

# **MIGRATION OF THE HIGHLY SKILLED: THE CASE OF BRAIN DRAIN IN THE FAROE ISLANDS**

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This dissertation is submitted in part-fulfilment of the degree of MSc in Globalization undertaken by me in the Department of Sociology at the University of Aberdeen, and it is solely written by me.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the emigration of skilled people from the Faroe Islands, a nation that sends many of its young citizens, especially females, abroad for higher education, but subsequently suffers as many do not return. The study is framed theoretically by the concept “brain drain” which refers to the mass emigration of an area’s most talented and skilled people. Sociological literature generally states that this is detrimental to the affected society and results in societal stagnation; however, it also recognises that in certain societies this “brain drain” can turn into “brain circulation”: a situation where the affected country can gain from sending students abroad, as they return equipped with new knowledge and transnational professional connections. By means of online questionnaires aimed at Faroese students, studying abroad, this study investigates the extent of this brain drain and the prospects for turning it into brain circulation. It is found that most respondents emigrated for educational purposes and for the international experience and that most are unsure of whether they want to return. More females than males want to return, but not enough to make up for the disproportionately many females who leave in the first place. Of those wishing to return most do it for personal and societal reasons, whereas those who are unsure or do not want to return, make these choices for professional reasons. Seeing as the latter group is most beneficial to societal development, this study deduces that the current brain drain in the Faroe Islands is significant, and if nothing is changed, it will gradually worsen. The study recommends that in order to achieve brain circulation the country should improve possibilities for entrepreneurship, research and innovation, strive towards creating transnational networks, update old and restrictive laws and make it financially easier for newly graduated individuals to move back.

## CONTENTS

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Abstract</b> .....   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>Introduction</b> .....                                       | <b>5</b>  |
| Context .....   | 5         |
| Note from the researcher .....                                  | 6         |
| Outline of study.....   | 6         |
| <b>Literature Review</b> .....                                  | <b>8</b>  |
| Theories on migration .....                                     | 8         |
| Theories on brain drain .....                                   | 9         |
| The impact of globalisation .....                               | 10        |
| Transnationalism and the possibility of brain circulation ..... | 11        |
| Who is affected?.....   | 12        |
| International students .....                                    | 12        |
| Evidence from rural communities .....                           | 14        |
| The case of the Faroe Islands.....                              | 16        |
| <b>Research Methods</b> .....                                   | <b>18</b> |
| Overview.....   | 18        |
| Sampling .....  | 18        |
| Data Collection .....   | 19        |
| Data Analysis.....  | 21        |
| Ethical considerations .....                                    | 21        |
| <b>Results</b> .....  | <b>23</b> |
| Reasons for emigrating.....                                     | 23        |
| Intentions of returning to the Faroe Islands .....              | 25        |
| Future prospects of the Faroe Islands .....                     | 29        |
| Gender differences.....   | 34        |
| <b>Discussion</b> .....   | <b>36</b> |
| What is the extent of the Faroese brain drain?.....             | 36        |
| Reasons for emigrating .....                                    | 36        |
| Intentions of returning to the Faroe Islands.....               | 38        |
| Gender differences .....  | 41        |
| Can the Faroe Islands achieve brain circulation? .....          | 43        |
| Policy Recommendations .....                                    | 46        |
| Recommendations for future study .....                          | 47        |
| <b>Conclusion</b> .....   | <b>49</b> |
| <b>References</b> .....   | <b>50</b> |
| <b>Appendix</b> .....   | <b>53</b> |
| Questionnaire .....   | 53        |

## **INTRODUCTION**

This dissertation deals with the concept of brain drain. Specifically it investigates the brain drain of the Faroe Islands, a country that is struggling with continued emigration of its educated people. It will look at young Faroese people who study abroad, in order to get an understanding of this current and critical challenge to Faroese society. Seeing as the Faroe Islands are relatively unknown it seems necessary to first provide the reader with some background information about this remote island nation north of Scotland.

### **Context**

The Faroe Islands are a self-governing nation within the Kingdom of Denmark. The small population of just fewer than 50.000 are quite independently minded with a separate language, parliament, flag, traditions and customs. The Faroes are in many ways both a traditional and a modern society. It resembles Durkheim's (1893) mechanical society in terms of its emphasis on community, shared agricultural work and strong social ties. But the forces of modernity and globalisation have affected the Faroes by specialising work and allowing people to enjoy all the conveniences of an advanced society. The main industries are modern fishing, fisheries and various maritime industries, but there are also people working sectors such as communication, trade, business and finance. In general the workforce is well educated and there is little unemployment. In fact, there is a need for more qualified labour (Norðuratlantsbólkurin 2008). However, crucially to this study, a trend has been developing that causes many Faroese to worry about the future wellbeing of their country. Like many other small and isolated countries the Faroes are seeing many of their best and brightest take up residency and employment in other countries. In short, it is suffering from brain draining. In the Faroes it is common for young people to go abroad to attain higher education and then choose not to return home. Many Faroese say that outmigration is the toughest challenge facing their society today (Reistrup and Á Rógvi 2012). To investigate this important matter, this study will survey a sample of Faroese students living abroad, with the aim of answering the key research questions:

- What is the extent of the Faroese brain drain?
  - Is there a gendered aspect to it?
- And can it be turned into brain circulation?

The first question attempts to determine the extent of the brain drain in the Faroes by surveying Faroese who are studying abroad. It looks at their motivations for leaving and intentions to return. It will try to uncover the characteristics of and connections between those who want to stay and those who want to return. In doing this, it will also pay particular attention to gender differences.

The second research question investigates the possibilities of transforming the Faroese brain drain into brain circulation. This part of the study incorporates the relevant literature and views and suggestions from the respondents to work out the options for attracting back Faroese emigrants as well as other internationals. It will try to uncover how students abroad could be drawn back and what considerations Faroese society has to make to achieve this.

### **Note from the researcher**

As a Faroese national, I, the researcher, cannot deny that this subject is close to my heart – this dissertation deals with the future of my mother country. But moreover, as a young Faroese, studying abroad, I have unique vantage points of the community being researched in this study. I originally embarked on this research because of a personal interest and a feeling of the crucial importance of the subject. Thus the study is essentially grounded in my own experiences and beliefs and it is my hope that I will be able to advance the understanding of the situation and put forward some policy recommendations that could be beneficial to my home country. The reader should understand that serious effort has been made to remain objective and reflective over the entire research process; however, given the personal interest and insight into the subject this dissertation will undoubtedly be influenced by the researcher to some extent.

### **Outline of study**

This study is divided into chapters. After this introduction the next chapter accounts for some relevant literature in the area. It looks at theoretical perspectives, cases related to

brain drain and describes the Faroese case in greater detail. Subsequently the research methods used in this study are accounted for. In the fourth chapter the results of the survey research are reviewed. The fifth chapter discusses the outcome of the survey in relation to the literature and the research questions, after which some policy recommendations, based on the outcomes of the discussion, will be offered along with recommendations for future study. Lastly the study concludes by summarising the crucial findings and policy recommendations.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

The emigration of a nation's most skilled and educated people is commonly called "brain drain". A huge body of literature exists on the brain drain of developing countries, but the literature on skilled migration from developed country to other developed country is scarce; indeed, the return migration of students from abroad represents one of the largest gaps in the literature concerning skilled migration (Alberts and Hazen 2005). This scarcity is perhaps surprising seeing as the label "brain drain" was invented by the British Royal Society as a result of the mass departure of highly skilled British citizens to the United States in the 1950s and 1960s (Gibson and McKenzie 2011). This dissertation will thus expand on this subject by examining the brain drain of a small, but nonetheless highly developed country: the Faroe Islands; and it will particularly focus to the return migration of students from abroad. The following literature review will outline some relevant information about the concept of brain drain and areas marked by it.

### ***Theories on migration***

Economic theories focus on push and pull factors to explain why people migrate. Push factors are generated by a number of disadvantageous issues in an immigrant's home country, such as lack of education, lack of employment or other opportunities, low income levels or political repression. Pull factors are structural advantages to be found in a migrant's destination country, such as low unemployment levels, high salaries, political freedom or even lifestyle preferences. Thus economic theories presuppose that migrants individually make the rational choice to migrate (Castles and Miller 2003).

Contrary to economic theories, historical-structural or dependency theories do not assume that migrants are able to make free rational choices, but rather that the choice to migrate is often an outcome of Western hegemony, so that Western capitalists can keep the developing countries dependent. The theory about brain drain fits well within these dependency theories, because this assumes that developing countries are not able to improve because they are sending away all their most talented individuals to the already developed countries (Massey 1998).

A more recent body of literature focuses on transnational theories. These take into account the relative ease of travel and communication nowadays which make it less

problematic to travel back and forth between countries and to keep contact with different places, resulting in the formation of a sort of transnational community (Castles and Miller 2003). This more contemporary theoretical perspective will be looked at in more detail later.

### ***Theories on brain drain***

Kuznetsov and Sabel (2006) define brain drain as the transfer of human capital from less to more developed economies, thus not limiting it to migration from the third world to the first, but taking into account slight edges that some developed countries have over other also developed countries. Docquier and Marfouk (2005) helpfully provide the definition of a brain drain rate as the number of nationals, within a certain educational level, aged 25 or more, who live abroad. According to their calculations, the brain drain rate for people with tertiary educational levels is 7.3 times higher than for people with primary educational levels.

The brain drain phenomenon has been debated for decades. Two early and influential writers are Harry G. Johnson and Don Patinkin. Johnson (1968) refutes the nationalistic position and advocates a cosmopolitan liberal position on brain drain; consequently he sees international migration of any kind as a positive phenomenon since it is the result of a free choice made by actors who decide to migrate. Contrary to Johnson's cosmopolitan position, Patinkin (1968) says that there is no point in discussing brain drain if the national aspect is not important. He says that the national part is crucial as people normally feel strongly attached to their home country, in terms of its culture, history, language and family, which makes the choice to migrate very difficult.

Patinkin (1968) offers some advice to help stem brain drain. He proposes that in order to retain their educated people, the affected countries must actively encourage skilled citizens to personally identify with the development of their country. This can be done by demonstrating that it is within the hands of the skilled workforce to further societal development and that they have a crucial role in doing this. Patinkin says that the success of a country is directly related to optimism about its future prospects. If there are bad prospects, then there are few solutions, which is often the case in under-developed countries where political freedom is limited, social mobility is restricted and nepotism rules. In contrast to under-developed countries with dire prospects Patinkin sees

potential in countries like the Faroes which have advanced systems of primary, secondary and some tertiary education, but no major scientific centres, so the people who want the highest and best educations have to go abroad. But Patinkin stresses that these people should not stay abroad longer than 4 years, since any longer will make it too difficult to readjust to their home country again. He also says that it would be best to send more mature, preferably married and employed people abroad, because these people have stronger incentives to return.

### ***The impact of globalisation***

Some might imagine that brain drain is a recent problem arising from increased global interconnectedness, but brain draining has been taking place throughout history; for example the flow of scholars to Rome in ancient times or the mass relocation from country to city during the Industrial Revolution. But what is different about the brain drain today, Patinkin (1968) argues, is that since the Second World War, there has been a general shift in people's awareness – people nowadays are more concerned about the wellbeing of the developing world. Contrary to historical brain drain, the people who are affected today can be seen and heard, especially since the advancement of electronic media. This is the contribution of globalisation.

King (2002) argues that the new kind of migration that has emerged today is qualitatively different to historical migration, which was mainly economically driven and permanent. Contemporary migration is shaped by different motivations and is not as clear cut as earlier, because today the borders between temporary and permanent, legal and illegal, internal and international become hard to define. Nowadays the migration of lone females, professionals, students, retired people and tourists all add to an increasingly complex picture. One of these new types of migration that King writes about is a sort of excitement or experience migration – this is when the migration itself becomes the goal, rather than the means to an end. This type of migration has less to do with the economic needs of the home country or individual survival than with experiencing the world. King also notes how over the last couple of decades student migration within Europe has proliferated and is even being promoted by the European commission through student exchange programmes. It is a common pattern that young, single and educated people are the most mobile and most likely to migrate in a given

population (Franklin 2003). Another new type of migration is what King calls “love migration”, which comes about as the increased travelling, the popularity of studying abroad and the improved linguistic abilities make transnational romantic relationships more likely, while the advancements in communication technology and travel makes the idea of such transnational intimacy seem less daunting.

Globalisation, as time/space compression where advanced communication technology has shrunk the distance between places (Harvey 1998), means that even though people decide to migrate, they do not have to cut their relationship with friends and family back home. These advances have inspired a whole new avenue of social theory on migration, namely transnational theories. These theories assume a sort of back and forth flow of migration, where people have attachments and connections in different countries and are not restrained by the boundaries of the nation-state.

### ***Transnationalism and the possibility of brain circulation***

Naturally transnationalism does not only refer to the ease of visiting friends and family as mentioned above, but it also means that transnational professional business links can be created through migration, which can encourage economic and societal developments in different places. In this context the term brain drain is perhaps not so fitting; as Johnson (1968) noted, the term is clearly biased because it implies a significant loss; essentially it only refers to migrant sending countries that do not get anything in return. But nowadays there is a growing body of literature on the potential gains that skilled migration can produce. Docquier and Marfouk (2005) call the positive side of international skilled migration the “feedback effect”; this refers to the helpful returns of migration, either in forms of remittances, return migration, knowledge transfers or transnational entrepreneurial links. This paper will use the expression that Saxenian (2005) and others call “brain circulation”; this is when there is transference of knowledge and expertise between distant countries as a result of transnational skilled migration. Saxenian predominantly writes about the way that Chinese and Indian skilled individuals, who have studied and worked in the US, are able to develop and improve the technological industries in their home country by utilising their connections to American technological centres. Faster travel and advancements in the flow of information makes it easier for skilled migrants to maintain professional connections in both places. Brain

circulation creates transnational networks and through them encourages development in the periphery. But in order for these transnational networks to thrive, the home country must make some societal concessions. Saxenian acknowledges that the potential of brain circulation is only present in countries that are politically and economically secure and have invested much into research and higher education. Cervantes and Guellec (2002) further note that relative success of bringing back migrants to countries like India, Taiwan and Korea is attributable to an opening up of their economies and to policies that promote research and development. They say that developing scientific centres, fostering innovation and high-tech entrepreneurship is essential to make the country appealing both to national and international skilled workers.

### **Who is affected?**

Most literature on brain drain focuses on the emigration of skilled workers from developing countries where the low-income levels constitute the main push factor; thus some might believe that this problem is restricted to underdeveloped countries. However, brain draining also happens in highly developed countries. For example there is a growing concern about the agglomeration of professionals in big cities and about the loss of experts in countries like Britain, Canada and Germany that send masses of highly skilled individuals to America (Cervantes and Guellec 2002). Gibson and McKenzie (2011), on the other hand, find that less populous nations have higher emigration rates of skilled individuals and Clemens (2009) has shown that highly skilled workers want to gather in populous places. Gribble (2008) agrees that it is often the small island nations that have the highest risk of brain drain. She finds that educated people want to live in safe places that are politically stable, have ample employment opportunities and chances to work with like-minded individuals. But Gribble also admits that small, remote Island nations can make the most of their situation by specialising in specific areas, as the island Mauritius for example has done – it has striven towards establishing itself as a “cyber island” to attract IT companies.

### ***International students***

Gribble (2008) sees a problem in that international students increasingly decide to stay put after graduating abroad. She suggests that governments have three possible policy options when it comes to limiting student induced brain drain. The first one is retentive,

where governments should ensure that students do all or most of their education in their homeland. If countries do not have the resources to offer a variety of degrees, Gribble suggests partnering with a foreign university, so that some time is spent at home and some abroad. The second policy option is about permitting students to educate themselves abroad, but then actively encouraging them to return through policies aimed at repatriation, such as promises of a job, or luring them back by developing a strong innovation, research and development environment. The third policy option would be to acknowledge that some students will not return and then find ways that they can contribute from abroad, for example through diaspora networks, transnational entrepreneurship or temporary stays to transfer knowledge. Small or developing countries are sometimes unable to provide good enough universities and therefore many people have no choice but to attain higher education abroad, often in USA. According to Gribble the main draws of USA are to do with their pioneering research and innovation facilities and progressive culture of entrepreneurship. Only about half of the overseas students in America return to their home country after they finish studying. It seems that international students are at the core of the brain drain problem.

Alberts and Hazen (2005) write as former international students themselves; coming from Germany and Britain they both studied in the United States and both felt a split of emotions when their studies came to an end in regards to whether to return to their home country or stay in the US. Originally they only intended to stay until they had finished their degrees, but then they both went on to postpone their return. As an international student myself, like Alberts and Hazen, I too am faced with doubts about where to live and work in the future. They grounded their study in their personal experiences, something I have also done. Their study is thus highly useful to my study and I draw some inspiration from their themes. Their first theme assesses why foreign students chose to come to the US in the first place. Reasons for this mainly had to do with access to funding and the high standard of American graduate schools. Some students also expressed that a lack of education opportunities in their home countries made them look elsewhere. The second theme considers foreign students' intentions to return home after the completion of their studies. Here they found that more than half of the students had originally intended to return when they finished, but few were sure that they would do so immediately. From the participants' responses Alberts and Hazen developed three

categories which they called: professional factors, societal factors and personal factors. Their findings showed very little support for professional reasons to go back to their home country; however, the majority mentioned professional reasons to stay in America. In regards to societal factors, every participant mentioned some kind of preference for their home country – feeling more comfortable in the home country was a main incentive to return home. In contrast, some students reported feeling alienated from the American way of life and a sadness over having to leave their own culture behind. Furthermore, many of these international students claimed that they had difficulties empathising with Americans because of social and linguistic differences, and therefore mainly had other foreign friends. Of the personal factors, family and the upbringing of children were mentioned most often as reasons for returning to their home country. Overall, they found that professional reasons were mostly associated with desires to stay in the US, while societal and personal reasons were the driving forces behind the wish to return home. But it varied how much value people put on each factor, for example, they found that Greeks typically wanted to return home because of the value they placed on societal and personal factors even though they admitted that they could probably not get as good jobs in Greece as in America.

### ***Evidence from rural communities***

As mentioned before, the literature on migration of skilled people from developed to developed countries is scarce. Due to this scarcity this paper uses some comparable literature, such as rural to urban migration within developed countries.

In Australia there is a massive movement of rural youth migrating to metropolitan areas. This has huge consequences for those who stay behind in the rural areas, resulting in an increasingly older population, a decline in industry and public and private services such as schools, hospitals or retailers. All of this makes it unattractive for people to return, and so the vicious circle continues (Kettlewell 2010). Although Australia is far removed from the Faroes, this is the same thing that is happening with the same social consequences.

Alston (2004) argues that the emigration of young people, and especially females, from Australia's rural towns is usually due to a lack of specialised education and meaningful employment opportunities, but it is also very much driven by a wanting to get away from the small town environment. Alston found that many girls experienced an unpleasant

rural macho culture and they felt that there are more opportunities for boys than girls in rural towns, such as in sports and employment. She also found that the more isolated areas had noticeably lower numbers of young people and females. Along the same lines, Dahlström (1996) found that patriarchal traditions, a perceived restraint on personal freedom and too much gossiping in rural Norway was making more young women than men immigrate to urban areas. This gender imbalance in rural regions gives rise to mounting social problems and makes it difficult for males to find a partner, which in turn threatens population growth. Alston again found that Australian rural girls are more prone to want to leave rural areas in order to experience city life and more girls than boys aspire to get a university degree – 78% of girls and 52% of boys (Alston 2004:307).

Like in the Faroe Islands, the primary sector is also vital to Iceland's economy, implying that these countries have a significant rural side to them. With approximately 300,000 inhabitants it has a larger population than the Faroes, but it is nevertheless a small island nation in the global context. Seyfrit, Bjarnason and Olafsson (2010) show that Iceland is experiencing an outmigration of its youth, particularly from its rural regions; for example there was a 23% decline of 18-25 year olds from the rural Eastfjord and Westfjord region between 1991 and 2000. Seyfrit and colleagues conducted a study in a rural region in Iceland where a large-scale development project was built to revitalise the area by creating employment and hoping to stop people from leaving. However, their finding was that the majority of the youth in this area still wanted to emigrate, regardless of employment opportunities. This squares with Bjarnason and Thorlindsson's (2006) finding that Iceland's rural youth mainly wants to live in urban areas, many of these abroad. Consequently the young people who do stay behind often suffer from social isolation, as most of their friends leave.

Kloep et al. (2003) did a comparative piece of research on the migration tendencies of rural youth in Scotland, Norway and Sweden. They found that overall the rural Norwegian youth were less likely to want to emigrate than the Scots and the Swedes. Reasons for this included some deliberate policy approaches in Norway aimed at decentralisation, for example by placing universities in rural regions, the improvement of regional infrastructure as well as low unemployment in rural Norwegian areas.

### ***The case of the Faroe Islands***

The North Atlantic coastal region as a whole (Greenland, Iceland, Faroe Islands and Coastal Norway) is generally marked by outmigration and brain drain. This is especially true for females, the young, the educated and those who do not want to work in fisheries. A common motive for emigrating is in order to pursue higher education (OECD 2011).

Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) argue that young people from rural backgrounds have to make the decision to stay in their country, just as much as the decision to leave it. Apol (2012) says that it is a natural choice for young Faroese to move abroad, especially to study – they are just following the pattern of the people before them. Thus many young Faroese leave the Faroe Islands, seeking higher education. Migrants tend to choose their immigration country on the basis of links and likeness to home country (Gibson and McKenzie 2011), and by far the most Faroese choose to study in Denmark, as there are fewer cultural and linguistic barriers than anywhere else. In the Faroes there is one established university along with some other educational institutions offering shorter educations, but most Faroese students chose to study abroad. Statistics reveal that for the year 2011/2012 there were 1365 Faroese studying at Danish universities, 903 at Faroese higher education institutions (including shorter educations) and 256 at universities elsewhere (Studni 2012). These numbers have increased every year since 2004 and the number that increases the fastest is the Danish one. And for each year group that moves abroad to study, only about half returns to the Faroes shortly after they graduate (Hayfield 2012). Seemingly a part of the unattractiveness of the Faroes for young people lies in the lack of educational opportunities. Edmund Joensen, a Faroese representative in the Danish Parliament, recognises the problem and stresses that the higher education system within the Faroes has to be strengthened in order to stem the brain drain (Stanners 2013). The emigration of students must then be a large contributor to the consistently negative net migration rate and population decline, despite the high fertility rate of 2.53 in the Faroes (Hagstova Føroya 2013).

The Faroese do not lack financial incentives to educate themselves, as Faroese students enjoy a range of financial support to study, both in the Faroes and abroad. This includes guaranteed payment of tuition fees, a monthly allowance for students (up to 6 years), and a yearly travel grant (Studni n.d.). Furthermore, even though the Faroes are not in the European Union, most Faroese have a Danish passport, giving them the full benefits

of travelling within the EU as EU-citizens. The high mobility and financial securities might make it more attractive to study abroad. Bhagwati and Hamada (1974) argue that the economic consequences of brain drain are especially serious for developing countries because they often subsidise education with public money, thus when the beneficiaries emigrate permanently they do not pay back into the tax system. This problem also applies to the Faroe Islands; the government pays for the education of all Faroese citizens, irrespective of whether they return or not. Indeed some Faroese politicians have stated that they are worried that the outflow of people is threatening the welfare system (Stanners 2013).

Like in rural Australia, studies have shown that Faroese females are more likely to undertake higher education abroad than males – 61% of the Faroese students abroad are female. This trend has led to a deficit of about 2,000 women in the Faroes – a significant number for a small country (Hayfield 2012). Yet other studies have confirmed that a number of Faroese women living in Denmark would consider moving back home to raise their children, as the Faroe Islands are seen as a safe place with strong family bonds (Norðurlatlantsbólkurin 2008).

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

### **Overview**

This study uses quantitative research methods to assess primary survey data. The research design is cross-sectional and the survey data come from self-completion web-based questionnaires. Usually the purpose of questionnaire research is to examine a random sample of a population, so that their attitudes and behaviours can be generalized to the population (Creswell 2014). But since the size of this study's population is not known and the sample is purposive, this survey could not obtain a random sample and thus cannot be used to make generalizable claims about the wider population. It can be argued that this study has a deductive and an inductive approach – it is deductive because it sets out to test the extent to which the established theory of brain drain applies to the Faroe Islands. It is inductive because it wants to examine the unknown possibility of a brain circulation coming about.

Quantitative research is often associated with objectivism and positivism, meaning the research process should be uninfluenced by the researcher; but, as O'Reilly (2005) argues, being completely bias and value free is practically impossible in social research and therefore researchers must remain aware that all choices regarding their research, from deciding on the subject to interpreting the data, are influenced by their personal biographies. Like Alberts and Hazen (2005) who commenced their study as a direct result of their own dilemma regarding whether to remain in the US or return home, I am faced with this same dilemma which has been a contributing reason to why I undertook this project. This study is examining a very close personal issue and therefore I take care to remain self-reflective. I have endeavoured to be objective and somehow view this research as something unfamiliar, yet at the same time I have been able to take advantage of insider knowledge of the context, personal experiences with the issue, easier approaching of participants in their native language and so on.

### **Sampling**

This study examines a sample of the population of Faroese university students, who study abroad. University students were chosen because they represent a well-educated

segment of society and thus embody a part of the skilled emigrants that can bring about a brain drain.

The sampling method was non-probability in the form of a snowball sample, where one respondent sent the questionnaire on to other potential respondents. This means that the sample is not representative, but it is highly relevant. Sue and Ritter (2012) argue that snowball sampling is advisable when dealing with a specific population without a readily accessible sampling frame. Potential respondents were found on the social media website Facebook, where it was relatively easy to locate and ask participants to fill in a questionnaire. As a member of the target population myself, I sent an invitation to other members of this population and asked them to forward the survey to other people that they might know within the targeted population. To reach as many members as possible the invitation was also posted in two social groups on Facebook, one group for Faroese students in Scotland and one for Faroese students in Denmark.

### **Data Collection**

Sue and Ritter (2012) claim that contemporary advancements in technology and computing have created new spaces for conducting social research; which are naturally appropriate for a dissertation in a globalisation subject. Digital administration is a good option when the targeted population is geographically diversely spread, as in this study, and accordingly web-based questionnaires were chosen for data collection. Sue and Ritter list the advantages of online surveys as being fast, efficient, inexpensive, and have a broad geographic reach; all features that were appealing to this survey. Bryman (2008) also notes that self-completion questionnaires are a lot less likely to be influenced by interviewer effects and social desirability bias than other data collection strategies. Disadvantages of online surveys include a coverage bias and the reliance on technology. However, it can perhaps be assumed that most of the targeted population have access to computers, as Sue and Ritter note that for some segments of society, such as university students, internet access is almost universal. However, the use of social media (Facebook) may result in a sampling bias because there is no obligation to have such a profile. Nevertheless, as this study did not aim to generalise it was decided that the easiness of finding respondents and the broad geographical scope that can be accessed by using social media outweigh the disadvantages. Other disadvantages of self-

completion questionnaires include that the researcher cannot prompt, probe or even be sure whether the right respondents are answering the questions; Bryman says that this last predicament is exacerbated when the questionnaire is online because it can become so widely dispersed. However, this study had an information page as the first page of the questionnaire, which plainly stated who the study was intended for.

The questionnaire was made using SurveyMonkey (2013), a major global provider of online surveys, where anyone can create their own survey, conduct the data collection and analyse the data to some extent. Using this established provider of surveys ensured that the survey had a professional and clear layout, making it attractive for respondents. The questionnaire contained 23 questions, appearing across 9 pages. The first page was the information sheet, which will be described in the ethical section below, and the last page thanked the respondents for their participation. The language was Faroese so that the respondents would be most comfortable. Most questions were close-ended, where respondents could tick one or sometimes several options or they could choose their preference on a Likert scale. Bryman (2008) says that close-ended questions are easier for respondents to answer and easier for the researcher to compare. Yet they can also result in a loss of spontaneity as the respondents cannot answer freely; in this situation Bryman suggests including an “other” category, which this study did in several questions, allowing the respondents to elaborate or come up with their own answer if they wished to. The questionnaire also contained one question that was completely open-ended and optional. On the positive side, open-ended questions can result in responses that the researcher might not have considered previously, they are usually non-suggestive and are helpful in exploring rather unfamiliar areas. But on the negative side, Bryman notes how open-ended questions require greater effort from the respondents and thus may not be answered at all. For these reasons this survey chose to only have one open-ended question and to make it optional, so as not to deter respondents. See appendix for an English translated version of the questionnaire.

In the interest of remaining reflective, it can be added that some questions were influenced by the researcher’s insider status. My experience in the Faroes alerted me to the possibility of a nationalistic desirability bias, which could have an influence on the responses. Therefore, for example, in writing up the question “do you want to move back to the Faroe Islands after you finish studying”, the negative answer reads “no, probably

never". A personal intuition told me that adding the "probably" to the sentence, made it look less overwhelming, making people more inclined to pick it.

Data collection was completed in one and a half week (from 4<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013). The decision to stop collecting data on the 15<sup>th</sup> July was due to a confidence in the size of the sample, which had reached 108 responses, well above the 30 responses which are generally considered the lowest number justifiable in a non-probability sample (Sue and Ritter 2012). There was also a certain indication of saturation, as no new responses had come in within the last two days, despite reminders sent out. Furthermore there was also a financial consideration, as the full use of SurveyMonkey has a monthly charge, so the whole process of creating, distributing, collecting and exporting the data from SurveyMonkey was to be done in one month.

### **Data Analysis**

When the data collection had finished the responses were exported from SurveyMonkey to Microsoft Excel, transformed into numbers to aid computer processing and then imported to IBM SPSS Statistics. A major advantage of web-based questionnaires is that the data is ready to be downloaded, which minimises the otherwise tedious task of coding every answer (Bryman 2008). SPSS was used to generate descriptive statistics, analyse the relationship between variables and to illustrate and present the results of the questionnaire, with the help of charts, graphs and cross-tabulations.

The responses to the open-ended question were exported from SurveyMonkey into Microsoft Word, where they could be interpreted and analysed. Open-ended questions call for a more qualitative approach to analysis than close-ended ones, as the data is not readily available in a quantifiable format and thus has to be literarily interpreted. The main tool for interpreting the texts was colour coding, which Mason (1996) says helps locating themes in the data. The texts were written in Faroese, so when quotes have been used in this study, they have been translated into English.

### **Ethical considerations**

Sue and Ritter (2012) argue that one aspect of web-based snowball surveys is that all participation will be voluntary, as respondents are people who happen to come across the survey and participate of their free will. But in this type of voluntary online

participation, respondents also have to be able to make an informed decision about whether to partake. Therefore this study created an information sheet, which was located as the first page of the questionnaire. This contained a description of the study and the subject area, identification of the researcher and contact details, specification of what the study is used for, the length of time to complete the survey, information assuring the respondents' anonymity and confidentiality, and their rights to withdraw from the study or refuse to answer any questions. This page thus made sure that only informed respondents who agreed to participate continued to the actual questionnaire. The invitation that was sent out on Facebook contained a shorter version of the information sheet and a link to the website containing the questionnaire.

Babbie (1997) suggests that the best way to protect survey respondents' interests is by ensuring anonymity and confidentiality. This is easily done with online survey research as the researcher and the respondent do not meet. The SurveyMonkey website allows surveys to be carried out completely anonymously and the individual respondents cannot be traced. SurveyMonkey's (2013) statement on security and anonymity reassures users that they keep data secure and that it is encrypted with some of the most advanced internet security available today.

## RESULTS

This chapter looks at the results of the questionnaire. A total of 108 respondents answered the 23 questions; on average 7 respondents skipped each question (excluding one open and optional question which 49 people skipped). To better understand who the respondents are, some demographic traits are accounted for here. 70% of the respondents were studying in Denmark, 23% in the United Kingdom and the rest elsewhere in the world (Norway, Poland, Thailand and Australia). These numbers are fairly consistent with the Faroese national statistics mentioned above (Studni 2012). The average age in my sample was 25.77 with a range of 20 to 48. The gender balance was quite skewed as 72% (78) were female and 28% (30) were male. This skewedness could be purely coincidental, or it could be the result of the snowball effect as the researcher is female and has more female associates, who again also know more females; or it could be indicative of the fact that more Faroese females than males go abroad to study. Most respondents, 51%, had lived abroad for 2-4 years, 31% had lived more than 4 years abroad and 18% less than 2 years. Most respondents, 40%, had a Faroese partner who also lived abroad, 26% were single, 21% had a foreign partner, and 12% had a Faroese partner who lived in the Faroes.

### Reasons for emigrating

Table 1 displays some motivations for emigrating, in response to the question “why did you choose to go abroad to study?” This question allowed respondents to tick any option they felt were applicable and hence the percentages shown in the table do not total to 100. All the tables in this section display the results in percentages, and frequencies in parenthesis.

**Table 1**

*Reasons for studying abroad.*

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| The subject I wanted to study is not available in the Faroe Islands          | 73 (73) |
| The institution I am studying at has a good reputation for my degree         | 21 (21) |
| I wanted to increase relations with professionals and business people abroad | 10 (10) |
| I wanted to experience living abroad   | 69 (69) |

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| I like the lifestyle/culture of the place I am currently living      | 36 (36) |
| I wanted to get away from the “small town” environment               | 42 (42) |
| I want to live here permanently and a degree is a good steppingstone | 5 (5)   |
| Friends/family live here   | 19 (19) |

The mostly chosen reason was because the respondent’s degree was not available for studying in the Faroes, consistent with most literature about brain drain, which states that lack of educational opportunities is a push factor (Gribble 2008). Another big reason was because people wanted to experience living abroad, followed by wanting to get away from the small-town environment. This question had an “other” option which revealed that the expensiveness of everything in the Faroes was a substantial reason for leaving.

Considering that most people chose to emigrate because it was not possible to study their intended degree in the Faroes it is interesting to look at whether the respondents would have decided to study in the Faroes if it had been possible. The results displayed on Table 2 show that only 9% would have studied in the Faroes if they could.

**Table 2**  
*Hypothetical willingness to study in the Faroes.*

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| Yes I would have done the whole degree in the Faroes | 9 (9)   |
| No   | 16 (16) |
| Don’t know   | 41 (42) |
| I would have done a part of the degree in the Faroes | 16 (16) |

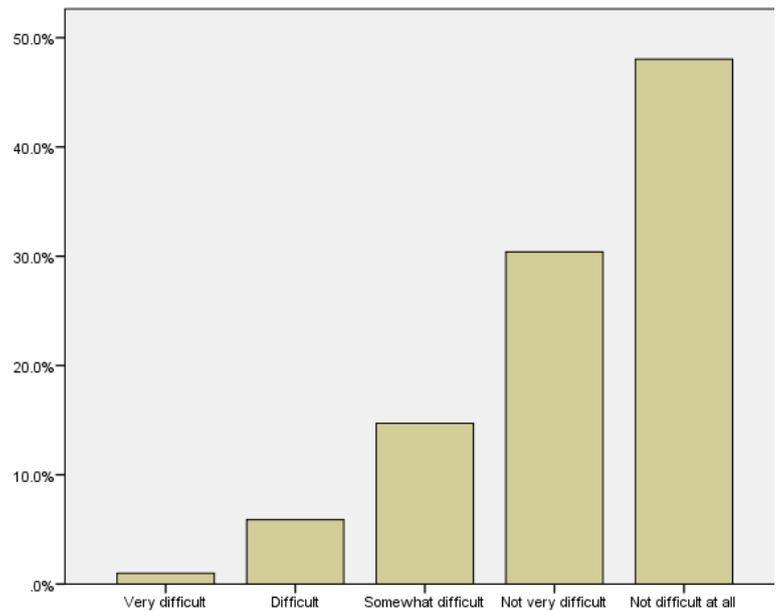
**Table 3**  
*Hypothetical willingness to study abroad without financial support.*

|   |         |
|---|---------|
| Yes I would have done it anyway                     | 21 (21) |
| I might have studied in the Faroes instead          | 47 (48) |
| I might not have undertaken higher education at all | 16 (16) |
| Don’t know  | 17 (17) |

Another question elaborates on how important the governmental financial support is to the students, Table 3 shows the respondents’ answers about whether they would have chosen to study abroad if they did not receive any financial support from the state.

When asked if the decision to go abroad to study was a difficult one most respondents indicated that it was not difficult, 48% answered that it was “not difficult at all”, and 30% “not very difficult”. Figure 1 shows the replies in percentages.

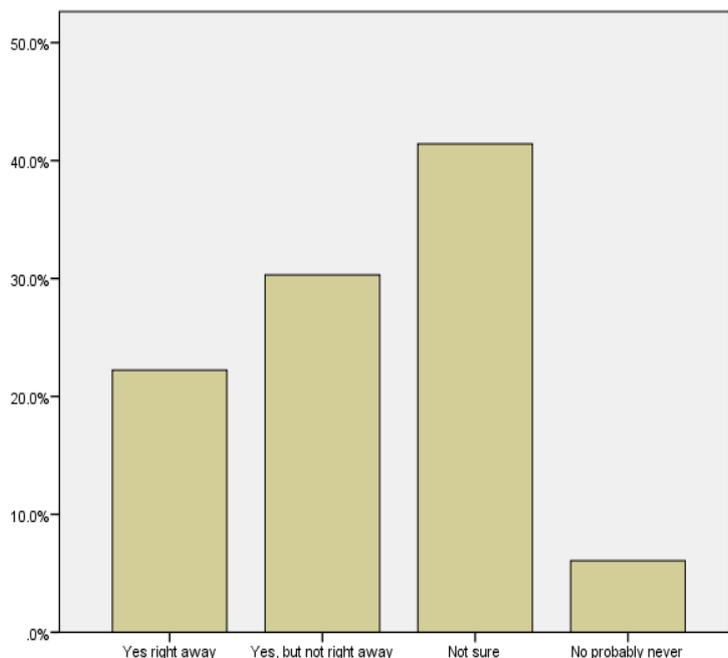
**Figure 1**  
*Difficulty of decision to study abroad*



### **Intentions of returning to the Faroe Islands**

Perhaps the most important question asked respondents: do you want to move back to the Faroe Islands when you finish studying? There were four possible answers to this question as displayed on Figure 2; the most common one was “not sure”, which 42% picked, the second most chosen was “yes, but not right away” with 30%, the third was “yes, right away” with 22% and last was “no, probably never” with 6% of the picks.

**Figure 2**  
*Intentions of returning*



In the interest of further analysing the motivations behind intentions to return, this question is compared to a number of other questions. First,

taking into account Patinkin's (1968) advice, the years that respondents have lived abroad are compared against their intention to return. This comparison is statistically insignificant ( $X^2 = 1.912$ ,  $p = .928$ ). The same goes for the comparison with the respondents' age ( $X^2 = 14.329$ ,  $p = .111$ ). This means that neither age nor years spent abroad changes the respondents' wish to return, therefore it is not deemed necessary to produce a table for these comparisons.

**Table 4**  
*Intentions to return according to relationship status*

| "Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?" | Relationship status |  |                                 |                        |              |
|---|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|------------------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Single</i>       | <i>Faroese partner (in the Faroes)</i> | <i>Faroese partner (abroad)</i> | <i>Foreign partner</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 38 (10)             | 75 (9)                                 | 68 (27)                         | 30 (6)                 | 53 (52)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 54 (14)             | 25 (3)                                 | 32 (13)                         | 50 (10)                | 41 (40)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 8 (2)               | 0 (0)                                  | 0 (0)                           | 20 (4)                 | 6 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (26)            | 100 (12)                               | 100 (40)                        | 100 (20)               | 100 (98)     |

$X^2 = 18.197$ ,  $p = .006$

Table 4 displays the association between intentions of return and the respondents' relationship status, which turned out to be very significant. No respondent who had a Faroese partner, be it in the Faroes or abroad, answered that they were not going to return home. For simplification of reading, the answers for intentions to return are recoded so that "yes right away" and "yes but not right away" become just "yes".

Bjarnason and Thorlindsson (2006) reported that young people from Iceland's rural towns suffer from social isolation as most of their friends emigrate. Table 5 reveals that most respondents of this study say that most of their friends do not live in the Faroes.

**Table 5**  
*Location of friends*

|               |         |
|---------------|---------|
| Faroe Islands | 22 (23) |
| Abroad        | 69 (70) |
| Don't know    | 9 (9)   |

However, another question revealed that 56% of respondents say that, in the country where they currently live, they mostly associate with other Faroese and 29% mostly

associate with nationals from the host country. Table 6 shows this association compared to intentions to return, which is statistically significant.

**Table 6**  
*Intentions to return compared with association*

| “Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?” | “Which nationality are you mostly associating with in the place you live?” |                |                            |              |
|---|--|----------------|----------------------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Nationality of host country</i>   | <i>Faroese</i> | <i>Other international</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 40 (11)  | 62 (35)        | 40 (6)                     | 53 (52)      |
| <i>Unsure</i>   | 56 (15)  | 34 (19)        | 40 (6)                     | 41 (40)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 4 (1)  | 4 (2)          | 20 (3)                     | 6 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (27)   | 100 (56)       | 100 (15)                   | 100 (98)     |

$X^2 = 9.857, p = .043$

Another question looked at whether the respondents feel that they fit (in terms of values, attitudes, culture etc.) into the society where they live or into Faroese society. Since Alberts and Hazen found a lack of integration to be a reason for wanting to return home, the results on Table 7 are compared with intentions to move back.

**Table 7**  
*Intentions to return compared to feelings of integration.*

| “Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?” | “Do you feel that you fit well into society where you are or in the Faroe Islands?” |  |                         | <i>Total</i> |
|---|---|--|-------------------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Better here, than in the Faroes</i>  | <i>Better in the Faroes, than here</i> | <i>Fit well in both</i> |              |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 24 (7)  | 86 (12)                                | 60 (32)                 | 53 (52)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 59 (17)   | 14 (2)                                 | 38 (20)                 | 41 (39)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 17 (5)  | 0 (0)                                  | 2 (1)                   | 6 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (29)  | 100 (14)                               | 100 (53)                | 100 (96)     |

$X^2 = 21.949, p = .001$

One question asked the participants to rate a number of criteria according to how important they are when it comes to making the decision of where to live and work in the future. On Table 8 the responses to this question are recoded so that “important” and “very important” become “important”, and “not very important” and “not important at

all” become “not important”. This table reveals that employment opportunities and family and friends are the two mostly regarded considerations in choosing where to live after having finished studying.

**Table 8**  
*Importance of criteria concerning choice of future residence.*

|  | Important | Somewhat important | Not important |
|--|-----------|--------------------|---------------|
| Family and friends   | 84 (79)   | 13 (12)            | 3 (3)         |
| A good place to raise children   | 81 (77)   | 12 (11)            | 7 (7)         |
| I can be a part of a professional network                              | 46 (44)   | 33 (31)            | 21 (20)       |
| The chance to make a difference and contribute to societal development | 68 (64)   | 21 (20)            | 11 (10)       |
| Personal freedom   | 83 (79)   | 15 (14)            | 2 (2)         |
| Values of society  | 76 (71)   | 16 (15)            | 8 (8)         |
| Employment opportunities   | 87 (83)   | 10 (9)             | 3 (3)         |
| Tradition and culture  | 53 (50)   | 28 (27)            | 19 (18)       |
| Safety   | 73 (69)   | 26 (25)            | 1 (1)         |
| Climate  | 21 (20)   | 39 (37)            | 40 (38)       |

Below is a table with the three criteria from Table 8 that were statistically significant when compared with intentions to return. Seeing as so many respondents picked the first option, the tables below do distinguish between “very important” and “important”.

**Table 9**  
*Importance of criteria compared with intentions to return.*

| “Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?” | <i>Very important</i> | <i>Important</i> | <i>Somewhat important</i> | <i>Not important</i> | <i>Total</i> |
|---|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| <b>Employment opportunities</b>                                     |                       |                  |                           |                      |              |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 31 (14)               | 68 (26)          | 78 (7)                    | 67 (2)               | 52 (49)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 60 (27)               | 32 (12)          | 22 (2)                    | 0 (0)                | 43 (41)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 9 (4)                 | 0 (0)            | 0 (0)                     | 33 (1)               | 5 (5)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (45)              | 100 (38)         | 100 (9)                   | 100 (3)              | 100 (95)     |

$X^2 = 21.511, p = .001$

**A good place to raise children**

|                 |          |          |          |         |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| <i>Yes</i>      | 63 (31)  | 46 (13)  | 27 (3)   | 29 (2)  | 52 (49)  |
| <i>Not sure</i> | 35 (17)  | 46 (13)  | 73 (8)   | 43 (3)  | 43 (41)  |
| <i>No</i>       | 2 (1)    | 7 (2)    | 0 (0)    | 29 (2)  | 5 (5)    |
| <i>Total</i>    | 100 (49) | 100 (28) | 100 (11) | 100 (7) | 100 (95) |

$X^2 = 15.490, p = .017$

**Family and friends**

|                 |          |          |          |         |          |
|-----------------|----------|----------|----------|---------|----------|
| <i>Yes</i>      | 69 (34)  | 47 (14)  | 8 (1)    | 0 (0)   | 52 (49)  |
| <i>Not sure</i> | 27 (13)  | 53 (16)  | 83 (10)  | 67 (2)  | 44 (41)  |
| <i>No</i>       | 4 (2)    | 0 (0)    | 8 (1)    | 33 (1)  | 4 (4)    |
| <i>Total</i>    | 100 (49) | 100 (30) | 100 (12) | 100 (3) | 100 (94) |

$X^2 = 25.295, p = .000$

Contrary to the group of people who emphasise the criterion employment opportunities, Table 10 reveals that the belief about professional prospects in the Faroes compared to intentions to return, is statistically insignificant. 64% of the respondents believe that they cannot reach as high in the professional ladder in the Faroe Islands as in the place they are now. 18% believe that they can.

**Table 10**

*Intentions to return compared to confidence in possibility of professional achievements.*

| "Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?" | "Do you feel that you can reach as high in the professional ladder in the Faroe Islands as in the country you currently live?" |           |              |
|---|--|-----------|--------------|
|   | <i>Yes</i>   | <i>No</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 71 (12)  | 47 (28)   | 53 (40)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 23 (4)   | 44 (26)   | 39 (30)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 6 (1)  | 9 (5)     | 8 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (17)   | 100 (59)  | 100 (76)     |

$X^2 = 2.864, p = .239$

**Future prospects of the Faroe Islands**

One question asked the respondents what they thought would be the future prospects for the Faroe Islands in regards to economic growth and development. 50% answered

that the future prospects looked rather negative, 8% rather positive and 42% did not know. A comparison of this belief with intentions to return is displayed on Table 11. This difference is statistically insignificant.

**Table 11**  
*Intentions to return compared with view of future.*

| "Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?" | "What do you think will be the future for the Faroe Islands, in terms of economic growth and development?" |                        |                   |              |
|---|--|------------------------|-------------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Rather positive</i>   | <i>Rather negative</i> | <i>Don't know</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 50 (4)   | 56 (27)                | 49 (20)           | 53 (51)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 38 (3)   | 40 (19)                | 44 (18)           | 41 (40)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 12 (1)   | 4 (2)                  | 7 (3)             | 6 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (8)  | 100 (48)               | 100 (41)          | 100 (97)     |

$X^2 = 1.292, p = .863$

The next question asked how personally concerned the respondents were about the future development of the Faroe Islands. 49% were concerned and 19% very concerned. Table 12 shows this concern compared against intentions to return, which is statistically significant. Table 11 and 12 are compared against intentions to return because of Patinkin's advice that optimism and personal identification with the country's development is related to desires to return.

**Table 12**  
*Intentions to return compared with personal concern*

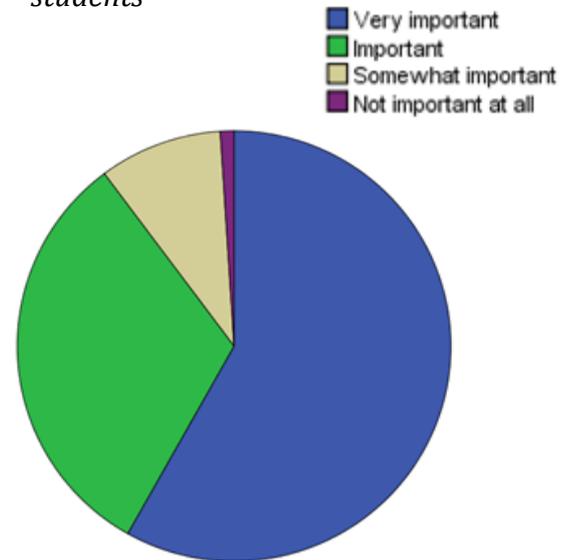
| "Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?" | "How concerned are you personally with the development of the Faroe Islands?" |                  |                           |                      | <i>Total</i> |
|---|---|------------------|---------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
|   | <i>Very concerned</i>   | <i>Concerned</i> | <i>Somewhat concerned</i> | <i>Not concerned</i> |              |
| <i>Yes</i>  | 74 (14)   | 58 (28)          | 33 (9)                    | 0 (0)                | 52 (51)      |
| <i>Not sure</i>   | 26 (5)  | 38 (18)          | 59 (16)                   | 50 (2)               | 42 (41)      |
| <i>No</i>   | 0 (0)   | 4 (2)            | 7 (2)                     | 50 (50)              | 6 (6)        |
| <i>Total</i>  | 100 (19)  | 100 (48)         | 100 (27)                  | 100 (4)              | 100 (98)     |

$X^2 = 23.420, p = .001$

One question asked how important the respondents believe it is to develop a strong environment of innovation, research and development in the Faroes, in order to get

skilled people to move back home. As seen on figure 3, by far the most common answer was “very important” which 58% of the respondents chose, 32% said “important” and just 1% said that it was not important.

**Figure 3**  
Importance of developing innovation, research and development for the return of students



Yet another question on a Likert scale asked how concerned the participants were about nepotism in the Faroe Islands. This question revealed that most respondents, 36%, are “somewhat concerned”, 29% are “concerned”, while 18% are “very concerned”, and one respondent is “not concerned at all”. Table 13 explores whether this worry has anything to do with intentions to return, which the statistical significance suggests it does.

**Table 13**  
Intentions to return compared with concern about nepotism

| “Do you want to move back to the Faroes after you finish studying?” | “How concerned are you with nepotism (friend and family politics) in the Faroes?” |           |                    |               | Total    |
|---|---|-----------|--------------------|---------------|----------|
|   | Very concerned  | Concerned | Somewhat concerned | Not concerned |          |
| Yes   | 33 (6)  | 36 (10)   | 66 (23)            | 71 (12)       | 52 (51)  |
| Not sure  | 67 (12)   | 50 (14)   | 31 (11)            | 24 (4)        | 42 (41)  |
| No  | 0 (0)   | 14 (4)    | 3 (1)              | 6 (1)         | 6 (6)    |
| Total   | 100 (18)  | 100 (28)  | 100 (35)           | 100 (17)      | 100 (98) |

$X^2 = 15.153, p = .019$

The questionnaire contained one open question so that respondents could write what they wanted. This question asked “what do you think can be done in order to get people to move back to the Faroe Islands after they finish studying abroad?” 59 respondents answered this question. The replies were coded into categories according to the themes that came up; these are displayed on Table 14 along with the number of times they were mentioned. Each category was mentioned in different contexts and for varying reasons.

The category “employment” includes the wishes for more varied work opportunities, work in production, more challenging and creative work.

*That it was possible to have more specialized areas in e.g. research and production, so that people have something to come home to. I will not move home to be unemployed or end up cleaning floors just to have an income. Then I would rather work in Denmark or other countries where I can use my education.*

The “cost of living” category refers to the opinion that groceries, clothes, furniture, accommodation, travelling, and the like are too expensive in the Faroes.

*Reduce the cost of foods, and keep allowing students to get travel money to go home to the Faroes for holidays, but make sure that the money is used for a trip home and is not just paid out.*

“Unemployment benefits” refers to the fact that people do not have the right to unemployment benefits from the Faroese government right after they finish studying. Many express that they want the Faroes to have the same unemployment system as in Denmark, where students can get unemployment benefits as soon as they graduate.

*Improve conditions such as housing-political-social- and not least the possibility to move back home without having secured a job. It is almost impossible to move home if you don't have a job already, because no unemployment fund will help you.*

“Housing” means a wish for better and cheaper flats and houses, better prospects for renting, more social housing and students flats.

*Better housing prospects. Who can afford to buy a house? ... It would be more tempting to come home if I didn't have to move back in with my parents.*

“Values and attitudes” generally refers to a wish for a more tolerant, open and secular society, it means that the Faroes must get rid of small-town attitudes so that people can be different without being judged, a wish for less religious control, a willingness to

**Table 14**  
*Thematic categories and frequencies of mentioning*

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Employment                | 24 |
| Cost of living            | 17 |
| Unemployment benefits     | 10 |
| Housing                   | 16 |
| Values and attitudes      | 18 |
| Political change          | 12 |
| Transnational connections | 8  |
| Educational opportunities | 8  |

integrate people who have been away for long and potentially their foreign partners, a bigger embrace of the rights of women, homosexuals and foreigners, and lastly some mentioned that it is crucial that the students abroad see themselves as a part of the change that they want to see in the Faroes, rather than the change being a precondition to moving back.

*The attitude among the students has to be changed. Most of them only focus on the negative about the Faroes and forget the positive. Also, everyone wants that the things that they don't like about the Faroes will be improved by someone else before they move home, rather than seeing themselves as a part of the change and an active participant in carrying out these changes.*

The category “political change” has to do with the general dissatisfaction among students with the current conservative government, the wish for an update of old regulations, getting rid of the political system they see as based on nepotism, they desire more left-oriented politics, less savings in the public sector, and a willingness to give everyone equal rights.

*A more open society regarding human rights and values, a more metropolitan society, a political system that is not based on friends and family, we need national politics.*

The “transnational connections” category entails wishes for better connections between Faroese students abroad and the Faroese business community, both public and private, and wishes for better opportunities to travel to and from the Faroes.

*The public and the private sector must improve their contact to Faroese who study abroad. Offer them assignments, collaborations, give them information which makes it easier to move – as it is now it is way too difficult to find information and too difficult to keep a connection to the labour market.*

And finally, the “educational opportunities” category refers to a wish for better and more varied opportunities in higher education in the Faroes and an enlargement of the existing university.

*We need a bigger university – because I believe that the presence of young people (students) attracts others to also stay in the country.*

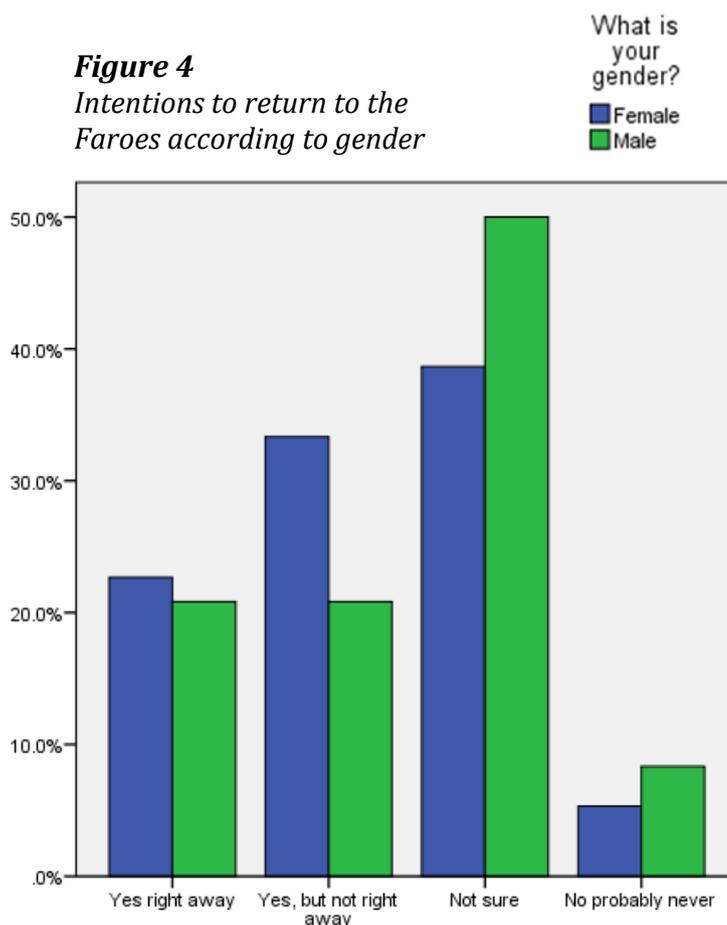
## Gender differences

When looking at the reasons for going abroad to study by gender, the only difference that is statistically significant is the answer “I wanted to experience living abroad” which 76% of the females and 33% of the males selected ( $X^2 = 16.810$ ,  $p = .000$ ). Some other differences that stood out were that 39% of women and 20% of men stated that liking the lifestyle and culture of the place where they moved was a reason for emigrating, and, very similar to Alston’s (2004) finding that more females want to escape rural settings, 44% of women and 27% of men wanted to get away from the small-town environment. None of the reasons were chosen more percentagewise by men than women.

In regards to intentions to return there are some gender disparities, although not different enough to be statistically significant, as seen on Figure 4. It seems that women are more inclined to want to return to the Faroes, as they have higher scores in the first two answers and the men have higher scores in the last two. 56% of women and 41% of men want to move home either right away or later.

Regarding the importance placed on a number of criteria to be taken into consideration when deciding where to live in the future (see Table 8), only the friends and family criterion has a statistically significant gender difference. 61% of the females say that the family and friends criterion is very important compared to 26% of males ( $X^2 = 11.221$ ,  $p = .011$ ). Regardless of statistical significance it is also pertinent to examine which criteria got the highest score (very

**Figure 4**  
*Intentions to return to the Faroes according to gender*



$X^2 = 1.799$ ,  $p = .615$

important) from women and men. In general, the criteria that women placed noticeably more weight on than men are: a good place to raise children, family and friends, personal freedom and safety. The criteria that men placed more weight on than women were: employment opportunities, presence of a professional network, and the chance to make a difference and contribute to the development of society.

In sum, the results show that most respondents were unsure of whether they wanted to return to the Faroes or not. Aspects that may influence respondents to return include their relationship status, for example, the people with Faroese partners are more likely to return, feelings of fitting into Faroese society and associating with Faroese people in the foreign country where they live. Furthermore, it is found that respondents who value employment opportunities are most likely to be unsure or not want to return. Most respondents feel that developing a stronger environment for innovation, research and development is crucial to attracting back expatriates, yet many are worried about nepotism, which might curb their desire to return. In regards to gender, it is found that more women emigrate to escape the society at home, yet also more women want to return, as they place higher value on family, upbringing children and safety, than men. Thus several respondents indicate that it is important to improve societal and political conditions, to invest in the educational and labour market, update restrictive laws and make it financially easier for young graduates, in order to attract back skilled Faroese.

## DISCUSSION

### **What is the extent of the Faroese brain drain?**

As several commentators have already confirmed, there is a brain drain occurring in the Faroe Islands (OECD 2011, Reistrup and Á Rógvi 2012, Stanners 2013). This study examines the extent of it. A useful way of doing this is to consider Docquier and Marfouk's (2005) definition of a brain drain rate; this would refer to the number of Faroese aged 25 or more with high educational achievements, who live abroad. This number cannot be calculated given the available statistics, but it is known that most of the Faroese who move abroad do it for educational purposes; meaning that the emigration rate is higher for educated than uneducated people, and that just around half of them return home right after graduation (Hayfield 2012), thus these people, who remain abroad, constitute part of the Faroese brain drain.

### ***Reasons for emigrating***

This study found that 69% of the respondents say that most of their friends live outside the Faroe Islands. Apol (2012) maintains that it is just a natural course for young Faroese to emigrate for educational purposes. It seems that there is nothing to do about this trend. But it is not a bad thing, per se, that young people leave to get an education and life experiences; on the contrary, it is highly beneficial to a small nation like the Faroes, since these will obtain special knowledge that might not come about if everyone remained in the same environment. What could be negative, however, is if there are other unwanted reasons that make people emigrate, since these could also be an impediment to return.

The most commonly stated reason for studying abroad is because the intended degree is not available to study in the Faroe Islands. However, when asked if they would have done it in the Faroes, had it been available, only 9% of respondents said yes. This presents a paradox which is difficult to work out. But as this question allowed multiple answers, most respondents picked several options; thus picking "unavailability of degree" as a reason for emigrating could be symptomatic of a desirability bias, meaning that the inability to undertake the degree in the Faroes is more of a pretext for moving abroad,

rather than the principal reason. This instantly increases the value of the second most picked option – “I wanted to experience living abroad” and others. Mainly, the reasons for emigrating support economic theories of migration, since the lack of education constitutes a push factor and the pull factor of other countries are to do with lifestyle preferences. Many respondents stated that a fondness of the lifestyle and culture of the immigration country and a wish to get away from the small-town environment were reasons for leaving; and as many as 69% wanted to experience living abroad. This corresponds with one of King’s (2002) new type of migration: migration for the sake of experience and excitement, as well as Alston’s (2004) and Seyfrit et al.’s (2010) findings that young people emigrate to get away from rural towns and to experience city life. The focus on lifestyle and culture perhaps makes this reason as much a subject for dependency theories about Western hegemony as for economic theories. These two theories are evidently still applicable, where economic factors push and pull people to migrate, and hegemonic images of urban lifestyles entice young people to experience city life. However, they do not hold monopoly on explaining the migration of skilled people today. Transnational theories of migration state that migrants can easily have attachments and connections in many corners of the world. Migrants can speak to friends and family back home as frequently as they want to, arguably making them feel less separated from home, which might make it easier to emigrate in the first place, along with easier to stay away. Imaginably the 78% of this study’s respondents who claimed that it was not a difficult decision to move abroad had this simplicity of keeping contact transnationally in mind.

To sum up, most respondents did not emigrate because of unbearable and permanent push-factors; the most stated reasons for emigrating were because the degree was unavailable in the Faroes and to experience living abroad. Technically, neither of these constitute a hindrance to return. Both reasons suggest that emigration is expected and temporary. However, the third most stated reason – wanting to get away from the small town environment, is more negative, as it does not infer a wish to return later.

### ***Intentions of returning to the Faroe Islands***

The results chapter revealed that 42% of the respondents are unsure in their intentions to stay or return to the Faroes after finishing studies abroad. 30% want to return, but not immediately and 6% do not want to return. Thus some of these respondents are responsible for causing the Faroese brain drain. The people who want to return later will not contribute to Faroese society to the fullest and there is a possibility that they change their minds later. The unsure 42% might realistically end up joining the 6% who do not want to go back.

Since Patinkin (1968) pointed out that the number of years an individual has lived abroad and the age of the people when they first emigrate are crucial for their intentions to return, this study compared peoples' intentions to return against the number of years they had lived abroad and their age. These comparisons generated very statistically insignificant numbers. Consequently, irrespective of how long the respondents had lived abroad or how old they were, all were most likely to be unsure of whether they wanted to return. It seems that Patinkin's advice is wasted on this sample. One reason for the apparent irrelevance of his advice might be that he wrote in 1968, before contemporary advances in communication technology. More than four decades ago it was not possible to keep contact with ones homeland as easily as today, which arguably might make the potential readjustment processes less challenging.

Previous literature often states that people do not want to return because they feel that there are not good enough employment opportunities in their home country (Gribble 2008). The previous chapter compared respondents' intentions of returning to their beliefs about how high they can reach professionally in the Faroes. The results, although not statistically significant, reveal that people who believe that they can reach as high in the Faroese professional life as in the country where they currently live are most likely to move back to the Faroes. The people who believe that they cannot reach this are most likely to be unsure of whether to move back home. But on the other hand, almost half of the respondents who viewed their professional prospects in the Faroes as worse than where they live, still want to return home at some point. Thus while professionalism is perhaps compelling, it is not determinative for the whole sample.

However, a comparison of intentions to return and the group of people who valued the criterion “employment opportunities” the most, when deciding where to live in the future, reveals that these are statistically most likely to be unsure or negative about returning. Therefore, to these, it is influential. Maybe it is like when Alberts and Hazen (2005) discovered that some participants wanted to return home after studying in the US, despite knowing that they would get better jobs in America, because they placed more weight on personal and societal factors, and others wanted to stay because they valued professional factors more. Thus, if seen through Albers and Hazen’s three factors, the Faroese who want to return, despite knowing their poor professional prospects there, might do it for personal and societal factors. This possibility is explored next.

In regards to societal factors, all of Alberts and Hazen’s participants expressed a preference for their home country, where the notion of feeling more comfortable at home was the main appeal. Unlike their findings, this study discovered that most Faroese reported feeling equally comfortable in the host and home country. A probable reason for this could be that most respondents reside in Denmark, which the Faroes has shared cultural, social and historical characteristics. But of the people who feel that they fit better into Faroese society 86% want to move home eventually and nobody intends to never return. Of the people who fit better into the society where they currently reside only 24% want to move home at some point. Consequently, the feeling of fitting into a society, in terms of its values, attitude and culture is imperative to these respondents when it comes to intentions to return or stay.

Another part of Alberts and Hazen’s societal factor was about association. Many of their participants mainly had other international friends as they felt somewhat alienated from the Americans. The current study also found that more than half of the respondents mostly associate with other Faroese. A comparison between the nationality of associates and intentions to return reveals that 62% of the people who mostly associate with Faroese want to move home eventually, compared to 40% of those who mostly associate with other nationalities. Thus, association with Faroese, another societal factor, seems to make people more inclined to want to return.

Alberts and Hazen also showed that personal factors, such as family and the upbringing of children, were important for return migration. Likewise, this study found that 84%

said that family and friends were an important criterion when considering where to live and work in the future. When comparing this criterion with intentions to return it is found that the people who value this criterion the highest also want to return home the most. The same goes for the criterion “a good place to raise children”.

It appears that this study’s findings are very comparable to Alberts and Hazen’s – both found professional factors to be reasons to stay abroad, and societal and personal factors reasons to return. This finding is debatable when it comes to assessing the extent of the Faroese brain drain. On the one hand it shows that many educated Faroese have good motivations for returning home (personal and societal). But on the other hand, the people who are less determined to return are the ones who value employment opportunities and professionalism the most, these are in all probability the top “brains” – the ones who are responsible for the most societal progress, and whose absence causes substantial brain draining.

To get skilled expatriates to return Patinkin (1968) implored people to personally identify with the development of their country, so they would actively want to contribute to its future. This study found that most respondents personally cared a lot about the future development of the Faroe Islands and that this care is statistically correlated to intentions to return, meaning that Patinkin was right and the people who personally care more about the future development of the Faroe Islands are more likely to want to return. Interestingly, a related question about how positively or negatively the respondents see the future prospects of the Faroe Islands turned out to be statistically insignificant when compared with intentions to return. Apparently optimism or pessimism about the future of the Faroes does not influence intentions to return, but personal concern for its future does. However, Patinkin did say that the potential for societal success is directly connected to people’s optimism about future prospects and this study uncovered largely pessimistic outlooks for the future of the Faroe Islands. Perhaps a part of the reason for this negative view has to do with the worry about nepotism that several respondents displayed. Nepotism is namely one of Patinkin’s characteristics of a society with bad prospects.

The finding that personal concern about the Faroe Islands makes people more likely to return is good news, as it means that there are grounds for many people to return. But if

the pessimistic outlook about future prospects stems, in part, from nepotism, then this study has uncovered a big obstruction to get expatriates to return. In the same way that people who value employment are less likely to return, as discussed earlier, the people who are more worried about nepotism are also less likely to return, while those who are less worried are more likely to return.

Together with the professionalism factor there seems to be an identifiable pattern in these results: it looks as if issues regarding personal and societal factors or emotions (care) make people want to return, while issues regarding professionalism and work-life make people unsure. As stated before, the people who value professionalism, and likely condemn nepotism, are some of the most valuable people in society, as they are the professionals who are needed in a society to create and develop businesses, industries, networks and so on, and the continued exile of this group can lead to a serious brain drain. Thus the Faroese need to be harsh on nepotism, as it is a big concern to many educated Faroese.

### ***Gender differences***

Perhaps the overrepresentation of women found in this sample is indicative of what others have already found; that women are more likely than men to emigrate to get an education (Dahlström 1996, Alston 2004), which unfortunately has led to a female deficiency in the Faroes (Hayfield 2012).

The results section found that women are more likely to move abroad for reasons to do with experiencing living abroad, getting away from the small town environment and because they like the lifestyle of the place where they moved. This is exceptionally similar to what Alston found in Australia – young women desired to escape the small town culture and wished to experience city life. As Australia is a very different country to the Faroes, in terms of its size, industries, culture and climate, this similarity is quite telling. It tells of the universal nature of the problem and it tells that women nowadays have options that they perhaps did not have some decades ago. Both Alston and Dahlström found that the out-dated patriarchal traditions of rural societies were significant reasons for women to leave. This study did not find any directly mentioned concerns about patriarchy, but the open-ended question revealed some things that could

be indicative of it. For example, when the current government was criticised, the criticism was mostly directed against men and particularly old men, some people also called for an update of old and conservative laws, such as laws forbidding abortion, and one person expressed that it is regrettably more challenging for women, homosexuals and foreigners to obtain equal rights in the Faroes. These issues should not be ignored by the government, seeing what has happened in rural Norway and Australia. If women feel less appreciated in the Faroes, then they have a simple solution: emigrate.

Perhaps disharmonious with the fact that women are more likely to emigrate than men, and with the fact that there is an underrepresentation of women in the Faroes, this study revealed that more women than men want to return after studying abroad. However, this is not an inconsistency, because even though women are more inclined to move back, many more of them leave in the first place. Using this study's numbers it can be calculated that if 61% of all Faroese who study abroad are women (Hayfield 2012), then 28% of everyone who leaves the Faroes to study are females who might not return and 23% are males who might not return, logically leading to an imbalance. Other studies have similarly found that Faroese women often consider moving back to the Faroes for settling down, since it is believed to be a safe place where family is at the heart of society (Norðuratlantsbólkurin 2008). The current study did indeed find that noticeably more women than men value criteria such as family and friends, a good place to raise children and safety, when it comes to making the decision of where to live in the future. Men valued criteria such as employment opportunities and the chance to contribute to the development of society higher than women. It appears that this sample's women place more weight on personal and societal factors and men on professional factors.

This section has revealed that percentagewise men value professional factors more and want to move back less than women. This implies that the top "brains" (who were earlier found to be less likely to return) are probably mainly men. This again means that the men who return are perhaps less ambitious than the ones who are unsure if they want to return. Thus it can be speculated that a reason why so many women emigrate, is because there are not enough educated and ambitious prospective partners in the Faroes. Granted, this is a wild speculation, but the fact remains that there are fewer women in

the Faroes than men and this can have severe social consequences with impending societal stagnation and further population decline.

This first part of the discussion, which has been examining the extent of the Faroese brain drain and the gendered aspect of it, can declare, based on people's ambivalence about return migration, professional preference for staying abroad, and decline of women, that the brain drain of the Faroe Islands is significant. The findings do not point to a rapid brain drain, but if it is allowed to continue on the current trajectory it will become worse, unless something is done to reverse the cycle.

### **Can the Faroe Islands achieve brain circulation?**

The survey discovered that if financial student support had not been given, more respondents would have studied in the Faroes instead. This could make someone suggest cutting the financial support, so that fewer Faroese leave, which would reduce the brain drain. However, this finding also uncovered that 16% might not have undertaken higher education at all, which would have increased the brain drain again. Thus it cannot be argued that cutting the financial support would somehow help stem the brain drain. Furthermore, brain circulation is not about stopping the outflow of people, it is about attracting back those who already left, with the knowledge and connections they gained abroad.

Several commentators (Cervantes and Guellec 2002, Alston 2004, Saxenian 2005, Gribble 2008) have advised that countries suffering from brain drain should invest in education, innovation, research and development in order to attract back expatriates. The results section shows that 90% of this survey's respondents thought it was important to create a strong environment of innovation, research and development in the Faroes in order to attract back the emigrated Faroese students. This suggests that it could be the lack of this environment that is holding some Faroese graduates back. The survey also found that most respondents believed that the future prospects of the Faroes, in terms of economic growth and development, looked rather negative. This means that most respondents believe that innovation, research and development is critical to get students to return, but they also believe that the development of such an environment does not lie in the

future of the Faroes. This contradiction could easily become a vicious circle, where the negative view of the Faroes' prospects stops people from moving back and potentially starting up initiatives aimed at innovation, research and development. Some respondents of this study also identified the necessity of an attitude change among students abroad, they wanted to see a more proactive and positive stance, where students should want to come back to help create a better society rather than setting demands to the existing society before considering returning.

A cause for the negative outlook could lie in a belief that the Faroese do not have resources and capabilities to offer proficient education and research. However, a reasonable number of this study's respondents indicated that they would have been willing to do a part of their degree in the Faroes and another part abroad, if this had been possible, therefore this avenue should be explored further. Gribble (2008) namely recommends partnering with another university abroad, so that students spend some time in each place to develop transnational attachments and connections as well as benefitting from the expertise that different universities offer.

Placing universities in the periphery is crucial to make people thrive there; Kloep et al. (2003) found that in rural Norway people are less likely to leave because the local government has invested in education and infrastructure. The Faroese government can learn from this experience and should invest in scientific institutions. Even though it is not a large country with masses of prospective students, with good infrastructure and a good university (perhaps in a partnership with other universities such as those in rural Norway) the Faroes could potentially attract many foreign students, especially if the university specialises in some area, as Gribble showed that the small island Mauritius has done. A strategic assessment, handed to the Faroese government in 2013, states that the Faroese have an ideal opportunity to highly specialise in the maritime field. The Faroe Islands could become a regional centre for maritime education, research and industries. The assessment calls for increased funding for research and development, as well as educational cooperation within the Arctic Region (Prime Minister's Office Foreign Service 2013). Furthermore, in another assessment, the OECD (2011) has acknowledged that the Faroes possess huge potential in areas such as eco-tourism and Arctic research.

But in order to take advantage of this potential and to create these collaborations the Faroes need ambitious, driven and professional people, and as stated earlier, the prospects of getting these to return to the Faroes, seem to be diminishing. What can then be done to get these people interested in investing in the Faroes?

Saxenian (2005) showed how transnational connections can lead to a brain circulation, where links between host and home countries promote development in the less developed country. This can only occur in politically, economically and socially stable countries, so seeing as the Faroes is a developed, stable and safe country with high income levels this should be possible, so why is it not happening? The answer again lies in the missing emphasis on innovation and development. The Faroes currently spends less than 1% of their GDP on research and innovation, which is much less than most advanced countries (Mikkelsen 2013). In order to attract back expatriates and other international skilled workers who can create these transnational links and foster development, the country needs to increase funding for innovation and encourage entrepreneurialism (Cervantes and Guellec 2002).

It almost seems that the one is a precondition for the other: a professional environment requires professional people to create it, and professional people need the environment to thrive. This is to some degree a question about attitude, as some respondents indicated in the open-ended question – students abroad need to start seeing themselves as a part of the change that they want to happen. A more positive attitude towards the possibility of progress could create ripple effects where students get increasingly willing to move home to promote development, and eventually create an environment that is appealing to transnational entrepreneurs of all nationalities.

Nevertheless, being a developed country, the Faroes does have a community of professionals and business people, albeit not as advanced as in many other countries. Several respondents expressed that they are missing a connection to this community and some recommended that Faroese companies should collaborate with students abroad by offering them assignments so that students would get involved and interested in the development of Faroese enterprise. Such a contribution from the professional community could be the start of the aforementioned ripple effect.

The OECD (2011) has suggested that the Faroes should relax their immigration laws, so as to allow foreign qualified labourers to work in the Faroes. As it stands it is very complicated, lengthy and not even guaranteed to get a work permit for non-Scandinavians. This is possibly blocking skilled people, who because of the high mobility in most of Europe, might be interested to work in the Faroes. In addition, these laws are also affecting another group of people, perhaps unintentionally, namely the Faroese people with foreign partners. In keeping with King's (2002) observations about the growing phenomena of "love migration", 21% of this sample had foreign partners. This study found that most respondents with foreign partners are unsure or do not want to return to the Faroes. This reluctance could be directly caused by the strict immigration laws, which then prevents potentially many Faroese who want to move back home with their foreign partner. It would seem advisable to consider a mitigation of immigration laws so as to get the best out of the high mobility and attract foreign specialists as well as welcoming back Faroese emigrants *and* their foreign partner.

Apparently the Faroes need to make some concessions, but I believe that it is possible to turn the tide of the current brain drain and achieve brain circulation. Below are a number of policy recommendations that could encourage this achievement.

### ***Policy Recommendations***

Through investigating the possibility of turning the Faroese brain drain into a brain circulation, this paper has come up with four policy recommendations. Despite being a humble Master's dissertation, I believe that these recommendations can be of some merit and could be an addition to the body of work that is gradually accumulating on the issue of outmigration in the Faroe Islands.

First, a clear recommendation that stood out in this study is the need to create a better environment for innovation, research and development. The ability to get skilled individuals to thrive lies in the will to promote entrepreneurialism and innovation and to invest in science and research. This could be done by increasing funding for research and development, expanding the current university or by establishing collaborations with

other scientific centres. Furthermore, the immigration laws must be made more lenient, so as to allow foreign experts into the country to teach and explore.

Secondly, several respondents reported missing a connection to professional and business people in the Faroe Islands. Thus, there are good grounds for creating better connections between Faroese business life and Faroese students abroad. This could easily be achieved if businesses and organisations in the Faroes extend themselves more to students abroad, which, in addition to attracting back Faroese graduates, could be hugely beneficial for the businesses.

Thirdly, this study found that many respondents wanted to get away from the small town environment that and that personal freedom was an important criterion when deciding where to live in the future. Several people implied that the Faroes are too conservative, religious and narrow-minded. Therefore the Faroes should strive to create a more tolerant, open and secular society, so that everyone feels comfortable, especially women. This could be done by re-evaluating the relevance of out-dated laws and restrictions, being harsher on nepotism and by guaranteeing equal rights.

And fourthly, one of the most frequently stated categories of the open-ended question was about the cost of living in the Faroes. If the Faroese want to get back their expatriates, they should look into ways of making it more affordable for newly graduated individuals. This could include improving the prospects for renting and social housing, as well as offering unemployment benefits to graduates while they are looking for work.

### ***Recommendations for future study***

This study used a quantitative approach mainly for practical reasons, so as to reach a broader audience and because the researcher is based in Scotland and most of the potential respondents are elsewhere. However, it would have been advantageous to have some qualitative aspects to the paper, such as individual in-depth interviews or focus group interviews. This may have allowed a deeper and more insightful understanding of the individuals' opinions and attitudes.

Furthermore, this study concluded by offering some policy recommendations, these were the result of the survey that was carried out. A future study could perhaps look into how these recommendations could be implemented concretely, and examine people's and policy makers' opinions on them.

## CONCLUSION

This study found that the current brain drain in the Faroe Islands is significant, and that if nothing is done, it will probably carry on and get worse. This deduction was the result of the survey research, which found that generally most Faroese are unsure about whether to return home after finishing studies or not, and that more women are inclined to leave than men. When looked at in greater detail it revealed that the people who want to move home value societal and personal factors more than the people who are unsure or do not want to return; these typically value professional factors more. Therefore the most ambitious people, who could potentially reverse the brain drain, are not guaranteed to return.

However, something can be done to stem the brain drain. This hypothesis is the result of an inductive exploration about the potential for creating brain circulation in the Faroes. Through lessons of other countries, advice of theorists, and suggestions of the survey respondents, this dissertation has come up with some policy recommendations that arguably can turn the tide of the current brain drain. If there is more investment into education, research and development, if Faroese business people extend themselves more to students abroad, if out-dated restrictive laws are re-evaluated and if something is done to make it more affordable to newly graduated students, then hopefully many more skilled people would be attracted to the Faroes, both nationals and internationals, both for staying permanently and for short-term transnational entrepreneurship or knowledge transfer. If this were to happen, the Faroes would have achieved brain circulation.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

#### Information Sheet

This survey is intended for Faroese students, obtaining higher education abroad.

This questionnaire is a part of my Masters dissertation in Globalization at the University of Aberdeen. The assignment is about outmigration from the Faroe Islands, specifically, outmigration of students and skilled people.

It should take about 5 minutes to complete the questionnaire. All the answers will be anonymous and confidential. I emphasise that participation is voluntary and that you can refuse to answer any question. You can also withdraw from the study if you feel like it.

If you have any questions regarding the assignment you are welcomed to contact me on

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Thank you.

1. Are you male or female?  
(1) Female. (2) Male.
2. How old are you?  
—— years
3. Where do you currently live?  
(1) Denmark. (2) United Kingdom. (3) Other: please specify.
4. How many years have you lived abroad?  
(1) 0-2 years (2) 2-4 years (3) 4 or more years
5. What subject are you studying?  
Open question.
6. What is your relationship status?  
(1) Single. (2) Faroese partner who lives in the Faroes. (3) Faroese partner who also lives abroad. (4) Foreign partner. (5) Refuse to answer.
7. Are your parents living in the Faroes?  
(1) Yes (2) No. (3) One
8. Are most of your friends living in the Faroes?  
(1) Yes (2) No (3) Don't know

9. Which nationality are you mostly associating with in the place where you are?  
(1) Nationality of country. (2) Faroese. (3) Other international.
10. Why did you choose to go abroad to study? Tick any that applies.
- The subject I wanted to study is not available in the Faroe Islands
  - The institution I am studying at has a good reputation for my degree
  - I wanted to increase my relations with professional and business people abroad
  - I wanted to experience living abroad
  - I like the lifestyle/culture of the place I am currently living
  - I wanted to get away from the “small town” environment
  - I want to live here permanently and a degree is a good steppingstone
  - Friends/family live here
  - Other, please specify.
11. Would you do your degree in the Faroes if it was possible?  
(1) Yes I would do the whole degree there. (2) I would do a part of my degree there if it was possible. (3) No. (4) Don't know.
12. Would you say that your choice to study abroad was a difficult decision?  
(1) Not difficult at all. (2) Not very difficult. (3) Somewhat difficult. (4) Difficult. (5) Very difficult.
13. Would you have chosen to study abroad if you had not had the range of benefits that Faroese citizens get, for example if you had to pay for the education yourself, you didn't get allowance(SU, ÚSUN), travel money and you had to get student visa etc.?  
(1) Yes I would still have done it. (2) I might have stayed in the Faroes to obtain it. (3) I might not have chosen to pursue further studies at all. (4) Don't know.
14. Do you want to move back to the Faroe Islands when you finish studying?  
(1) Yes right away. (2) Yes, but not right away. (3) I'm not sure. (4) No probably never.
15. Do you feel that you fit in this society here/Faroes (in terms of values, attitudes and culture etc.)?  
(1) Better here, than in the Faroes. (2) Better in the Faroes, than here. (3) Fit well in both. (4) Don't fit well in both. (5) Unsure.
16. What do you miss about the Faroes? Tick any that apply.
- Family and friends
  - Nature
  - Food
  - Tradition and culture
  - Small town environment
  - Safety
  - Other (please specify).

17. What do you think could be done in order to get people to move back to the Faroe Islands after they finish studying abroad?  
Open response.
18. What do you think will be the future for the Faroe Islands (in regards to economic growth and development etc.)?  
(1) Rather positive. (2) Rather negative. (3) Don't know.
19. How concerned are you personally with the development of the Faroe Islands?  
(1) Not concerned at all. (2) Not very concerned. (3) Somewhat concerned. (4) Concerned. (5) Very concerned.
20. Do you feel that you have the opportunity to reach as high in the professional ladder in the Faroes as in the country you are now?  
(1) Yes. (2) No. (3) Unsure.
21. How important would you say that developing a strong environment of innovation, research and development is for the prospective returns of skilled Faroese from abroad?  
(1) Not important at all. (2) Not very important. (3) Somewhat important. (4) Important. (5) Very important.
22. How concerned are you with nepotism (friend and family politics) in the Faroes?  
(1) Not concerned at all. (2) Not very concerned. (3) Somewhat concerned. (4) Concerned. (5) Very concerned.
23. How important are the criteria below when you think about where you want to live and work after you finish your studies?  
Choose from: (1) Not important at all. (2) Not very important. (3) Somewhat important. (4) Important. (5) Very important.
- Employment opportunities (e.g. more challenging work, higher income)
  - Presence of a professional network
  - The chance to make a difference and contribute to development of society
  - Family and friends
  - The values of society (e.g. equality, social obligations, importance of family)
  - A good place to raise children
  - Personal freedom
  - Tradition and culture (e.g. food, music, art)
  - Climate
  - Safety
24. Thank you for your participation.