

# Research Proposal

Campbell MacPherson  
Laidlaw Foundation  
University of St Andrews

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*‘How do Scottish expatriates and diasporic populations negotiate their Scottish and non-Scottish identities overseas, and in what ways does their Scottish identity shape their experience living abroad?’*

## Introduction

“There’s 20 million people across the United States who perhaps aren’t officially Scottish, but wannabe Scottish. Has there ever been a greater compliment ever paid to any nation?”<sup>1</sup>

The present research aims to explore the national identity of Scottish expats and the Scottish diaspora, and how this identity impacts their lives outside of Scotland and the UK. Despite the population of Scotland being around 5.4 million, the Scottish diaspora is estimated to be somewhere between 40-80 million people.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, in the past 5 years alone, around 110,000 Scots have migrated out of the UK.<sup>3</sup> With such an extensive presence of Scots worldwide, this research aims to uncover the commonalities and differences of their experiences in different regions of the world, and the advantages and disadvantages that being Scottish has for individuals overseas. Key themes to be explored by this research include identity negotiation, identity practice, language and accent, the Scottish brand, international perceptions of Scots and Scotland, and the relationship between the Scottish diaspora and Scottish expat communities.

## Research Design and Methodology

This research will mostly deploy qualitative methods of study, using interviews and surveys to gather information. The majority of the research will consist of interviewing Scottish expats about their experiences and identity overseas, and will aim to cover a diversity of backgrounds, currently locations of residence, connections to Scotland, and overall duration of time away from the UK. A set list of questions will be asked of each

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1. Former First Minister of Scotland Alex Salmond, “A Good Global Citizen,” (speech, New York, 2014), *Open Democracy*, <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/opendemocracyuk/good-global-citizen-alex-salmonds-speech-on-scotlands-role-in-world/>.

2. Director-General Constitution and External Affairs, *Scottish connections (diaspora) work: literature review*. ISBN: 9781802017946, Edinburgh, Scotland: The Scottish Government, 2021, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/literature-review-scottish-governments-scottish-connections-diaspora-work/#page-top>.

3. National Records of Scotland, *In, out and net migration between Scottish administrative areas and overseas, by sex, 2001-02 to most recent* (25th June 2022), distributed by NRS Scotland, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/statistics-and-data/statistics/statistics-by-theme/migration/migration-statistics/migration-flows/migration-between-scotland-and-overseas>.

participant to keep some consistency across my research but there will also be some more fluid questions which will change throughout the research in response to any interesting data trends. A survey will also be circulated among individuals of the Scottish diaspora which will ask questions about their experience and identity to be used comparatively against the results of the interviews. Scottish expat community groups on Facebook will be my main target for recruitment, but British embassies, Scottish Business Network Ambassadors, and Scottish expat blog writers will be contacted as well. Experts on the Scottish diaspora will be consulted during my data analysis stage towards the end of my research, and secondary literature will be used to supplement my research findings.

## **Expected Results and Research Implications**

No hypothesis can be confidently stated about this research because of its broad scope and the flexible nature of the research which is intended to hone in on interesting trends as they appear. However, some topics and themes which are expected to arise include: how expat Scots interact with 'affinity' Scots and non-expat descendant Scots, the challenges of Scottish accents in both English and non-English speaking countries, and the significance of emerging online platforms (like Facebook) for connecting expat Scots to others like themselves at a national and international level.

This research could potentially be implemented in two ways. First, some of the challenges which Scottish expats face could be addressed using online means; for example, setting up online community groups for the purpose of helping Scots integrate into new communities if there is no existing local expat community group to provide that assistance. Secondly, there could be benefits for Scottish tourism (which constitutes 5% of Scottish GDP)<sup>4</sup> by attracting the Scottish diaspora to come to Scotland through better understanding their perception of Scotland and connection to their Scottish roots.

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4. "Tourism and events," Minister for Culture, Europe and International Development and Minister with special responsibility for Refugees from Ukraine, Scottish Government, accessed 11<sup>th</sup> July 2022, <https://www.gov.scot/policies/tourism-and-events/#:~:text=Spending%20by%20tourists%20in%20Scotland,5%25%20of%20total%20Scottish%20GDP.>