

PERCEPTIONS OF CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

LABOUR MARKET PERCEPTIONS OF CARIBBEAN INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS  
AND THE FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THEIR DECISIONS OF WHETHER TO REMAIN  
IN CANADA TO WORK OR TO RETURN HOME

Written by:

Ashayna N. Nisbett B.A(Hons)

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree

Master of Arts

McMaster University

© Copyright by Ashayna N. Nisbett, B.A(Hons), September 2011

MASTER OF ARTS  
(2011)

McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Labour Market Perceptions of Caribbean International Students  
and the Factors that Influence Their Decisions of Whether to  
Remain in Canada to Work or to Return Home

AUTHOR: Ashayna N. Nisbett, B.A(Hons)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Suzanne Mills

NUMBER OF PAGES: vi, 51

## **ABSTRACT**

Many Caribbean international students travel to Canada to complete their post-secondary education. Upon graduation, these students often remain in Canada to work as opposed to returning home. This study identifies the factors that influenced Caribbean international students' decisions of whether to remain in Canada or to return home and evaluates the relative importance of their labour market perceptions in light of all of the factors influencing their decisions. Factors such as easy labour market entry, high wages, less stringent immigration policies, careers relevant to the students' degrees, family ties and relationships with loved ones, discrimination in the labour market, lifestyle and attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members can all act as push or pull factors in Canada, the host country, or the students' countries of origin. These factors influence the students' decisions of whether they should remain in Canada to work or return home. However, results support the conclusion that labour market perceptions are the most significant factors in students' decision making.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

To my supervisory committee, Dr. Suzanne Mills, Dr. Donna Baines, Dr. Wayne Lewchuk, thank you for your assistance, guidance and support. Sharon Molnar, thank you for your kind, positive and encouraging words throughout the year. To my fellow classmates: thanks for being there. To the participants in my study, thank you for taking the time out of your schedules. It was great to be in the company of fellow Caribbean international students and without you I could not have put this study together.

To my family, a special thank you. Most importantly, thanks Mom, for your patience, your encouragement, your support, your confidence in me and your love. Without you this would not have been possible. This Master's degree is shared with you Mom! Love always.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iii
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	iv
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	v
<b>LIST OF TABLES</b> .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER 1</b>	
Introduction .....	1
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	
Literature Review .....	4
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	
Methodology .....	10
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	
Findings .....	13
- Labour Market Perceptions .....	14
o Entry into the labour market .....	14
o Discrimination in the labour market .....	18
o Value of Canadian work experience .....	20
o Remuneration .....	22
- Other Factors .....	24
o Attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members .....	24
o Canadian immigration policies .....	28
o Family ties and relationships with loved ones .....	33
o Lifestyle .....	36
<b>CHAPTER 5</b>	
Discussion .....	38
<b>CHAPTER 6</b>	
Conclusion .....	46
<b>APPENDICES</b>	
Appendix A .....	48
Appendix B .....	49
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b> .....	50

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1		
	Research Sample.....	11
Table 2		
	Factors and Major Categories .....	13
Table 3		
	Student Decision Statistics.....	14
Table 4		
	Push-Pull Factors – Categories and Ratings.....	39

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Globalization allowed various societies worldwide to become more and more interconnected, where many people could travel from developing countries to developed countries more frequently and easily in order to pursue a better future. Many students left their home countries to complete their post-secondary education in a country like Canada because their countries of origin often did not provide them with the type of education they seek, in terms of either accreditation or the program of study. Unfortunately, these students often remained in Canada, contributing to a brain drain in their own home countries, and benefitting their host country.

The brain drain phenomenon was traditionally viewed as the movement of highly skilled people, also referred to as knowledge workers, from their home countries to countries that offered them more and better opportunities in not only their area of specialty, but also in terms of their living conditions and lifestyles (Tansel and Güngör, 2003). However, another prevalent form of brain drain, as pointed out by Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri, (2007), happened when students from non-developed regions chose to study in a developed country such as Canada and decided not to return home after completion of their education. Brain drain occurred worldwide. Carrington and Detragiache (1999) asserted that a number of countries – especially small countries in Africa, the Caribbean and Central America – lost more than 30 % of highly educated individuals to migration (1999, p.49). It was therefore important to understand how students view their education abroad and how their perceptions could lead to migration to their host countries. Previous research on ‘brain drain’ focused primarily on movement of highly skilled workers from developing countries to developed countries and rarely on movement of students

from Caribbean countries to a developed country such as Canada for education and migration. This study was different from many others in that the focus was solely on migration from the Caribbean region to Canada through the perspectives of Caribbean international students. Although people often migrate to find work, there were other factors that weighed heavily on the decisions that Caribbean international students made to decide whether they want to either remain in Canada to work or to return home. In this paper, the importance of students' attitudes and perceptions of the labour market relative to other factors when deciding where to go to work after graduation were examined.

The push-pull model coined by Lewin (1951) as cited in Baruch et al. (2007), explained how “people experience contradictory forces in making a decision regarding whether or not to move to a different country” (2007, p.101). It was essential to know and understand what push-pull factors in Caribbean international students' home countries and their host countries influenced their decisions to remain in Canada to work or to return home. Perceptions of the labour market were important as most students wanted to find work immediately upon completion of their studies, and how they perceived the labour market in their home countries or their host countries tended to determine where they would decide to work. More specifically, the research sought to answer the following questions:

- How did Caribbean international students perceive the labour market in Canada and in their countries of origin, and how did their perceptions play out in their decisions?
- What were other factors that determined the decisions that these Caribbean international students made?
- What was the relative importance of Caribbean international students' perceptions of the labour market versus their perceptions of other factors in their decision making?

This paper is divided into 6 chapters. The first chapter introduces the paper. The second chapter includes an overview of the current literature on international mobility of students, their subsequent immigration and the brain drain phenomenon. Chapter three illustrates the qualitative research methods used to answer the above research questions. In chapter four, students' perceptions of the labour market in their home countries and Canada are explored. This section also identifies other factors that students took into account when deciding whether they should return to their home countries or remain in Canada to work. This is followed by an analysis of students' perceptions of the various factors that helped to determine their decisions in chapter five. Subsequently, the paper concludes in chapter six, where the important perceptions and factors that students cited are illustrated and evaluated against each other.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers examine the brain drain phenomenon which describes the immigration of highly skilled workers from one country to another (Baruch, Budhwar and Khatri, 2007; Mazzarol and Soutar, 2002; Rizvi, 2005; Tansel and Güngör, 2003). A less researched aspect of the brain drain phenomenon is the brain drain's link to academic mobility, which is defined by Tremblay (2005), as "a period of study abroad which allows students to absorb cultural and social customs of their host country" (2005, p.197). In the case of academic mobility, students from less developed countries often chose to immigrate to their host country, usually a more developed country, upon completion of their studies instead of returning home. In this literature review, studies that discussed the characteristics of migrants are examined first. Next, studies that explained why students chose to undertake an international education are investigated. Subsequently, research that examined why students either remained in their host countries or returned home are analyzed. Studies that looked at labour market outcomes of students with an international degree are also assessed. Ultimately, the gaps in previous research are analyzed. The importance of understanding the labour market perceptions of Caribbean international students and the factors that influenced their decisions of whether to remain in Canada to work or to return home are also explained.

When estimating the extent of migration by level of education, Carrington and Detragiache (1999) concluded that there was an overall tendency for migration rates to be higher for highly educated individuals than those with little or no educational qualifications. "With the exceptions of Central America and Mexico, the highest migration rates are for individuals with a tertiary education" (Carrington and Detragiache, 1999, p.49). This suggested that there is a

greater possibility for students, who travel abroad to undertake an international education and to migrate to their host country than other people.

The literature illustrates that there are various reasons for migration. The push-pull model was a consistent concept in the literature and helps to explain the factors of student migration which resulted in brain drain. In particular, Mazzarol and Soutar (2002) and Baruch et al. (2007), focused on the push-pull model. There were numerous reasons why students chose to obtain an international education and Mazzarol and Soutar (2002), using the push-pull model, suggested that various factors within the home country push students to study overseas and various factors in the host country pull students to attend university internationally. For many students, obtaining an international education could mean increasing their economic and social standards of living. Limited access to education also forces students to leave their home countries to study. Wiers-Jenssen (2008) agreed with Mazzarol and Soutar (2002). Wiers-Jenssen (2008) stated that going abroad to study was the students' primary motivation since many students believed that an international education from a developed country could result in international opportunities for work. Study abroad could also be a part of a deliberate immigration strategy from the perspective of students, asserted Tremblay (2005). Since foreign students are considered future workers in these countries, immigration policies are often implemented to facilitate the students' settlement.

Baruch et al. (2007) determined that there are a number of push-pull factors that influence individuals' decisions to stay abroad or to return home after graduation. These factors include economic, social or legal. Attitudes of students and their beliefs about migration were examined in some of the literature (Wiers-Jenssen, 2008; Rizvi, 2005; and Baruch et al., 2007). After surveying college and university graduates from Norwegian and foreign institutions,

Wiers-Jenssen (2008) hypothesized that international students gained a taste for living abroad since they studied abroad and were more likely to work abroad. This supported Baruch et al.'s (2007) claim that the students' positive adjustment to their host country could influence them to stay abroad. According to the study conducted by Wiers-Jenssen (2008), results showed that students from the foreign institutions reported far more interest in working abroad than the Norwegian students. Moreover, Rizvi (2005), conducted in-depth interviews over a period of five years with Chinese and Indian students in Australia and the US. Some of these students were in their final year of study, while others completed their education and remained in their host country or returned home. Rizvi (2005) found that his study substantiated the claim, that students viewed an investment in travelling overseas to obtain their education as a "ticket to migration" (2005, p.177). However, it was important to note that many of the students in Rizvi's (2005) study did not desire a permanent move, but were still very committed to their countries of origin. Baruch et al.'s (2007) study supported this commitment; students' strong ties to family members in their home countries deterred them from remaining abroad.

The economic situation of a country generally determines the strength of the labour market. The economic situation of a country also influences the stability of politics, salaries and employment opportunities in the students' host countries or their countries of origin. Baruch et al. (2007) hypothesized that "a weak labour market in the home country and a strong labour market in the host country will be positively associated with a foreign student's decision to stay in the host country after their studies" (2007, p.102). They concluded that students' perceptions of the labour market in either the host country or the country of origin affected their intentions to stay or to return home respectively. Tansil and Güngör (2003) evaluated findings on the return intentions of Turkish students studying abroad and found that these factors: political instability,

lower salaries and lack of employment opportunities in the home country, helped to explain the Turkish brain drain. They suggested that the most important reason for not returning or delaying return was the uncertainty of finding employment upon the students' return to Turkey. The students, therefore, chose to remain abroad to obtain work experience. Bratsberg (1995) also discussed economic factors as a determinant to remain in the host country. He analyzed the non-return among foreign students in the United States using administrative micro-data from the US Immigration and Naturalization Service. Based on this study, the decision to remain in the US was dependent upon the “economic situation in the home country as the most important factor in the return decision and the monetary rewards to the current job to be the primary reasons for continued stay in the US” (Bratsberg, 1995, p.376).

From the literature examined, an international education had different outcomes. A study was done by Ziguras and Law (2006) where they compared Malaysia and Australia. Australia was considered the host country to Malaysian students. Malaysian students remained in Australia upon completion of their studies. According to this study it appeared that Malaysian graduates in Australia were more readily employed than graduates with a foreign degree (Ziguras and Law, 2006). According to Brooks and Waters (2009) interviews conducted with 45 UK graduates did not have positive outcomes in the domestic labour market. Many UK students according to Brooks and Waters (2009) encountered some difficulties in the UK labour market because they possessed foreign qualifications. Students in this study felt that there was little knowledge of their international education, and the value of their foreign credentials was often questioned. Therefore, many students according to Brooks and Waters (2009) tried to gain meaningful employment in their host countries. However, Wiers-Jenssen and Try, (2005) also looked at the outcomes of students who chose an international education and their study

contradicted the study conducted by Ziguras and Law (2006). Wiers-Jenssen and Try (2005) focused on transferability of an international education to the Norwegian labour market and concluded that an international education could have either positive or negative effects on labour market outcomes (Wiers-Jenssen and Try, 2005). These researchers agreed that an international education was applicable and appreciated in Norway, the domestic labour market, but contrary to Ziguras and Law (2006), “employers preferred to recruit graduates with parts of their education abroad over graduates with an all Norwegian or an all-foreign education” (Wiers-Jenssen and Try, 2005, p.701). Although Bremer’s (1998) study looked at Hungarian students in a short (5 month) study abroad period across Central and Eastern Europe, their research supported Wiers-Jenssen and Try’s (2005) claim that employers preferred students with part international and part local education. Bremer (1998) indicated that the Hungarian domestic labour market valued the students’ international education. This was apparent because this period of study had a positive impact on the student’s ability to find work and on their salary level. It also illustrated that not all students who undertook an international education chose to undertake international work experience.

The literature review corroborated the claim made by Tremblay (2005) that there was a link between academic mobility and immigration, which could result in the brain drain phenomenon. International students were certainly attractive migrants. However, various push and pull factors and students own attitudes determined whether they would remain in their host country or return to their country of origin upon graduation. The literature review examined students from or in countries like Turkey, Norway, the UK, the US, Hungary, China, India and Australia. However, none of these studies provided evidence that explained why many Caribbean international students chose to remain in their host country. It was, therefore, important to

examine and analyze Caribbean international students' perceptions of the labour market and other factors in their home countries and in their host country Canada, to understand how the brain drain phenomenon could affect the region.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

Between April 2011 and June 2011, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 Caribbean international students attending universities in Ontario, Canada. Students were undergraduates and graduates, including Bachelors, Masters and PhD students. In this study, the term Caribbean international students referred to students from Caribbean countries that came to Canada on study permits for the purpose of post-secondary education. Qualitative interviews were used to explore the respondents own understandings and interpretations of their education and future career. Questions asked detailed information about why respondents planned to remain in Canada after completion of their studies or why they planned to return to their countries of origin.

Since I was a student of McMaster, I used this school to recruit students. However, students who volunteered from McMaster only represented two Caribbean Islands; this did not accurately represent the Caribbean region as a whole. Therefore, students were also recruited from Trent University since it had a large Caribbean student population. Snowball sampling was used to obtain more participants. Participants were recruited through:

- International Student Groups at the McMaster University in Hamilton, Ontario and Trent University in Peterborough, Ontario. An email, see Appendix A, was sent to these groups and then forwarded to students.
- International Student Office at the McMaster University. An email was sent out to this office, and the email was then forwarded to International students.
- Advertisements were posted all around the McMaster University campus. A notice was placed on the Trent University Facebook page.

- Convenience sampling – Being a part of the group studied and familiar with many other students in this category around Ontario; former classmates who fit the criteria, were contacted and the standardized email was forwarded to them.
- Snowball sampling – students who opted to participate were asked to speak to persons they thought might be interested in the study and referred this study to others who fit the sample criteria.
- Posts on my personal Facebook page – directed to my friends in universities across Ontario.

Interviews were conducted with 13 students, 4 of whom were male. Students ranged in ages from 20 to 26 and included two PhD candidates and one Master's student. Remaining participants represented students from 2nd year to 4th year of their undergraduate studies at three universities across Ontario. The interview sample represented a variety of students from various university programs and countries of origin; see Table 1.

**Table 1 – Research Sample**

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Program of Study</b>	<b>Island</b>
Astra	BA Anthropology	Bahamas
Delicacy	BA International Development and Environmental Research Studies	St. Kitts
Dennian	BA Engineering	Bahamas
Ianna	BA Tourism and the Environment	Jamaica
Judith	BA Psychology	St. Maarten
Julienne	BA Psychology	Bahamas
Kevin	BA Biochemistry	Bahamas
Leigh	PhD Chemistry	Barbados
Max	BA Economics and Finance	Barbados
Nyara	BA English	Bahamas
Ricaldo	MA Economics	St. Maarten
Shani	BA Environment and Resource Science	St. Lucia
Tiffany	PhD Psychology	Dominica

The interviews were semi-structured; see Appendix B for the interview guide. Participant responses shaped the direction of the interviews. The interviews were averaged 30 minutes in length. The first section of the interview focused on students' chosen path of education and future career goals. This question allowed them to situate themselves in the labour market. The students were then asked about their work experience in both Canada and their home countries. With this information, they discussed their perceptions of both labour markets. Questions were asked about the students' job search and how they felt about remuneration and benefits. Subsequently, the students were asked if they wanted to remain in Canada after their education.

Although considered temporary residents, since they were students attending school in Canada, in order to reside in Canada after their education, students must follow certain procedures and apply for a work permit. Students were asked about the Canadian immigration policies in place. Specifically, they were asked whether they believed the policies were a negative or positive feature of immigration to Canada.

After transcribing the interviews, I used thematic analysis to analyze the interviews. I identified a number of consistent categories and used codes to group these categories together. I was able to create major themes that were of importance to students in their discussions of their labour market perceptions and other factors that influenced their decisions of whether to remain in Canada to work or to return to their countries of origin.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

Perceptions of the labour market that affected students' decisions about whether to remain in Canada or return home included entry, discrimination, remuneration and their perceived value of a Canadian experience. They based their perceptions on their own experiences at work, or through the experiences of close family and friends. Along with their labour market perceptions, the Caribbean international students identified four additional factors which influenced them to either remain in Canada to work or to return home; see Table 2. These included attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members and the Canadian immigration policies and played a significant role in the decisions that students made. Family ties and other relationships, as well as lifestyle, also influenced these students' decisions.

**Table 2 - Factors and Major Categories**

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Major Categories</b>
<b>Labour Market Perceptions</b>	Entry into the labour market
	Discrimination in the labour market
	Remuneration
	Value of Canadian experience
<b>Other Factors</b>	Attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members
	Canadian immigration policies
	Family ties and relationships with loved ones
	Lifestyle

In response to the question of whether they wanted to remain in Canada to work or to return home, students provided four types of responses; see Table 3. Even though the sample of participants was quite small, the decisions varied tremendously.

**Table 3 – Student Decision Statistics**

Student Decision	Female		Male		All	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Return Home	1	11%	2	33%	3	23%
Remain in Canada	3	33%	2	67%	5	39%
Remain in Canada temporarily	3	33%	0	0%	3	23%
Unsure	2	22%	0	0%	2	15%
Total:	9	100%	4	100%	13	100%

39% of the students stated that they would remain in Canada, 23% stated that they would remain in Canada temporarily to gain experience and then return home, 15% were not sure; their decisions would depend on where they would be able to find work and 23% stated that they preferred to return home upon completion of their studies. More students chose to stay in Canada after their studies rather than to return home, whether it was a permanent or a temporary stay. These numbers suggested that more students saw Canada as a favourable location for working once they completed their education. This also indicated that the Caribbean was experiencing a brain drain since approximately two thirds of the students chose to remain in Canada.

### **Labour Market Perceptions**

Students understood the labour market in terms of their access to employment, the discrimination they faced within the labour market, the remuneration they would receive for the positions they would hold and their perceived ideas of the value of Caribbean vs. Canadian work experience.

### ***Entry into the Labour Market***

All the students had prior work experience in their home countries before coming to Canada to attend university and many were able to find some sort of employment while attending university here in Canada. Many of the students indicated that it was fairly easy for them to be able to find

employment in their home countries prior to attending university in Canada, usually because their parents and family members connected them with employers. However, these jobs tended to be either menial jobs or jobs unrelated to their future goals. Many students in the group used informal mechanisms such as personal references to obtain work in their home countries. One student stated:

I think when you deal with small islands, small island nations, everybody knows everybody, the entire population of the country is not bigger than the population of Hamilton so everybody knows someone and you usually get your job through your family connection or who you know (Astra, Bahamas).

When asked if it were more about whom she knew, one student who had been relatively unsuccessful in finding employment in Canada exclaimed “exactly! Which is probably why I have so much trouble finding a job here...because I don’t know anyone” (Nyara, Bahamas). Several students expressed a strong identification with ease in obtaining employment in their home countries prior to attending university in Canada because the islands are typically very small and just about everyone knows everyone. The students asserted that the informal processes they used to obtain employment in the islands prior to attending university in Canada would not necessarily work in Canada. In Canada, students had fewer social contacts to provide them with a personal recommendation to obtain employment. One student, however, felt dissatisfied for being hired for who he knew and expressed concerns that he wanted to be hired based on his knowledge and capabilities and not just by his family and friends’ networks:

It’s easier to find a job if you know someone, it’s a whole lot easier. I think sometimes businesses would rather hire you because a certain person asked for you to be hired, other

than that, if I just gave my resume they might just be like we don't have space for you. I think that it plays a big part in getting a job (Dennian, Bahamas).

When asked how he felt about this he asserted:

Well...good and bad. Good because I can always get a job, but bad because I don't feel like I'm really analyzed for who I am and what I can do and what I'm capable of, like sometimes if someone can really look at my resume and be like you know this guy has potential (Dennian, Bahamas).

However, many students were also fearful that the process would not be as easy if they were to decide to return home, unless they knew someone or if their program of studies were of great importance to their home country. The participants asserted that if students were not studying the usual: Business Administration, Education, or Tourism, there was a very low chance of being able to obtain acceptable employment in their home countries. They felt that there was not a market for other degrees such as Chemistry and Engineering. When a female participant was asked if she would be able to apply her education to her home country, she stipulated:

Well because it goes back to who your parents know or this person knows so I think that when it's time for me to go home and work, getting a job in the government and getting a good enough job to make a difference in the government will be a possibility for me, but that all goes back to exactly how countries run in the Caribbean (Astra, Bahamas).

The only Masters student asserted that:

It's a pretty small island. There aren't as much good jobs, just in a bank, insurance and as a teacher. Not many opportunities back home, the process might be easier to get a job back home, but work experience here [in Canada] is more beneficial (Ricaldo, St. Maarten).

However, another student currently studying economics and finance felt that an MBA might still be quite advanced for a country like Barbados:

I see a lot of people in business school; they want to go on to the fancy MBAs, especially in finance, all these Wall Street ambitions, all these exotic products which will never exist in Barbados. We just simply don't have a financial market like that (Max, Barbados).

Students perceived that although they felt it easier to obtain work in their home countries because of personal connections, some of the programs of study would be considered insignificant in their home countries, not like Canada which provides opportunities for students in all programs of study. Students asserted that it might be difficult for them to enter the labour market at home because they would be over qualified, and employers would be unwilling to pay them their deserved amount. The literature suggested that graduates from the host country were more employable than students who graduated from a foreign university (Tansel and Güngör, 2003; Brooks and Waters, 2009). Tansel and Güngör (2003) agreed, stating that “students returning with advanced foreign degrees and overseas experience may also find that they have received the “wrong” education for the needs of the domestic labour market” (2003, p.52). Although many students identified areas in which their expertise could be used, Downes (2006)

indicated that one of the major challenges in the Caribbean region was the creation of new jobs. For the majority, the perception was that the labour market in Canada was conducive to their needs and expectations upon graduation. Students claimed that because they studied in Canada it was an easier transition to work in Canada. 23% of students preferred to stay temporarily in Canada to obtain work experience and then return home. The students who believed that they studied programs which their home countries needed, such as environmental science, child psychology and tourism, perceived that they would easily enter the labour market back home. Downes (2006) emphasized that “service exports, especially tourism, have been promoted in several countries such as the Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia and Tobago” (2006, p.27). Students who undertook degrees in environmental studies may also find it easier to obtain employment in the Caribbean region (Conway and Potter, 2007: 31).

### ***Discrimination in the labour market***

Compared to the home country labour market, many of the students confessed frustration with being able to find work in Canada. Although their student visas allowed them to work, many maintained that jobs on campus were offered to students with Ontario Student Assistance Program (OSAP) first. To be eligible for OSAP, one must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident:

When I came to McMaster it was ridiculous because #1 they save a lot of jobs for 3rd year students, #2 you have to be on OSAP and the Mac work program before you can...before they'll even look at an application for a job (Astra, Bahamas).

One student also felt that, as a co-op student, he was unable to apply for certain jobs. He believed that most of these jobs were government jobs and were primarily for Canadian citizens: “The co-op jobs were government jobs, so you couldn’t have the jobs unless you are a Canadian citizen so automatically off the top I couldn’t get the job” (Kevin, Bahamas). According to the students the employment process in Canada seemed to follow more formal processes and requirements. It was not just about ‘who you know’ that got you the job. One student said that “Here the job interviews are more scrutinizing. You have to go through an interview process with less chances [of getting employment compared to Canadians]” (Kevin, Bahamas). Students also perceived the labour market in Canada as more reliant on qualifications and formal processes such as applications and interviews more so than ‘who they know’, but these processes can be a form of discrimination. The results are supported by the literature. Duvander (2001) found that many immigrants educated in their host country, were overqualified for the positions they held. It, therefore seemed, that it was not about educational attainment or lack of skills but “rather to the societal reception of immigrants” (Duvander, 2001, p.211). Although country specific capital could improve labour market outcomes to some extent, for Caribbean international students in Canada, it still did not explain the differences immigrants faced compared to Canadians in the Canadian labour market.

One student also felt that although she considered staying in Canada because the salary is much better than she would receive in her home country, she felt there may be some discrimination towards migrants in terms of salary. She stated “but I’m not sure about the salary, would they be getting the same as a citizen, it would seem good for some, but my question is would it be fair to some?” (Delicacy, St. Kitts).

Although some students saw the Canadian labour market as favourable for entry, many were also skeptical. Students articulated that because they were migrants they would not be paid as well as citizens. They also felt that their entry into the Canadian labour market could be delayed, since these positions in Canada are frequently first filled by Canadians. According to Duvander (2001), “unemployment is often higher among immigrants, and the immigrants who are employed are often educationally overqualified for their jobs” (2001, p.210). This strengthened the claim from the students that they could face discrimination in the Canadian labour market since they enter as immigrants.

Students’ work histories also determined their perceptions of whether they would be able to enter the labour market of either Canada or the Caribbean islands. Delayed entry into the labour market could be related to the fact that students are new graduates, with very little experience relevant to their studies. Some students, however, felt that entry into the Canadian labour market could be difficult since many of them did not have sufficient Canadian work experience. One student stated “I found that jobs back home are a lot more accessible because I have the qualifications for them, but in Canada, I do have the qualifications but, they aren’t considered equivalent to what they would rather up here” (Ianna, Jamaica). Students felt that Canadian work experience was another form of discrimination that delayed or prohibited their entry into the Canadian labour market. The experience they obtained from their home countries was often not considered when applying for jobs in Canada.

### ***Value of Canadian Work Experience***

Students believed that gaining Canadian work experience was an advantage to their future, more than work experience from the Caribbean islands because of the necessary

requirements, qualifications and formal processes that they would go through when they would seek employment in Canada, and that Canada's labour market employed persons from all university programs of study. A student in the PhD Chemistry program felt that it would be easier to transition to work in Canada than back home:

I think the transition to work here would be much easier than the transition at home...because everything here teaches you how to work here. All the people I meet work here... All the norms I've been introduced to, in terms of the working world and my profession, have been introduced to me here... Learning how to be a professional for me has been mostly in Canada. All the people teaching me how to be in the working world has been in Canada and that's just because I've been educated here" (Leigh, Barbados).

Students also believed that it would be easier for them to enter the labour market in Canada than in their home country, because they obtained their education and training here in Canada. They suspected that opportunities for employment would be available to them upon completion of their studies, making it easier for them to enter the labour market here in Canada. As Wiers-Jenssen (2008) pointed out, the education that students attained abroad could have weak or negative signaling effects to employers since the education from abroad was less known or acknowledged by employers in the students' home countries. Students would have to work in jobs in their home countries, where the requirements or responsibilities are not up to par as their qualifications earned.

However, some students felt that having work experience in Canada could be an asset to obtaining employment in their home countries. One student assumed that Canadian work experience would be viewed favourably when she stated “when you’re from small countries they look at your work history and say oh Canada, a big place! Let’s hire her! So it does benefit you to show that you have some experience in a developed country” (Astra, Bahamas). One student said, “My perception is that Canada has a waste management system, by remaining in Canada I can get work experience and then use it when I return to the Caribbean” (Shani, St. Lucia). To this student, the systems of recycling that were implemented throughout Ontario could be implemented in the Caribbean islands to better manage their waste.

Wiers-Jenssen (2008) stated that “working abroad adds to the country-specific human capital; different experiences are acquired, and networks are formed. It was likely that more graduates would return home at a later stage, bringing international work experience with them to the domestic labour market” (2008, p.122). 23% of the students wanted to return home but preferred to remain in Canada for a period of years to obtain gainful employment, which they stated would allow them to take meaningful experience to their islands.

### ***Remuneration***

When the students talked about salary, it became clear that they felt that the salary in Canada would be greater than that of their home countries. Students were concerned about their income, especially after spending approximately \$15000CDN per year in tuition fees:

My girlfriend took an internship here...made \$40000 dollars in one year. Then two friends who are engineers worked for Ontario Power...I don’t know...they made in

Canadian terms good money. In Barbadian terms, when you exchange it 2 to 1, fantastic money! \$80000BBD is the salary a person with three years' experience and a Master's degree in Barbados could expect; so yea it sounded great (Max, Barbados).

Students also claimed that they would be making higher wages in Canada, especially considering the high-exchange rate of their country's currency:

The only reason I would stay is if the pay, the salary is good and it's easier for me to pay off my student loan, in that Canadian currency is higher than mine and it's quicker to pay off what I owe for my degree instead of coming home and making less money with that currency (Delicacy, St. Kitts).

All of the students were international students; their tuition costs were substantially higher than domestic students, and these international students wanted to be able to repay loans, repay parents and save money. The only way to do this would be to gain immediate and meaningful employment. They believed that the ability to earn more money in Canada than they would earn in their home countries would allow them to repay loans and save more than they probably would if they returned to their home countries upon graduation. Canada's minimum wage was \$10.25 per hour, substantially higher than the minimum wage of the countries examined. The currency exchange rates of the students' countries of origin were also quite high. This helped to understand why many students, 62%, opted to remain in Canada, even though some would stay temporarily and then return home. Brooks and Waters (2009) asserted that obtaining an international education may not give students an automatic advantage in the labour market of their home countries but, it does open up opportunities in their host countries.

## **Other factors**

### *Attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members*

Five students referred to either one or more of these professions: banking, insurance, teaching, hospitality and tourism, which seemed to be the most readily available in terms of employment in the Caribbean islands. Students suspected that their program of choice could either work in their favour or against them if they chose to return home. They all felt that they would not have difficulty with finding work in their field here in Canada. One student believed that if he returned home to assert his knowledge in his field, the government and prominent people of the community, “would not accept it because they think that you are trying to show them off which you’re not trying to do” (Kevin, Bahamas). Another student said:

A lot of people back in St. Martin...I wouldn't say hard headed, but their minds are fixed to the old ways of doing things and for a small island that can be a big problem and this certainly dampens the idea of going back home to work, to elevate the country and contribute (Ricaldo, St. Maarten).

In frustration, another student explained:

I think the first roadblock would be the government's priority because at this moment, the priority of the government is tourism, so the way that they see things which is quite different to the way I see things without my Bachelors, is that it's about investment, pouring aid [in tourism], is the way to go (Shani, St. Lucia).

This student then goes on to say:

You have persons like myself who are craving, who want to go back, who would swim from Canada to go back to the island to make the change that will help us to be a Caribbean, a place where we're not known for beaches and sunshine but known as cutting edge and trendsetters and paving the way for the rest of the world. Without that it is frustrating for us because we want to help, but we're not given the opportunity and the chance to help. If I'm trying to get in, eventually I'm going to stop knocking and go to other doors that open wherever it is. It might be that I stay in Canada or I go to some other part of the world. It's like I'm not giving back to my country because my country doesn't want me to give back, it's not ready (Shani, St. Lucia).

Students also asserted that although programs such as Environmental Studies and Waste Management were pertinent to the development of many of the Caribbean islands, governing bodies would not be open to funding these kinds of projects, and the students believed that the need for their expertise would go unrecognized. One student explicitly stated "tourism is the name of the game" (Ianna, Jamaica). A Barbadian student expressed discontent and frustration:

I went to the labs; the government has some labs where they do forensics. I asked them about it and they told me, do not come back if you have a Masters or PhD. They said we will not have the money to pay you, you will be overqualified and we will hire someone else...they are going to be cheaper and we can train them. I thought it was quite insulting because you know the people who are going to advance anything are the people who are going to be educated in it, and I think it's ridiculous that they are turning away people that are educated, but at the same point, it is reasonable and understandable because they don't have the money (Leigh, Barbados).

The same student felt that the Government did not want to fund initiatives related to science. She said, “I come from a purely science background and I think that science itself in Barbados is completely underfunded, I don’t think Government cares about it at all” (Leigh, Barbados). Many students felt that the governing bodies and prominent community members lack the vision of innovation for development and progress that the students could bring to their countries from the knowledge they gained from their studies overseas. One student stated:

Certain things have to change but, it’s also an island thing... You’re just saying what you saw abroad and you have an experience and you see that this works better and you want to show people that, hey, this can work better, but they don’t accept it, because they think you’re trying to show them off which you’re not trying to do. So I just think when you come here and you get more open minded the mentality of going back home gets you more frustrated you know you’re going to be frustrated (Kevin, Bahamas).

Although many of the students asserted this perceived negative attitude by governing bodies and prominent community members, one student believed that students who left their home countries to gain an education, need to be mindful of the changes they would like to make:

I think that the types of things and [the] pace of change that we expect back home is a bit unrealistic...because a lot of the islands are categorized as underdeveloped and we study in a developed country (Tiffany, Dominica).

But this student also stated that:

People back home should give a little bit of credit to those persons who've travelled and made the sacrifice to return home and yes, change is tough. Change is very hard, but I think sometimes it's necessary (Tiffany, Dominica).

Although many students suspected that they would not be supported, one student asserted that “locals from Jamaica would appreciate [it] more if a person who goes away to study comes back... They classify those who go abroad to study and don't come back as ‘sell out’ ” (Ianna, Jamaica). Another student talked about how she would be able to contribute to her country once she completed her degree because her profession was seen as needed by the government who provided a scholarship for her program:

We don't have any child psychologists on the island and the thing like I said I'm on a scholarship from back home, and the government of St. Maarten only gives you a scholarship in the field you are studying because that's what they need back home. If you wanted to study engineering and we have 20 engineers, they won't give you a scholarship, but if there are a low number of teachers oh, study teaching...we'd give you a scholarship for that (Judith, St. Maarten).

It seemed that unless the program of study was deemed as necessary to the country and its economy, students would be turned away by government. However, one student believed that “students should go the non-governmental route rather than through the government. We need to be more direct to the people” (Tiffany, Dominica). The attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members in the students' countries were very influential in the decisions the students made. To the students, these people were not accepting to the many students who

left their countries to obtain an education and wanted to return to their home countries to make their contribution.

### ***Canadian Immigration Policies***

Most of the students were aware of certain policies that were put into place for international students studying in Canada to migrate to Canada upon completion of their studies. For some students, immigration policies affected their decisions of whether to stay in Canada or return home. One student exclaimed:

It's fantastic! If it wasn't for that, I would be in America. Canada wouldn't have gotten my money. The way I see it, it's a market for international students' money. We pay \$15000 plus a year, plus expenses, plus Canadian taxes, plus health insurance. I throw a lot of money in Canada and if Canada has an open immigration policy well, not to be elitist, but the people that can afford to pay for an education and become educated, well it's the kind of immigrants you want to encourage. So if you're competing for immigrants that have money or just for money yourself for the market, having an open immigration policy set you a notch above England and America (Max, Barbados).

Another student also referred to the Post graduate work permit, which allows students to work in Canada upon completion of their studies. She believed that applying for this permit and then permanent residency was a way to continue her education at a lower cost:

The other plus of applying for the post grad is that after I apply for the post grad I can apply for permanent residency, which makes school even more affordable. If I actually

do stay here, I won't pay that \$20000, \$1500 for a course, I would pay \$500 for a course, so it makes it more affordable (Julienne, Bahamas).

A Bahamian student expressed displeasure about the implementation of Canadian policies. She saw them as just another means of Canada gaining financial benefits from the international students:

Another thing that got me was this new program the Canadian government has with international students. So when you graduate you get, they fast track a work permit for like 3 years or something like that and yes it's great that we do have that opportunity to stay in Canada, but as far as I'm concerned I've spent how many years paying double, triple the fees from boarding school, to college, to university. I've spent over almost 10 years paying double the fees and now you're asking me to stay in your country to give it all, like return the income to you...I don't...I don't know...that's why me, personally, I would not stay (Astra, Bahamas).

Some students felt that obtaining the work permits and permanent residency were very costly, and involved too much paper work, which could take a long time to process:

Honestly I'm kind of annoyed by them, I've gotten used to the system, but to me it's just a pain. The thing is that a lot of the paper work processes you're left high and dry hoping for something in the mail to be sent back to you, or approval, no communication, just praying that your paper work doesn't get lost somewhere." (Ianna, Jamaica).

Although these particular students expressed displeasure, they both would be using the work permit “I guess its annoyance and gratitude are the two words I use to describe them” (Ianna, Jamaica). Students feared that a lot of restrictions were imposed on them when they applied for these documents. Two students expressed not being able to apply for certain immigration documents such as the Post graduate work permit, which allowed students to continue working in Canada upon graduation, or the Provincial Nominee, where students could apply to be nominated and then they could apply directly for their permanent residency. They were unable to apply for the permits because they had already started new graduate programs...Masters and PhD respectively. One student said, “I was unable to apply for the post grad work permit, because I had already enrolled in the Masters’ program, so I will have to wait until this program is complete before applying” (Ricaldo, St. Maarten). Another student who hoped to apply for the Provincial Nominee stated “If you are applying after your Masters and you’re already enrolled in a PhD program you don’t get it. I was very disappointed in that, but I know a couple of my friends you got it through the experienced class” (Tiffany, Dominica). Here was an account of an experience for a female PhD student who applied for permanent residency:

I have not applied for a work permit, but I have applied for my Canadian permanent residency. I applied under the Canadian experienced class... and they denied me. They took a year processing my application where I heard absolutely nothing from them for that whole year...and then when they finally did reply to me the first time I was hearing from them was to tell me that I did not have enough working hours in Canada. So their policy is that if you have working hours in Canada it has to be full time work for at least a year, and where I would have had the number of hours to fill that space it wasn’t in full time hours, `cause it was basically stretched over teaching assistant jobs I’ve had over a

period of time. I had the number of hours, but not in the way they wanted them, so they denied me and that really sucked (Leigh, Barbados).

Although students were pleased with the possibility of migration, some students were of the opinion that the Canadian government made it difficult for international students to apply for these permits primarily because Canada is first protecting its citizens' employment opportunities. These students knew that many people apply to immigrate to Canada on a regular basis, and one student also felt that it could be a difficult process because people before them would immigrate illegally and so Canadian immigration was forced to be stricter with its immigration policies:

So you have people coming over to study, but their citizens paid the taxes and everything else that's why I think that they have policies in place where you have to go through getting a work permit, because its little tougher because they want to make sure that the Canadian citizens are first then whatever's extra they can give to other people of other countries (Kevin, Bahamas).

Another student said:

More and more people are trying to stay the Canadian government is getting more and more strict, with an influx of people I think that they are starting to feel a little bit of pressure. I mean there are people immigrating from not only the Caribbean but refugees from like Russia, with the wars happening all over the place...Lebanon, in the Congo and with them accepting more and more people I think they are making more tougher to apply and get accepted to stay here. So in that sense it's easier for people to move on or to choose a different place to go (Leigh, Barbados).

Some students were of the opinion that applying for the post graduate work permit led to a better future for their families as well:

The prospect of immigration or having the ability to travel to Canada a bit more freely and maybe when I get a bit older if I decide to have a family that they can study in Canada and get an education like I did you know good quality, not that the, the Caribbean doesn't have a good quality, but that would probably be the other reason (Shani, St. Lucia).

Overall, students expressed interest in taking advantage of the various policies that Canada put into place. One student clearly stated “if I get a work permit, it validates my being here” (Nyara, Bahamas). This illustrated how students valued the importance of work, and that employment was a major reason for attending university in Canada. Tremblay claimed that “immigration policies in the main destination countries of students have been amended in the recent years in a way that provides skilled workers an easier access to residence permits. Within this trend, most destination countries designed specific schemes to favour former students in the selection process of prospective immigrants, most often by providing them a step-by-step path toward permanent residence” (2005, p.221). Several of the students indicated that Canadian immigration policies were also very important factors in their decision making. Students, however, felt that the immigration process should be an easier one given that they remained in Canada remitting tens of thousands of dollars to Canada's economy to obtain their education. Many believed that taking advantage of immigration policies was a means to an end in terms of accessing cheap education should they choose to apply for permanent residency. Canadian

permits would also provide easier means to travel and to raise a family in Canada. Although, for some, the process seemed to be quite expensive, lengthy and arduous, and may still favour Canadians over immigrants, they all claimed that they have or would be taking advantage of the policies put into place for international students to Canada.

*Family ties and other relationships with loved ones*

Several of the students expressed concerns about their relationship with family members. They felt that relationships needed to be taken into consideration when they made their decisions. One student talked about the sacrifice that her parents made to send her off to school and how she felt indebted to them. She wanted to return to repay them, but also to be present for her very young sibling in the way her parents were there for her:

My parents always struggled to put me through university... I owe them and they remind me. Another thing too is that a lot of Caribbean parents...try to make sure that they provide for their children. I'm 24 years old and they still put the allowance there. They still put the rent. They work hard to make sure that we live and that we have better opportunities than they did so I feel when they get in their older age, it's my responsibility to be there and take care of them. I have a little brother who is 5 years old and I need to make sure that I can be able to give him what they gave me (Astra, Bahamas).

Many Caribbean international students although recipients of various scholarships to attend university, often relied heavily on parental support and funding which took care of not only

tuition, but also miscellaneous fees for living expenses. One student talked about the importance of home and family:

I am the kind of person, I'm not the person who likes change, so I'm comfortable with being home, already know my home. I have my family and friends and change will be too drastic for me, coming to school overseas, was drastic enough, but again the salary is a persuasion to stay if I got a good paying job (Delicacy, St. Kitts).

Two other students talked about the distant relationships they have with their family which impacted their decision to remain abroad. One of these students said, "my family relations aren't good, so I would rather stay here than to continue underneath their care" (Nyara, Bahamas). Another asserted "I don't have a close relationship with my family back home so I feel free to establish myself overseas" (Tiffany, Dominica). Some students, who did not have a close or positive relationship with family members, had no ties to their country of origin and were free to remain in Canada on a long-term basis after graduation. One female student had a fiancé at home and would return home upon completion of her studies to be with him. She also noted that she had no family here:

I have a fiancée that's there, so I probably need to be there. So I do have stronger ties in any event to my home country and another thing is I don't have any family here...it's just me (Astra, Bahamas).

Three students met someone here in Canada, one of them a female, met her fiancé here in Canada and he was Canadian:

I got engaged like 2 weeks ago...hopefully yes that will be a large influence obviously with my boyfriend if he wants to stay here...then you know I'm thinking of two of us and not one of us anymore. He is also not from Barbados. He's from Canada so that complicates things completely. So that's an influence – he loves Barbados, he's been there a few times, he says he'd love to live there...I think if I found a job there, he'd probably follow me there (Leigh, Barbados).

Students who had positive relationships with their family viewed this factor as one of tension. Leigh also talked about the fact that she has no family here, but ultimately she was more concerned about settling in a place where she would be able to find work:

I would move home because I love my family and they're there, but, I need to find a job that challenges me in a way that I thought was parallel to all the work that I've put into my education so far and pay me enough money that I deserved it (Leigh, Barbados).

Another student clearly stated “I don't want to marry a Canadian, and that would be the only other reason to stay here in Canada. I want to set up roots back home” (Judith, St.Maarten). The only male student to acknowledge family ties as a factor stated, “My girlfriend is here and I have family and friends here, so I feel a sense of belonging especially after being here for such a long time. I am very well adjusted to the lifestyle” (Ricaldo, St. Maarten). Some of the students acknowledged that their families sacrificed a lot in order for them to pursue their education. By returning home they could take care of their families, but many also felt that by obtaining gainful employment in Canada they could send remittances back home. This would allow them to take care of their family from a distance.

### *Lifestyle*

The group also spoke about other factors in terms of culture and weather, which I termed lifestyle. Many students took these factors into consideration, when they made their decisions. The students perceived that the culture of Canada's labour market was a busy one, whereas the Caribbean islands were more relaxed:

I must say I enjoyed working back home than here...yea it's not as fast paced as here, and you could work on your own time if customers are not in at the store, you can sit down read a book or find something on the computer to do, but in Tim Horton's even if there are no customers you still have to be on your feet and it can be tiring" (Judith, St. Maarten).

One male student preferred to return home:

The lifestyle is good there...like I said...people who are...the younger, ambitious they see a future in Canada, I mean honestly I like surfing, I like a simple life so...Barbados. I know you don't make a lot of money, but it's more conservative, but the lifestyle is good...quality (Max, Barbados).

Another student said "I like home, I like sunshine all year around" (Delicacy, St. Kitts). Ianna agreed with Delicacy saying "I'm in Canada so let's be real, the sunshine and the beach, I hate winters" (Ianna, Jamaica). One student although he disliked the weather expressed getting accustomed to it when he said "I would say weather, but after you go through undergrad for so long, you got to get used to it" (Kevin, Bahamas). To these students, the relative importance of

lifestyle was low compared to the other factors discussed. The students from the Caribbean islands were accustomed to the year around tropical weather, whereas in Canada they had to adjust to the four seasons, in particular winter. Some students stated that although they were very uncomfortable during the winter weather, they adjusted to it and could certainly continue to adjust on a long-term basis. Max, a male respondent, who wanted to return home stood out in that he was the only one that really enjoyed the “quality of lifestyle” back in Barbados. The only reason he would remain in Canada was if he would be able to obtain a really high paying job. He asserted that it was expected that he would leave the island to attend university for which his family would gladly pay. It seemed that he came from a high socioeconomic background, and so finding a job was not as important as the lifestyle he would like to maintain.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

Many students from the Caribbean annually chose to travel overseas to a country like Canada in order to obtain a higher education. “Data on the proportion of international students who go back to their countries of origin upon graduation are difficult to find, but most estimates suggest that fewer than half return home” (Rizvi, 2005, p.179). This move for higher education could result in permanent migration to their host country. This claim supported the results of this study. Permanent migration to the host country by Caribbean students could lead to the Brain Drain phenomenon. What factors influenced and motivated students to remain in their host country were important ones, as these decisions could have major impacts not only on the individuals, but an impact on their countries of origin and their host country.

This investigation made two contributions. First, the students’ perceptions and attitudes of the labour market in Canada as well as in their home countries were examined and then the other factors that were influential in determining whether they remain in Canada to work or to return home were identified. Second, the key factors that the students identified as important in their decision making were evaluated; specifically, attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members, the concept of 'who you know' and the Canadian immigration policies were analyzed.

The factors listed in Table 4, all acted as push-pull factors. Push-pull factors not only operated when students chose to obtain an education overseas, but also operated once students completed their education, and decided whether to return to their home countries or to remain in the host country. Baruch et al. (2007) pointed out that these factors were at the individual, organizational or national levels and were economic, social and legal.

**Table 4 - Push-Pull Factors-Categories and Ratings**

<b>Student Ratings</b>	<b>Factors</b>	<b>Major Categories</b>	<b>Minor categories</b>
<b>1</b>	Labour Market Perceptions	Entry	‘Who you know’ Field of study
		Discrimination	
		Remuneration	
		Value of Canadian experience	
<b>2</b>	Attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members	Resistance to Student innovation: ‘Laggards’	‘Who you know’
<b>3</b>	Canadian Immigration Policies	Discrimination	
<b>4</b>	Family ties and relationships with loved ones	Gender	
<b>5</b>	Lifestyle	Class	

Tremblay (2005) stated that “host countries may take advantage of the presence of foreign students by allowing some of them access to the labour market in the form of part-time or seasonal work, participation in research and development work (R&D) incorporated in educational programmes, or immigration upon completion of their studies” (2005, p.197). The various aspects of the labour market that the students identified are key aspects. During studies, it was often difficult to earn a steady income; rather students spent lots of money on tuition. Therefore, the ability to find work immediately upon graduation was imperative. Students’ perceptions of the labour market were the most important in influencing the decisions that they made, but if they perceived difficulties in entering the labour market, as they did in their home countries, they would opt to remain in Canada. How students perceived the labour market was important to the decisions they made, but as Rizvi (2005) pointed out “the drivers of international mobility are not only economic, however. They are also cultural and political” (2005, p.176).

In the introduction to this paper, I drew on the concept of the brain drain phenomenon, which explained the loss of talent from the Caribbean region to a country like Canada since more students chose to remain in Canada upon completion of their studies rather than to return home. The main purpose of the interviews was to determine how students decided on whether to remain in Canada or to return home and how their decisions related to the brain drain phenomenon. However, it became apparent during the interviews that although students felt their decisions caused a brain drain in the region, they believed there was more of a brain push from their countries of origin. It seemed that students were not encouraged to return to the region.

Students identified that the attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members in their home countries were major factors in the decisions that they made. These students felt that they were not supported by the governing bodies and prominent community members. Thomas-Hope (2002) claimed that in countries where the levels of social capital are low, where there is little trust, especially in the institutions, policies need to be directly aimed at building confidence (2002, p.25). The students displayed a lack of confidence in governing bodies and prominent community members to help them secure employment, and put their expertise to use. Students perceived that governing bodies and prominent community members were resistant to student innovation.

Dysart-Gale, Pitula and Radhakrishan (2011), studied the importance of cultural factors in facilitating the design and diffusion of culturally appropriate communication technologies in the Caribbean (2011, p.43). These researchers evaluated Rogers' (1999) 'Diffusion of Innovation' which could be used to explain the attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members in the Caribbean region. Rogers (1999) defined diffusion of innovation as a process where perceived new ideas and practices are communicated, by creating and sharing

information with one another to reach a mutual understanding through channels, over time among the members of a social system.

Dysart-Gale et al. (2011) referenced Rogers (1999) various groups of diffusion of innovation and referred to the group termed ‘laggards’ which best explained the attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members in the Caribbean region.

“Laggards tend to be frankly suspicious of innovations and change agents. Their traditional orientation slows the innovation-decision process to a crawl... [while] most individuals in a social system are looking to the road of change ahead and the laggard’s attention is fixed on the rear-view mirror” (Dysart-Gale et al., 2011, p. 45).

Within the home countries, low wages discouraged students, but it was more about the ‘laggards’ within the Caribbean region that deterred students from returning. Those persons with power and authority within the Caribbean communities would need to be more open to students’ innovations and expertise which could spur development within the region, and thus, students would want to return since they knew that they would be supported.

Conway and Potter (2007) claimed that educated students returned as professionals laden with university and technical proficiencies from the universities they attended, but they were still aware of the local knowledge and expertise used in their home countries. If students returned, their human and social capital would make a difference. If the Caribbean international students felt like they would not be accepted or taken seriously, there would be no need to return. Some students were blatantly told by governing bodies, that they could not pay them suitable salaries, or that their program of study was insignificant to the economy. There was a great need for these small developing countries to realize that it would be by education and educated citizens that

these countries could move up on the economic scale. According to Tremblay (2005) many countries have recognized that having an educated workforce is a prerequisite for economic growth. The Caribbean region should be more open to their citizens and not push them away to be useful to other countries, especially a country like Canada which was already considered ‘developed’. Instead of viewing these students as assets, it seemed as if they were perceived as a threat to the power and control of those in governing or high powered positions.

As mentioned by one of the research participants, students should look to nongovernmental organizations to exert their expertise in their home countries. Gmelch (1987) as cited in Conway and Potter (2007) suggested that “return migrants’ affect local community development. They found that there were notable investments in small business ventures, and further, that the private sector experiences of returnees were often progressive and productive in contrast to the re-assimilation problems of returnees in public sector institutions” (2007, p.31). On the other hand, the only Jamaican student in the study alleged that the Jamaican communities considered students that do not return as “sell out”. Unlike other Caribbean states, Jamaica’s government realized that the returning population had a potentially major contribution to make, and so established a Returning Residents Program to encourage nationals abroad to return (Thomas-Hope 2002, p.23). If the Jamaican government developed systems to ensure that its citizens returned and became productive citizens, perhaps the students should take advantage of this opportunity to put their expertise to use. According to Thomas-Hope (2002) a program similar to the one initiated in Jamaica was also implemented in St. Kitts/Nevis.

When the students talked about ‘who you know’, it became clear that it was a very important aspect of gaining entry into the labour market in their countries of origin. The concept of ‘who you know’ could be directly related to Bourdieu’s concept of ‘social capital’ which

referred to the connections between people in various social networks which were considered valuable and beneficial. Støren and Wiers-Jenssen (2010) indicated that students must have relationships with the following resources: friends, previous colleagues, employers and family, who may have an influence on labour market opportunities (2010, p.32). In their home countries, Caribbean international students had ample social capital to provide them with labour market opportunities, but in the host country this was not the case.

The concept of ‘who you know’ also related to social class. Students’ chances of getting a job were higher if the structure of their ‘social capital’ included someone of importance within an organization or someone in the middle to high socioeconomic status within the communities they lived. Students were aware that with connections to people in a higher socioeconomic status, they would be able to gain employment. Therefore, entry into the labour market at home discriminated against those who were in a lower socioeconomic status, since they may not have had ties with people in a higher socioeconomic status with the social capital to connect them with employers.

Many of the students acknowledged that their parents were working hard to get them through university. Some of the students also worked throughout their university careers, and this illustrated that the students and their families were probably from a middle to lower socioeconomic status in their home countries. However, there was one student who was classist in his remark. He indicated that the elite who could afford to go abroad to study should go; this student was also the only student that mentioned that lifestyle was a very important factor. Socioeconomic status also determined the factors that would be more important in the decisions that students made. This concept of ‘who you know’ also factored in with attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members. People in this group were from a higher

socioeconomic status, and if the students were unable to network with governing bodies and prominent community members it would be difficult to have their concerns heard.

Although there were some variations in terms of gender-specific factors, gender played a minor role in the decisions students made. Family ties and relationships with loved ones were more of a concern for the female participants than the male participants. Students not only talked about their relationship with immediate families, but also envisioned future relationships with fiancées and starting their own families. According to a study conducted by Baruch et al. (2007) “strong ties with family members in the home country discourage a foreign student’s decision to stay abroad after their studies” (2007, p.107). The female students, more than the male students, expressed that their relationships with family were important ones, although a source of tension. This factor was a major source of tension because even though these students had a close relationship with their family or other loved ones and would prefer to be nearer to them, finding employment still overshadowed returning home if the students would not be able to find gainful employment near their families.

The majority of students viewed the Canadian immigration policies favourably. They described them as a great way to remain in Canada to gain Canadian experience. Canada capitalized on the educated and qualified students that travelled to Canada to obtain their education.

“Facing a shortage of the highly skilled workers needed to sustain their own economic growth in knowledge-based economies, developed countries like Australia and Canada, which once strongly encouraged international students to return home—and were almost apologetic when they did not—now view international education as a major avenue for recruiting highly skilled migrants” (Rizvi, 2005, p.179).

As mentioned previously, the students were learning in the Canadian environment and were taught through a Canadian perspective and so gained country-specific skills that could be utilized in the labour market here in Canada. However, these immigration policies were also discriminatory against immigrants. The policies for some were a means of weeding out persons that Canada would rather return to their home countries, and so were forms of discrimination. For students to work upon completion of their studies, they would have to apply for a Post graduate work permit. This permit would often indicate a set date for which the students should leave, and would also entail other information that would alert potential employers to the fact that these were international students applying for work. These aspects of the permit allowed for discrimination to occur in the hiring process, especially since most jobs were offered first to Canadians. Although some students expressed disdain with regards to the immigration policies, they all planned to take advantage of them.

Despite the decisions of many students to remain in Canada, temporarily or permanently, they all wanted to be productive citizens to their home countries. These factors discussed by students only illustrated that the Caribbean region was not conducive to these students' need for growth and development within their chosen careers. They believed that Canada allowed them the opportunity of growth and development.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

The findings suggested that students' perceptions of the labour market and other factors such as attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members, immigration policies, family ties and relationships with loved ones as well as lifestyle, all influenced the decisions that students made of whether to remain in Canada to work or to return home. Students identified Canada's pull factors as immigration policies, high monetary rewards, entry into employment relevant to students' degrees, and a strong labour market. Home country pull factors were family ties and other relationships with loved ones, attachment because of financial obligations and lifestyle. Push factors associated with Canada were minimal; family ties and relationships with loved ones, little to no relevant Canadian work experience and possible discrimination in terms of entry into the labour market. Push factors tied to home countries were negative attitudes by governing bodies and prominent community members, a weak labour market, low salaries and skill mismatch to available careers.

Although the brain drain phenomenon existed in the region, it was not necessarily prevalent in this region, but rather educated and talented students were pushed out of the region, and were not encouraged to return because of the lack of foresight and innovation by those in authority in this region. Caribbean international students' labour market perceptions were most important in influencing the decisions that the students made. Economic benefits and a higher inclination to be successful was anticipated if they remained in the country where they completed their education and this was primarily because students wanted to work. However, the attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members influenced who could enter the labour market in the students' home countries. This was a major push factor identified in the students'

home countries. Although brain drain was identified, it was less applicable to the Caribbean Region. Changes in the negative attitudes of governing bodies and prominent community members must be made to encourage and support student return to enhance innovation and development in the Caribbean region. If students perceived the pull factors of the host country, Canada, to be more positive, students would continue to remain in Canada upon completion of their studies. Providing attractive pull factors to these students would certainly lure them back to their countries of origin.

## APPENDIX A

Ashayna Nisbett, BA

**Masters Candidate in Work and Society**  
**Labour Market Perceptions of Caribbean International Students and the Factors that Influence Their Decisions of whether to Remain in Canada to Work or to Return Home**

---

**E-mail Subject line:** A study of the labour market perceptions of Caribbean international students and the factors that may influence their decision to remain in Canada or to return home to work.

I am inviting you to take part in an interview that will take approximately 30-45 minutes. As part of the Master of Arts program in Work and Society at McMaster University, I am conducting a study to examine the labour market perceptions of Caribbean international students and what factors may influence their decision to remain in Canada to work or to return home to work. I am interested in understanding ways in which the Caribbean can better understand the brain drain phenomenon occurring and how to possibly reverse it.

It is expected that this study will not pose any risks to you and you can withdraw at any time. I have attached a copy of a letter of information about the study that provides full details. This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster Research Ethics Board.

I would like to thank you in advance for your time and consideration. After a week, we will send you a one-time follow-up reminder.

Ashayna Nisbett  
Masters Candidate in Work and Society  
Department of Labour Studies  
McMaster University  
Hamilton, Ontario  
Tel: 289-925-5294  
Email: nisbetan@mcmaster.ca

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Guide

#### **Labour Market Perceptions of Caribbean International Students and the Factors that Influence Their Decisions of whether to Remain in Canada to Work or to Return Home**

**Ashayna Nisbett, (Master of Arts student)  
(Department of Labour Studies – McMaster University)**

**Information about these interview questions:** This gives you an idea of what I would like to learn about Caribbean international students' perceptions of labour markets and the influences to immigrate to Canada or to return home. Interviews will be one-to-one and will be open-ended (not just “yes or no” answers). Because of this, the exact wording may change a little. Sometimes I will use other short questions to make sure I understand what you told me or if I need more information when we are talking such as: “*So, you are saying that ...?*”), to get more information (“*Please tell me more?*”), or to learn what you think or feel about something (“*Why do you think that is...?*”).

- 1) Information about you: Your age now? Nationality/ Country of Origin? Have you ever been gainfully employed?
- 2) Please tell me your thoughts of where you see yourself working upon graduation/ future career goals?
- 3) What are your impressions of the Canadian labour market and the possibilities of you working here?
- 4) What are your impressions of the labour market in your home country and the possibilities of you working there?
- 5) Are you obligated to return home to work? [  ] Yes [  ] No  
Please tell me more about this?
- 6) Would you like to remain in Canada to work?  
[  ] Yes If yes, please tell me more.  
[  ] No If no, please tell me more.
- 7) What policies (if any) do you think have been put into place to ensure your easy transition to work in either Canada or your home country?
- 8) How do you think your decision will impact the country you choose to work in?
- 9) Is there anything else you would like to add with regards to your perceptions of the labour market?

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Baruch, Y., Budhwar, P. S. and Khatri, N. (2007) Brain drain: Inclination to stay abroad after studies. *Journal of World Business*, 42:99-112.
- Bratsberg, B. (1995) The incidence of non-return among foreign students in the united states. *Economics of education review*, 14(4): 373-384.
- Bremer, L. (1998) The Value of International Study Experience on the Labour Market the Case of Hungary: A Study on the Impact of Tempus on Hungarian Students and their Transition to Work. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 2:39-57.
- Brooks, R. and Waters, J. (2009) International higher education and the mobility of UK students. *Journal of Research in Higher Education*, 8(2):191-209.
- Carrington, W. J. and Detragiache, E. (1999) How extensive is the brain drain? *Finance and Development*, 36(2):46-49.
- Conway, D. and Potter, R. B. (2007) Caribbean Transnational Return Migrants as Agents of Change. *Geography Compass* 1(1): 25-43.
- Downes, A. S. (2006) Caribbean labour market challenges and policies. *Macroeconomía del desarrollo* 45, Chile: United Nations
- Duvander, A. E. (2001) Do Country-Specific Skills Lead to Improved Labor Market Positions?: An Analysis of Unemployment and Labor Market Returns to Education Among Immigrants in Sweden *Work and Occupations* 28(2): 210-233.
- Dysart-Gale, D., Pitula, K. and Radhakrishnan, T. (2011). Culture, Communication and ICT for Development: A Caribbean Study. *IEE Transactions on Professional Communication*. 54(1):43-55.
- Gmelch, G. (1980). Return migration. *Annals, Review of Anthropology* 9:135-159.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field theory in social science*. NY: Harper & Row.
- Mazzarol, T. and Soutar, G. N. (2002) Push-Pull factors influencing international student destination choice. *The International Journal of Education Management*, 16(2):82-90.
- Ontario Canada (2011) International Masters Graduate stream. *Opportunities Canada*. Retrieved from [http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/pnp/OI\\_PNPSTUDENTS\\_MASTERS.html](http://www.ontarioimmigration.ca/en/pnp/OI_PNPSTUDENTS_MASTERS.html).
- Rizvi, F. (2005) Rethinking “Brain Drain” in the Era of Globalization. *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 25(2):175-192.

- Rogers, E. (1999) *Diffusion of Innovations*, 3rd Edition. New York: Free Press
- Støren, L. A. and Wiers-Jenssen, J. (2010) Foreign Diploma versus Immigrant Background: Determinants of Labour Market Success or Failure? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 14:29-49.
- Tansel, A. and Güngör, N. D. (2003) Brain Drain from Turkey: survey evidence of student non-return. *Career Development Journal*, 8(2):52-69.
- Thomas-Hope, E. (2002) Skilled Labour Migration from Developing Countries: Study on the Caribbean Region. *International Migration Paper 50*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Tremblay, K. (2005) Academic Mobility and Immigration. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9(3):196-228.
- Wiers-Jenssen, J. (2008) Does Higher Education Attained Abroad Lead to International Jobs? *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 12(2):101-130.
- Wiers-Jenssen, J. and Try, S. (2005) Labour market outcomes of higher education undertaken abroad. *Studies in Higher Education*, 30(6):681-705.
- Ziguras, C. and Law, S. (2006) Recruiting international students as skilled migrants: the global 'skills race' as viewed from Australia and Malaysia. *Globalization, Societies and Education*, 4(1):59-76