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London Calling?

Preferred emigration destinations among Icelandic youth

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Abstract

Preferred emigration destinations among adolescents reflect images and stereotypes of other countries that continuously emerge in a multitude of local and global discourses and from concrete experiences with other countries. The affinities of Icelandic adolescents are split between the islands of the Northern Atlantic, continental Nordic countries, European core countries, and North American countries. If they had to leave Iceland, however, the largest proportion of Icelandic adolescents would want to move to the United States. Girls are more likely to choose the Nordic countries, in particular Denmark, while boys are more likely to choose English-speaking countries with a reputation for economic and military power such as the United States and England. Adolescents are more likely to prefer migrating to Europe rather than North America if they are proud of their Icelandic nationality, live in cohesive communities, have more educated parents, and feel closer to Europe. Adolescents who want to move abroad are in contrast most likely to have North American destinations in mind. Recent geopolitical changes may however shift the attention of Icelandic adolescents eastward towards the European continent.

Key words:

Adolescents – Affinities – Destinations – Emigration – European – Iceland – Nordic

Introduction

If I'd lived in Roman times, I'd have lived in Rome. Where else? Today America is the Roman Empire and New York is Rome itself. John Lennon.

Growing mobility, technological advances, and an omnivorous global culture that feeds on disparate elements from societies around the world have undermined geographical and biographical notions of identity and belonging in Western countries (Gibbons, 2003). The process of European integration has furthermore resulted in unprecedented freedom of residence, education, and employment throughout most of the continent, and among European youth the choice of future residence has increasingly become part of the process of identity formation in a world characterized by constant flux (Bjarnason and Thorlindsson, 2006). While some scholars lament the demise of geographical communities and community-based social organizations (e.g. Etzioni, 1995; Putnam, 2001), others have heralded the emergence of a fluid, flexible or fragmented postmodern self (e.g. Harré, 2001; Tseëlon, 1992). In particular, Bauman (1995, 2001) has argued that individuals must break the bonds of geographical community in order to realize their genuine human potential in the contemporary world.

Preferred emigration destinations reflect images and stereotypes that continuously emerge in a multitude of local and global discourses as well as from concrete experiences with other cultures in the local community and foreign countries alike (Broddason, 1991, 1996). On the individual level, preferred emigration destinations may be related to differences in educational resources, family affluence, and other aspects of human and cultural capital, as well as differences in social capital in the form of social networks of trust and support. On the national level, collective perceptions of closeness to the people of other countries and willingness to live among them indicate cultural relations between nations beyond formal interactions among the political elites in different countries or regions. Emigration preferences can therefore illuminate the highways and byways of socio-cultural world maps, in particular among young

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people who are more able than adults to consider such issues in abstraction from prior educational or occupational choices, family responsibilities and other aspects of adult life that may limit the horizon. To paraphrase Lennon, preferred emigration destinations may indicate where ‘Rome itself’ lies in the minds of contemporary youth.

In this paper, the preferred emigration destinations of Icelandic adolescents will be explored. This analysis contributes to the current literature in primarily three areas. First, it examines perceived closeness to specific countries and their desirability as emigration destinations at the rather unique Icelandic crossroads between Europe and North America. Second, it identifies the personal and social profiles of adolescents choosing Northern Atlantic, continental Nordic, core European or North American destinations. Third, it evaluates the extent to which perceived closeness and the willingness to emigrate are associated with preferred emigration destinations.

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The pursuit of adventure and excitement in exotic lands may be an important objective of emigration, in particular among youth. Those eager to emigrate may thus envision moving to distant, unfamiliar or glamorous destinations, while those who reluctantly seek better opportunities abroad may find proximate destinations most attractive. Such choices can be expected to be closely related to differences in individual and collective resources, in particular in culturally and economically marginalized areas. Children of educated and wealthy parents may for instance have higher aspirations that can only be fulfilled by emigration, and their parents by definition have better resources to support such aspirations. Children from more affluent families may also be more likely to look towards countries such as the United States where material success is celebrated to a greater degree, while children from more educated families might perhaps be more likely to look east toward a more credential-oriented Europe. Metropolitan areas offer more diverse opportunities for education, employment, and leisure

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than rural municipalities, and they tend to draw female and younger migrants in particular (Olafsson, 1997; Stockdale, 2002). Urban youth may also be more confident in their abilities to succeed in large, diverse, and fiercely competitive societies and thus be more likely to prefer global hubs as emigration destinations while their rural counterparts may prefer smaller, more manageable destinations.

Various aspects of belonging and identity may furthermore affect emigration preferences. Emigration threatens to disrupt social support networks and community bonds, and research has indeed shown that migration expectations are lower among adolescents who have strong ties with friends and family, or with their home community as a whole (Elder et al., 1996; Glendinning et al., 2003; Pretty et al., 1996; Rudkin et al., 1994). Children who grow up in close-knit communities can also be expected to be more reluctant to move far away if they do need to leave their country of origin. Similarly, national identity fundamentally involves a personal identification with an imagined national community (Anderson, 1991) and a strong national identity has been shown to be associated with less emigration potential (Bjarnason, 2007; Datler et al., 2005; Jones and Smith, 2001). Should adolescents be forced to leave their home country, a stronger national identity could also be expected to be reflected in a preference for migrating to culturally similar countries. Conversely, adolescents who have lived abroad for an extended period of time and immigrant adolescents who do not identify with the country where they live can be expected to have a more cosmopolitan outlook and to have a broader horizon for future emigration.

Finally, the literature dating back to Ravenstein's (1885) seminal study of the 'laws of migration' has rather consistently shown that women are disproportionately overrepresented among migrants and those expecting to migrate (e.g. Bjarnason, 2007; Dahlstrom, 1996; Glendinning et al., 2003; Hamilton and Otterstad, 1998; Rye, 2006). Yet the influence of the gendered images of different countries on preferred emigration destinations has received limited attention in the literature. Factors traditionally associated with masculinity such as

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competitiveness and aggression can be associated with countries with a history of military and economic domination, while factors traditionally associated with femininity such as care and nurturing may be associated with countries with a reputation for being committed to equality and the welfare of all citizens. These stereotypes would for instance suggest that adolescent boys might on average be more partial to the United States and the major economic and military powers in Europe, while girls may be more likely to choose the Nordic welfare states as potential destinations for emigration.

The case of Iceland

The geographical position of Iceland is reflected in historical relations with various countries around the North Atlantic, in particular the Nordic countries, Britain and the United States. Iceland is reputed to have been settled by Celtic slaves and their Norse Viking masters in the late ninth and early tenth century, and the Icelandic Sagas written in the 13th and 14th century can be considered a body of historical fiction dealing with the origin and fate of prominent settlers and their descendents. Thorarinsdottir (2004) has argued that the medieval Christian authors of the Sagas were in part motivated by a desire to counter the popular image of their pagan ancestors as rapists and murderers and to project a more positive Icelandic identity onto the European intellectual scene. The Icelandic independence movement of the 19th century in turn romanticized the settlement period described in the Icelandic Sagas as a golden age of independence that had ended in brutal foreign subjugation. In the struggle against Danish rule, this supposedly proud heritage of independence, courage and honour was expected to provide the foundations for a progressive, independent Icelandic nation state (Egilsson, 1999).

Iceland came under Norwegian rule in 1262 and later Danish rule through the Kalmar Union of 1397–1524 (Karlsson, 2000). The country achieved full independence from Denmark

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in 1944, following the German occupation of Denmark and the British occupation of Iceland in 1940. The United States subsequently maintained a military presence in Iceland in the period 1941–2006. The Cod Wars with Britain however represent the only direct Icelandic conflict with the military forces of another country. The dispute over Iceland's claims to exclusive fishing rights around the island led to a series of increasingly violent clashes between Icelandic coastguard patrol boats and British battleships in 1958, 1972–3, and 1975–6, but ultimately resulted in the international recognition of a 200-mile national fishing zone (see e.g. Karlsson, 2000; Kurlansky, 1998). This hard-fought victory over the British became an important source of national pride, and the prospect of fishing vessels from Britain and other European countries returning to Icelandic waters has been one of the major political barriers against Iceland joining the European Union (Thorhallsson, 2002).

Historical and cultural ties to the other Nordic countries have been very important to the international relations of Iceland over the past century. The joint Nordic labour market and passport union established in 1954 allowed the free movement of labour between Iceland and Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden and further solidified Nordic cooperation in matters of economy, politics, and culture (Norden, 2008). This regional alliance of countries with a total of about 25 million inhabitants was in many ways eclipsed when Denmark and later Finland and Sweden joined the European Union. Iceland and Norway have remained outside of the EU, but the long-standing Nordic cooperation contributed considerably to their inclusion in the Schengen agreement on joint European border control in 2001 (European Union, 2008) and the establishment of the European Economic Area in 2004 (EFTA 2008; European Commission, 2008).

The opening of borders and the free movement of labour between Iceland and the European Union did not affect the long-standing Icelandic tradition of emigration and return migration for purposes of education and employment. Close to 1% of Icelandic citizens left the country annually in the period 1988–2007, and close to 1% returned to Iceland from abroad each year.

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The net emigration of Icelandic citizens was only 0.1% over this twenty-year period with annual fluctuations between -0.3% and +0.6%. About 70% of Icelandic emigrants in 2007 moved within the Nordic labour market (Statistics Iceland, 2008b). However, ease of employment only partially explains Icelandic patterns of migration. Although Iceland became part of the joint European labour market in 2004, only 14% of Icelandic emigration in 2007 went to the 24 non-Nordic European Union countries. In contrast, despite the notoriously restrictive immigration policies of the United States, about 10% of all emigration of Icelandic citizens went to the United States in 2007 and an additional 1% to Canada. The remaining 5% of the emigrants went to about 30 other countries around the globe.

Iceland has also experienced a considerable immigration of foreign citizens in recent years (Statistics Iceland, 2008b). In 1996, the proportion of foreign citizens in Iceland was 1.9% of the total population, the same as in 1950. However, after four years of the European Economic Area in January 2008, the proportion of foreign citizens had climbed to 7% (Statistics Iceland, 2008a), slightly above the average proportion of immigrants in Europe (International Organization for Migration, 2005). As a result of these changes, Icelandic adolescents have an increasingly multicultural background. According to official statistics, 7% of 15–16 year old residents of Iceland are born abroad and 2% are citizens of another country (Statistics Iceland, 2008a). In 2007, about 18% of 15–16 year old students in Iceland reported that at least one of their parents was not Icelandic, 3% reported that neither of their parents were Icelandic, and 2% did not consider themselves Icelanders (Hafthorsson and Bjarnason, 2007). About 17% had lived abroad for a period of at least one year and 13% reported speaking a foreign language at home. Consequently, a large proportion of Icelandic adolescents have direct ties with other countries and the majority can be expected to have friends or acquaintances that have such ties.

The preferred emigration destinations of Icelandic youth can be expected to be affected by their position on these crossroads between North America and Europe. While Icelandic adolescents could perhaps be expected to feel the greatest affinity with other small island

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societies in the Northern Atlantic, their preferred emigration destinations should nevertheless be strongly affected by the gravitational pull of the most powerful countries in both North America and continental Europe. In addition, the continental Nordic countries have played a major role in Iceland's relations to the outside world, in recent history particular acting as an intermediary between Iceland and the European Union. Hence, North Atlantic countries, Continental Nordic countries, European core countries and North American countries can be considered the major relevant categories of emigration destinations among Icelandic youth.

Data and methods

In the following analysis, a national population survey among all 9th grade (14–15 year old) and 10th grade (15–16 year old) students in Iceland is used to map the perceived closeness of different countries and preferred emigration destinations. The survey employed a standard school survey methodology with questionnaires administered anonymously with a blank envelope procedure (Bjarnason, 1995; Hibell, 2003) to all students present in class on the day of the surveys. The survey was conducted in March 2003 and yielded responses from 80.3% of all Icelandic students born 1987 and 1988. Using multinomial logistic regression techniques (Pampel, 2000), a distinction will be drawn between adolescents who would emigrate to (1) other Northern Atlantic countries, (2) continental Nordic countries, and (3) the largest countries in Western Europe, compared to (4) North American countries.

Table 1 about here

Destination of choice is measured by responses to the question “Imagine you had to leave Iceland. To which of the following countries would you move if you had to pick one of them?” (Broddason, 1991). The response list of countries is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather to exemplify important categories of countries. Responses were collapsed into four binary variables

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Northern Atlantic Destination (Faroe Islands, Greenland, and Scotland or Shetland Islands), *Continental Nordic Destination* (Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden), and *European Core Destination* (England, France, and Germany). *North American Destination* (Canada and the United States) serve as the omitted reference category in the multivariate analysis.

Perceived affinity with other countries is measured by responses to the question “How much do you feel you have in common with the people of the following countries?” (Jonsson and Olafsson, 1991), using the same list of countries as above. Responses (1: not close at all; 7: very close) were similarly collapsed into *North Atlantic Affinity*, *Continental Nordic Affinity*, *European Core Affinity*, and *North American Affinity*. The affinity with each group of countries was defined as the highest score each student gave to any country within that group. It is thus a measure of how close students feel to at least one of the countries within the group, not the average affinity to all countries within that group. Since affinities with different countries are not mutually exclusive, all four variables are included in the multivariate analysis.

In Iceland, almost two-thirds of the 313 thousand inhabitants lives in the capital region surrounding Reykjavik, while the remaining one-third live in towns, fishing villages, and rural areas along the 5,000 km coastline (Statistics Iceland, 2008c). For the purposes of the current study, the home community of each student is defined by his or her own designation. The responses were recoded into the dichotomous variables *Fishing Village*, *Other Town*, and *Rural Community*, with the *Capital Region* serving as the omitted contrast variable.

Perceived *Family Economic Status* is measured by asking respondents how well off their families are compared to other families (1: much worse off; 7: much better off). The education of father and mother is measured on a five-point scale (1: primary school or less; 5: university degree). *Parental Education* is defined by the education of the parent with the higher level of education. Finally, *Family Embeddedness* is measured by two items ($r=.55$), “My parents are familiar with the parents of most my friends” and “My parents are friends with the parents of my best friends”.

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Three measures of national identity were included in the survey. First, *National Pride* is measured by the question “How proud are you of being an Icelander?” (1: not proud at all; 4: very proud) (World Values Survey, 1990). Second, the self-ascribed national identity of the respondent was introduced as the binary variable *Not an Icelander* (1: not an Icelander; 0: Icelander). Third, responses to a question about where the respondent was mostly raised were coded into the binary variable *Raised Abroad* (1: raised abroad; 0: raised in Iceland).

Finally, emigration potential is measured by the dichotomous indicators of expecting and wanting to move abroad. Although emigration expectations and emigration wishes are related, they are nevertheless empirically and conceptually distinct. While some adolescents expect to leave their home community willingly, others expect to leave even though they don’t want to, and yet others would like to leave but do not expect to be able to do so (Seyfrit et al., 2008).

Results

Table 2 shows the affinity Icelandic adolescents reported with the people of other countries in 2003. The continental Nordic countries received the highest score of perceived closeness with 27% responding that they felt very close to the people of at least one of these four countries. About 21% of the respondents felt very close to at least one of the countries in the Northern Atlantic region and just under 18% felt very close to either one of the European core countries or one of the North American countries. Denmark and the Faroe Islands received the highest scores of any single country, with 18–19% of the respondents feeling very close to each country. Other countries receiving double-digit nominations were Norway, Sweden and the United States with 15–16% and England with 12%.

Table 2 about here

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Table 2 also reveals an interesting gender difference in perceived closeness to different countries. Icelandic girls clearly feel a stronger Nordic affinity than boys (30% vs. 24%), while boys are more likely to feel they have very much in common with European core countries (19% vs. 15%) and North American countries (20% vs. 15%). This gender difference is due to 23% of girls feeling close to the people of Denmark compared to 15% of the boys, while boys are more likely than girls to feel close to Germany (11% vs. 7%) and the United States (16% vs. 12%).

The second part of Table 2 shows where Icelandic adolescents would emigrate if they had to leave the country. The destination of choice clearly does not follow the same pattern as perceived affinity. North American countries receive the highest score of 43%, with the United States receiving the lion's share of 39%. England and Denmark were the only other countries to receive double-digit nominations with 18% and 14%, respectively. Although 18% felt very close to the Faroe Islands, only 2% wanted to move there if they had to leave Iceland.

About 29% of the girls name a continental Nordic country as their destination of choice, compared to 19% of the boys. Boys were in contrast more likely to name North American countries (45% vs. 41%) or European core countries (31% vs. 27%). Again, this difference can be traced to 19% of the girls and only about 9% of the boys naming Denmark, while boys are significantly more likely to name the United States (41% vs. 36%), England (21% vs. 16%) or France (7% vs. 3%). Interestingly, girls are significantly more likely than boys to choose Germany (8% vs. 4%).

Multivariate analysis

Table 3 shows the results of multinomial logistic regression analysis to predict the odds of each region as a preferred destination for emigration. Girls are shown to be significantly more likely to have the continental Nordic countries as their preferred migration destination than any

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other region. Controlling for other factors in the model, there were no significant gender differences between North Atlantic, European Core or North American destinations.

Table 3 about here

Adolescents who are living in farming communities are 2.3 times as likely to choose North Atlantic destinations and 1.3 times as likely to choose European Core countries, compared to North America. No other significant effects of community context are found in this study. Children who have more educated parents are significantly more likely to choose continental Nordic or core European countries rather than North American countries as their preferred destination. The odds ratio is 1.1 for each unit increase on the 5-point scale of parental education, implying that compared with children of parents with only compulsory education, children with at least one university educated parent are 1.3 times as likely to choose these groups of countries. Similarly, children of parents who are more embedded in their community are more likely to choose various European destinations. The odds ratio is 1.04–1.05 for each unit increase on the 9-point scale of embeddedness, implying that the children of the most embedded parents are 1.3–1.4 times more likely to choose these countries than children of the least embedded parents. There is no significant difference in preferred destinations by family economic status.

National pride is associated with a greater probability of choosing Northern Atlantic or continental Nordic countries rather than North American countries. The odds ratio of 1.24 for each unit increase implies that those with the greatest national pride are twice as likely to choose Northern Atlantic countries, compared with those with the least pride in being Icelandic. Similarly, an odds ratio of 1.15 per unit increase implies that those with the greatest national pride are 1.6 times as likely to choose continental Nordic countries. National pride does not differ significantly between those choosing Core European or North American

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destinations. Adolescents choosing Continental Nordic destinations are 2.8 times as likely to have lived abroad. Interestingly, adolescents who do not consider themselves Icelanders are 3.5 as likely to choose Northern Atlantic destinations compared to North American destinations.

Perceived affinities have a strong positive association with preferred emigration destinations. For each unit increase in affinity with Northern Atlantic countries, the odds of wanting to move to one of them increases by a factor of 3.3. The corresponding odds ratios for Continental Europe and Core European countries were 3.0 and 2.5, respectively. In addition, for each unit increase in North American affinity there was a reduction in wanting to move to any of the other sets of countries by a factor of .31–.38. Finally, Table 3 shows that adolescents who want to live abroad are only half as likely to choose North Atlantic or continental Nordic destinations and .8 times as likely to choose European core countries, compared to those in North American countries. No significant effects were found for emigration expectations.

Discussion

Throughout the centuries, Iceland's geographical position in the middle of the North Atlantic has to a certain degree allowed Icelanders to choose their own neighbours (Bjarnason, 1999). Countries such as Denmark, Norway, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, and the United States have in this sense moved in and out of the immediate vicinity of Iceland in different historical periods. In modern times, Copenhagen, London and Paris are only about three hours south and east of Iceland while Boston, Toronto and New York lie four to five hours to the west. The global currents sweeping Iceland thus offer adolescents competing social, economic and cultural futures in various places on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. At the same time, the viability of a microstate with a population of only 313 thousand inhabitants can easily be threatened by sudden shifts in the volume or nature of either emigration or immigration. Even though Iceland is only indirectly involved with the process of European

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integration through the European Economic Area, it may be more profoundly affected by the changes taking place than larger countries more central to the process.

The strategic position of Iceland between continental Europe and North America is clearly reflected in the split affinities of Iceland youth. About one in four adolescents feel that they have very much in common with the continental Nordic countries, while one in five have much in common with Northern Atlantic countries and one in six with core European or North American countries. Of individual countries, the greatest number of adolescents feels close to Denmark and Faroe Islands, followed by Norway, Sweden, United States, and England. The Faroe Islands are geographically and culturally closest to Iceland, and both countries were under Danish rule for centuries. It does therefore not come as a surprise that the Faroe Islands and Denmark are central to the world maps of Icelandic adolescents. The United States enjoy a global hegemony in contemporary youth culture and have maintained strong economic and political ties with Iceland over the past six decades. As a result, they appear to be on par with Norway and Sweden in the minds of young Icelanders.

In addition to geopolitical considerations, language issues may also play an important role in these results. The Faroese language is close enough to Icelandic to be mutually understandable, albeit with some effort. Despite independence from Denmark in 1944, Danish continued to be the first foreign language studied in Icelandic schools right up to the end of the 20th century. This has provided young Icelanders with some access to Danish, Norwegian and Swedish and has most certainly contributed to an affinity with the ‘Scandinavian-speaking’ Nordic countries. In 1999, Danish was demoted to the second foreign language in Icelandic schools under the assumption that English might be more widely applicable as the first foreign language in an increasingly global world. This change also signalled Nordic identity becoming only one among many strategic transnational identities Icelanders could assume. The results of the current study suggest that a Nordic identity is nevertheless strongly rooted in the national self-image of young Icelanders, even though England and the United States also figure

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prominently on their world maps. It would be informative to study the extent to which similar processes are at work among youth in the other Nordic countries.

The findings of this study also raise important questions about gender differences and the gendered images of different countries. Both boys and girls have the strongest affinity with the continental Nordic countries, but the United States are the most popular destination of choice for both genders. However, Icelandic girls appear to have a particular affinity with Denmark that is not shared by Icelandic boys, while the boys reported more affinity with the United States and England. Girls are also more than twice as likely to prefer Denmark as a destination for emigration, while boys are significantly more likely to prefer the United States and England. These findings are consistent with the stereotypical notion that boys should on average be more partial to countries with a ‘masculine’ image of economic and military power while girls should be more likely to choose countries with a more ‘feminine’ image for equality and welfare as potential destinations for emigration. Gendered perceptions of preferred emigration destination may thus in part reflect normative evaluations of alternative futures and desirable directions for Icelandic society. Incidentally, however, language issues may also play a part in explaining these gender differences. Educational research has consistently shown that Icelandic girls perform significantly and substantially better in Danish than boys, while gender differences in English are largely non-existent (Olafsson et al., 2007). Icelandic girls therefore have a much more direct access to Danish culture and the Nordic cultural sphere in general. This may partially explain why more than twice as many girls than boys would move to Denmark if they had to leave Iceland.

Our results suggest fairly specific and straightforward effects of marginalization and social structural context on preferred emigration destinations. Prior research has shown that opportunities for education, employment, and leisure tend to draw young people from rural to urban areas (Olafsson, 1997; Seytfrid et al., 2008; Stockdale, 2002), in particular those who have more educated parents (Bjarnason and Thorlindson, 2006). Conversely, adolescents often

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experience tight-knit communities as ‘oppressive, repressive, suppressive, and obsessive’ (Stockdale, 2002) and limited freedom to explore social and individual identities tends push young people out such communities (Dahlstrom, 1996; Gabriel, 2002; Glendinning et al., 2003; Jamieson, 2000; Matthews *et al.*, 2000; Valentine, 1997). The results of the current study suggest that community integration directs adolescents towards Europe rather than North America. As expected, parental education is associated with European destinations but the economic status of the family does however not appear to predispose adolescents towards North America. Destinations of choice do not differ between urban youth in the Reykjavik capital region and those living in fishing villages and small towns around the coastline, but adolescents in farming communities are particularly drawn to other small Northern-Atlantic countries and to a lesser extent to core European countries. In general, these findings support the notion that youth from rural and more tightly integrated communities prefer more proximal destinations.

Prior research has found national identity to be associated with less emigration potential (Bjarnason, 2007; Datler et al., 2005; Jones and Smith, 2001). The current study shows that national pride is also associated with more proximal preferred emigration destinations. Adolescents who are more proud of being Icelandic are significantly more likely to report that if necessary they would choose to move to another Northern Atlantic country or, to a lesser extent, to a continental Nordic country. Somewhat unexpectedly, adolescents of foreign descent were found to be substantially more willing to move to another Northern Atlantic country than those of Icelandic descent. While future research should explore this pattern further, it is possible that Icelandic adolescents may harbour some prejudice towards other, even more sparsely populated islands in the Northern Atlantic. Adolescents who have moved to Iceland from other countries may not share such negative attitudes and be more willing to entertain the idea of moving to another island in the periphery. It is also notable that adolescents who have lived abroad are more likely to want to move to the Nordic countries.

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The large number of Icelanders who have lived in the Nordic countries is the most likely explanation for this pattern. More than half of all Icelandic university students abroad are studying in the continental Nordic countries (Statistics Iceland, 2008d) and about 70% of Icelandic emigrants in 2007 moved within the Nordic labour market (Statistics Iceland, 2008b). The majority of adolescents who have lived abroad therefore have an experience living in one of the continental Nordic countries.

Among Icelandic adolescents, the proportion of 15–16 year old adolescents expecting to emigrate increased from 11% in 1992 to 20% in 2007, and the proportion wanting to emigrate increased from 26% to 33% in the same period (Hafthorsson and Bjarnason, 2007). The results of this study show that adolescents who do not want to emigrate are twice as likely to choose Northern Atlantic or continental Nordic emigration destinations if they had to leave, while those who want to emigrate are most likely to choose Northern American countries. It is also notable that although only 18% of Icelandic adolescents have very much in common with countries in North America, about 43% would nevertheless move to those countries if they had to leave Iceland. The hegemony of the United States in popular youth culture may be one of the factors contributing to these findings. To put it bluntly, Hollywood images of rampant wealth, unlimited freedom and beautiful people living in an eternal summer may be quite sufficient to spark various fantasies of the future in the adolescent imagination. Perceptions of the United States as a different, exciting destination may thus outweigh both the structural opportunities offered by European integration and perceptions of European affinities in the minds of Icelandic adolescents.

Culturally as well as geographically, Iceland is situated on the tectonic plates between North American and Europe. In first years of the 21st century, two seemingly unrelated seismic political events have shifted Iceland further east towards the European continent. In 2004, Iceland entered the European Economic Area (EFTA, 2008), essentially assuming most of the rights and responsibilities of membership in the European Union. Two years later, the United

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States without notice withdrew their armed forces from Iceland in order to redeploy military resources to Iraq and Afghanistan. In a highly symbolic reaction, the Icelandic government asked for French, Norwegian, Danish, Spanish and Polish fighter jets to monitor Icelandic airspace in place of the departed Americans. Future trends will determine how Icelandic adolescents will adjust to these geopolitical changes.

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Table 1
Descriptive statistics for logistic regression analysis of emigration expectations among 14–16 years old students in Iceland, 2003

		Boys			Girls		
	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev</i>	<i>s.e.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>St. dev</i>	<i>s.e.</i>
<i>Community context</i>							
- capital region	0–1	.52	.50	.008	.55	.50	.008
- fishing village	0–1	.16	.37	.006	.15	.36	.006
- other town	0–1	.18	.39	.006	.20	.40	.007
- farming community	0–1	.09	.29	.005	.07	.26	.004
<i>Family context</i>							
Family economic status	1–7	4.46	1.08	.018	4.29	1.03	.018
Parental education	1–5	3.61	1.21	.020	3.56	1.23	.021
Embeddedness	2–10	6.83	2.24	.037	7.09	2.09	.036
<i>National identity</i>							
National pride	1–4	3.55	.74	.012	3.53	.67	.011
Raised abroad	0–1	.04	.19	.003	.05	.21	.004
Not an Icelander	0–1	.01	.11	.002	.02	.12	.002
<i>Perceived affinity</i>							
Northern Atlantic affinity	1–4	2.57	1.02	.017	2.70	.95	.016
Continental Nordic affinity	1–4	2.76	.98	.017	3.05	.84	.014
European core affinity	1–4	2.73	.90	.015	2.77	.79	.014
North American affinity	1–4	2.68	.93	.016	2.70	.82	.014
<i>Destination of choice</i>							
- Northern Atlantic destination	0–1	.05	.22	.004	.04	.19	.003
- Continental Nordic destination	0–1	.19	.39	.006	.28	.45	.008
- European core destination	0–1	.30	.46	.008	.27	.44	.008
- North American destination	0–1	.42	.49	.008	.39	.49	.008
<i>Emigration potential</i>							
- Expect to move abroad	0–1	.15	.35	.006	.20	.40	.007
- Want to move abroad	0–1	.26	.44	.007	.36	.48	.008
Sample size		3,409			3,311		

Table 2
Perceived affinities and destinations of choice among 14–16 year old students in Iceland, 2003

	Boys	Girls	All students
<i>Percentage who feel they have very much in common with the people of the following countries</i>			
Northern Atlantic affinities	20.4 (± 1.3)	21.4 (± 1.4)	20.9 (± .9)
Faroe Islands	17.1 (± 1.2)	19.0 (± 1.3)	18.0 (± .9)
Scotland or Shetland Islands	8.1 (± .9)	5.1 (± .7)	6.7 (± .6)
Greenland	6.1 (± .8)	4.0 (± .7)	5.1 (± .5)
Continental Nordic affinities	24.0 (± 1.4)	30.2 (± 1.5)	27.1 (± 1.0)
Denmark	14.9 (± 1.2)	23.2 (± 1.4)	19.0 (± .9)
Norway	15.3 (± 1.2)	16.6 (± 1.3)	15.9 (± .9)
Sweden	14.6 (± 1.1)	16.2 (± 1.2)	15.4 (± .8)
Finland	6.2 (± .8)	5.9 (± .8)	6.1 (± .6)
European core affinities	19.3 (± 1.3)	15.4 (± 1.2)	17.5 (± .9)
England	13.1 (± 1.1)	10.8 (± 1.0)	12.2 (± .8)
Germany	11.1 (± 1.0)	6.8 (± .8)	9.1 (± .7)
France	6.0 (± .8)	4.4 (± .7)	5.3 (± .5)
North American affinities	19.9 (± 1.3)	15.0 (± 1.2)	17.7 (± .9)
United States	16.4 (± 1.2)	12.3 (± 1.1)	14.6 (± .8)
Canada	9.8 (± 1.0)	7.0 (± .9)	8.5 (± .6)
<i>Percentage who would emigrate to each country if they had to leave Iceland</i>			
Northern Atlantic destinations	4.8 (± .7)	3.6 (± .6)	4.3 (± .5)
Faroe Islands	2.6 (± .5)	2.1 (± .5)	2.4 (± .4)
Scotland or Shetland Islands	1.7 (± .4)	1.3 (± .4)	1.5 (± .3)
Greenland	0.5 (± .2)	0.2 (± .1)	0.4 (± .1)
Continental Nordic destinations	19.4 (± 1.3)	29.4 (± 1.5)	24.3 (± 1.0)
Denmark	8.7 (± .9)	19.0 (± 1.3)	13.8 (± .8)
Norway	6.1 (± .8)	6.1 (± .8)	6.1 (± .6)
Sweden	4.2 (± .7)	3.9 (± .6)	4.0 (± .5)
Finland	0.4 (± .2)	0.4 (± .2)	0.4 (± .1)
European core destinations	30.9 (± 1.5)	26.9 (± 1.5)	28.9 (± 1.1)
England	20.5 (± 1.3)	16.3 (± 1.2)	18.4 (± .9)
Germany	3.9 (± .6)	7.5 (± .9)	5.7 (± .5)
France	6.5 (± .8)	3.1 (± .6)	4.8 (± .5)
North American destinations	45.1 (± 1.6)	40.2 (± 1.6)	42.7 (± 1.2)
United States	40.8 (± 1.6)	36.3 (± 1.6)	38.6 (± 1.1)
Canada	4.3 (± .7)	7.0 (± .9)	4.1 (± .5)

Figures are percentage points. Confidence intervals are 95% probability, infinite population.

Table 3
Multinomial logistic regression model of preferred migration destinations among 14–16 years old students in Iceland, 2003

	North-Atlantic^{a)} <i>OR (95% CI)</i>	Continental Nordic^{a)} <i>OR (95% CI)</i>	European Core^{a)} <i>OR (95% CI)</i>
<i>Gender</i>			
Girls	.85 (.66–1.11)	1.45 (1.27–1.67)	.94 (.83–1.08)
<i>Community context^{b)}</i>			
- fishing village	1.07 (.74–1.55)	1.14 (.94–1.38)	1.17 (.97–1.39)
- other town	.99 (.69–1.41)	.94 (.79–1.13)	1.01 (.86–1.19)
- farming community	2.32 (1.57–3.45)	1.17 (.90–1.52)	1.31 (1.03–1.66)
<i>Family context</i>			
Family economic status	.94 (.82–1.07)	.93 (.87–.99)	.96 (.90–1.02)
Parental education	.87 (.78–.98)	1.07 (1.01–1.13)	1.07 (1.02–1.13)
Embeddedness	1.04 (.98–1.10)	1.04 (1.01–1.07)	1.05 (1.02–1.08)
<i>National identity</i>			
National pride	1.24 (1.00–1.54)	1.15 (1.03–1.27)	1.09 (.99–1.19)
Raised abroad	.71 (.23–2.17)	2.80 (2.00–3.92)	1.03 (.70–1.50)
Not an Icelander	3.45 (1.34–8.87)	.68 (.34–1.37)	.94 (.52–1.71)
<i>Perceived affinity</i>			
Northern Atlantic affinity	3.30 (2.73–3.99)	.99 (.91–1.08)	1.21 (1.11–1.32)
Continental Nordic affinity	.82 (.67–1.00)	2.97 (2.66–3.32)	1.09 (.99–1.20)
European core affinity	1.11 (.90–1.39)	.95 (.85–1.07)	2.46 (2.21–2.75)
North American affinity	.35 (.29–.43)	.38 (.34–.42)	.31 (.28–.34)
<i>Emigration potential</i>			
Expect to move abroad	.83 (.49–1.41)	.98 (.78–1.23)	1.00 (.82–1.23)
Want to move abroad	.49 (.33–.73)	.54 (.45–.65)	.80 (.68–.95)
<i>Explained variance</i>			
Nagelkerke: .274			

Coefficients are odds ratios, 95% confidence intervals

a) North America is contrast

b) Capital region is contrast

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