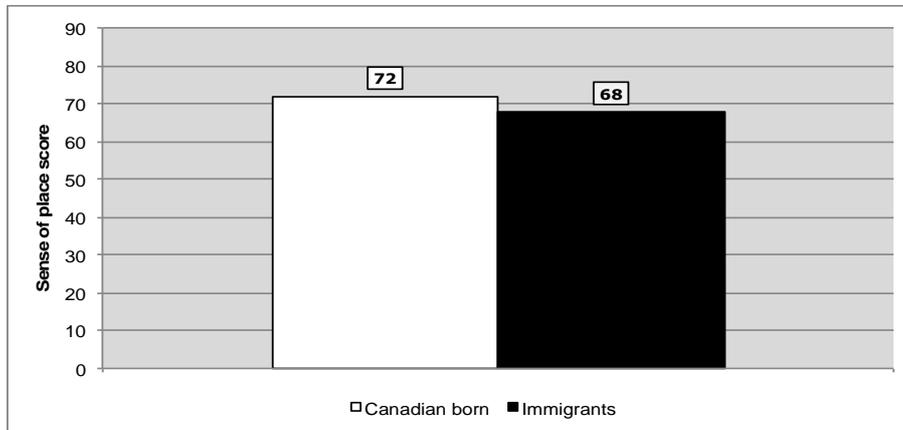
As noted earlier, islanders are supposed to have a heightened sense of place to their natural and social environment. An overall sense of place value was calculated for each individual (Williams & Kitchen, 2012). This value is a composite measure, incorporating the responses to each of 16 questions or statements, such as; “I know many of my neighbours on a first name basis” and “How often do you participate in social activities with your neighbours (e.g., barbeques, coffee dates, etc)”. Overall values range from 0 to 100, with 100 being the highest possible evaluation of sense of place. Canadian-born island respondents had a value of 72, relatively higher than for the larger project’s mainland cities of Hamilton (65) and Saskatoon (68). As was the case with the sense of belonging construct, the value for immigrants’ sense of place in Charlottetown was almost as high (68) as that for the Canadian-born group, with no statistical difference between the two (Figure 7). The focus group responses appear to reinforce this strong connection that immigrants have to Prince Edward Island.

One Chinese immigrant stated that,

Each time you leave the province, just after a few days; I really want to go back to PEI. Once I cross the bridge, I have the feeling of being home. (Chinese immigrant participant - Established).

⁶ The word ‘store’ is used in this quote to disguise the actual name of the participant’s place of employment.

Figure 7: Perception of Sense of Place among Respondents.*



Source: Compiled by authors

* Higher values represent a greater sense of place; Charlottetown (n=270).

An Iranian immigrant noted that,

I have decided to stay here because if I moved to a bigger city, I will again have the same problems. Here is a very suitable place to stay away from the worries and problems of a big city (Iranian immigrant participant - Recent).

Discussion and conclusions

Some of the results of this research reinforce the work previously carried out on islands in general and on Prince Edward Island in particular. For example, values for sense of belonging and sense of place were very high for Charlottetown. The telephone survey revealed that perceptions regarding the quality of schools were much lower for immigrants to Charlottetown than for Canadian-born respondents. Part of the explanation for this result may be associated with one of the primary goals of recent immigrants, that being to access a high-quality 'North American' education for their children. The absolute and relative low perceptions of the quality of recreational programs may be attributed to the smaller size of Charlottetown relative to the immigrants' previous home communities, leading to a narrower range of recreational programs. It might also reflect cultural differences in expectations of leisure, and especially the quality and types of programs available for relatively immobile adult immigrants with lower English language abilities. Although not specific to an island context, Tirone & Pedlar (2005) suggest that leisure and recreation have different connotations for those from minority ethnic populations, being identified more strongly with family activities and pursuits and being located in private rather than public spaces.

As was the case on Grand Manan (Marshall, 1999), Newfoundland (Gien & Law, 2010), Whalsay (Cohen, 1982; 1987) and other island settings, many of the focus group comments suggest an underlying sense of exclusion to socio-economic opportunities. This includes lack of access to employment and investment opportunities regardless of the

immigrants' skills, expertise and financial capital. It also encompasses exclusion from existing social networks. It should be noted that this social exclusion of newcomers is not specific to international immigrants. Many Canadian 'come from aways' have also expressed sentiments of exclusion from the existing norm of strong 'Island' social networks (Baldacchino, 2006a).

Given the challenges reported in earlier research on immigrants' adaptation and integration on PEI (Baldacchino, 2010; Baldacchino & Saunders, 2010; Baldacchino, Chilton, Chung & Mathiang, 2009) perhaps the more idiosyncratic results are those where immigrants had positive perceptions regarding their quality of life, in absolute terms and relative to the Canadian-born population. Almost the same proportion of immigrants as Canadian-born viewed their quality of life as being excellent/very good and a slightly higher share of immigrants indicated that they think things are moving in the right direction with respect to quality of life in Charlottetown. The composite indicator of "perceptions of social capital" reveals that a significantly larger share (36% compared to 21%) of immigrants than Canadian-born fall into the 'High' category. The focus group responses provide a possible explanation for these results. One of the most important aspects of immigrants' new Canadian lives, especially relative to some of the international contexts they left behind, was a sense of personal and family safety and liberty and the realization that they could express themselves without fear of reprisal. Coincidentally, two of the four questions that make up this indicator are linked to a sense of personal safety and trust.

For an island setting such as Prince Edward Island, an even more surprising result is the absence of a difference in the perception of sense of place between immigrants and Canadian-born. It appears that developing a sense of identity or 'islandness' is not dependent on whether you were born on the island nor on how long you have lived there. Despite not being steeped in the local culture and island experiences, it also suggests that immigrants are able to gain a sense of belonging and a sense of place in a relatively short time period. Once again, this may reflect comparative satisfaction with quality-of-life on PEI, or in Canada, relative to the situations immigrants have left behind in their former countries. As suggested by many of the focus group comments, it may also reflect a general sense of welcome and openness by the Charlottetown community and the PEI government to diversify, either for economic development or for altruistic ends. Finally, it may reflect a self-selection process and a limitation to this study design; those who would normally report a lower quality-of-life may have already left the province. This merits future research.

In this regard, if the increased emphasis on recruitment of immigrants remains a major element to a provincial population and economic development strategy, attention needs to be paid to retention and to immigrants' perceptions of quality of life. Recruitment without retention misses the prospect for long-term economic and cultural contributions by immigrants to Island society. Immigrant retention on PEI is notoriously difficult to define and measure but, by many accounts, the vast majority of immigrants leave the province after a short period of time (Baldacchino et al., 2009). By establishing an Office of Immigration, Settlement and Population with a mandate that includes immigrant retention as well as recruitment and settlement, Prince Edward Island's provincial government has, albeit belatedly, recognized the importance of the perceptions held by and of immigrants. The large scope and scale of the activities of the PEIANC also makes a difference in shaping the perceptions and behaviours of both immigrants and islanders. Providing a welcoming social environment combined with more employment and investment opportunities would contribute to a more positive perception of quality of life and higher immigrant retention rates.

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