

An outline map of the Faroe Islands is positioned diagonally across the background of the page. The map is white with black outlines, set against a background of horizontal rainbow-colored stripes (pink, yellow, green, blue, purple).

Being the ‘Other’ from the Faroe Islands

Case Study:

An LGBT Føroyar Perspective

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Abstract

In this project the question; how does the notion of 'otherness' influence the homosexual identity management of individuals from the Faroe Islands, is examined with a social constructionist perspective. The theory of heteronormativity and its consequences are discussed and applied to the Faroe Islands. Also, the idea of 'otherness' in the context of the dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality is discussed as well as ways in which homosexual identities can be managed through heteronormativity and 'otherness'. In order to explore this problem a focus group was conducted. The analysis address issues such as, religion on the Faroe Islands, internal struggles, and being alone as the 'other'. Rather than a theoretical conclusion, a description of the findings is presented. Throughout the analysis it becomes clear that the three theories presented are interconnected and each theory is able to give a picture into what life is like for homosexuals growing up on the Faroe Islands. Furthermore, this project can easily be used as groundwork for further study. This project as well as the transcript could be used to further examine the gender roles on the Faroe Islands and how LGBT individuals are affected by them. It could also be a platform to further examine the political and social movements on the islands.

Abstrakt

In diesem Projekt wird die Frage ,Wie beeinflusst die Auffassung von ,Andersheit‘ die Bewältigung der homosexuellen Identität Individuen von den Färöer Inseln‘, durch eine sozialkonstruktivistische Perspektive untersucht. Die Theorie von Heteronormativität und dessen Konsequenzen werden auf die Färöer Inseln angewandt und diskutiert. Auch die Idee der ,Andersheit‘ – im Kontext der Dichotomie zwischen Heterosexualität und Homosexualität – wird diskutiert, genauso wie die Art und Weise in denen homosexuelle Identität durch Heteronormativität und ,Andersheit‘ bewältigt werden kann. Um dieses Problem zu untersuchen, wurde eine Fokus Gruppe durchgeführt. Die Analyse spricht Aspekte wie Religion auf den Färöer Inseln, innere Konflikte und allein sein als der ,Andere‘ an. Statt einer theoretischen Konklusion wird eine Beschreibung der Untersuchungsergebnisse präsentiert. Im Laufe der Analyse wurde deutlich, dass die drei vorgestellten Theorien miteinander verbunden sind und jede Theorie dazu in der Lage ist, das Leben von Homosexuellen, die auf den Färöer Inseln aufgewachsen sind, zu verbildlichen. Außerdem kann dieses Projekt auch als Grundlage für weitere Studien fungieren. Das Werk, wie auch die Transkription, könnten für weitere Untersuchungen über die Rollenverteilung auf den Färöer Inseln und dessen Effekte auf LGBT Individuen genutzt werden. Es könnte überdies als eine Plattform für weitere Untersuchungen über die politischen und sozialen Bewegungen auf den Inseln sein.

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1. Introduction

In this chapter the field of study and the aims of the project are introduced. In the first section 1.1 the research problem is formulated and presented along with the main research question and sub questions. This is followed by a section 1.2, which describes the motivation of the group for conducting the project work. Additionally, the delimitations of the research project are specified in the latter section of this chapter (1.3).

1.1. Field of Study and Problem Formulation

Sexuality is an ambiguous concept with various domains. However, one's sexual identity usually falls within the existing social categories of sexual orientations; such as heterosexuality and homosexuality. (Savin-Williams 2011) Heterosexuals are the majority in society and thus have placed all other sexual orientations into the inferior category of '*the others*' (Dibyendu 2013). A dichotomy has been created specifically between heterosexuality and homosexuality as right – wrong and natural – unnatural (Staszak 2008, Rosenfeld 2009). Heterosexuality as the dominate group in society has created what is called a heteronormative society, where everything is dictated by the fact that not only is heterosexuality '*the norm*' but is also the ideal (Dreyer 2007).

There are continuous power relations between social categories, as the majority group of heterosexuals aim for 'social control' and oppresses the minority group of homosexuals (Dreyer 2007). These two contrasting groups of sexualities are '*based on binary logic*', so is the notion of '*otherness*' and *identity* (Staszak 2008, Dibyendu 2013). As the majority of society negotiates their identities through the mode of heterosexual development, 'the others', who are sexually oriented in a different way, are forced to develop their own path through identity formation in a heteronormative society. Discrimination had led to homosexuals feeling the need to 'hide' their sexuality and stay 'in a closet' meaning they do not reveal their sexual identity to others. Therefore, their sexual identity formation might include portraying socially prescribed heteronormative identities. For example, being able to '*pass*' as the norm in the majority of heterosexuals. (Rosenfeld 2009, Page & Peacock 2013)

The phenomenon of homosexual ‘others’ not completely fitting into the heteronormative society can be investigated in various contexts around the world and the rights of ‘the others’ have been under public discussion for the past decades. However, it is a fairly new discussion in the small island country of the Faroe Islands.

The Faroe Islands consist of 18 small islands, which are situated in the middle of the North Atlantic Ocean between Iceland, Norway and Scotland. Though the Faroe Islands belong to the Kingdom of Denmark, they have home rule which means they dictate their own laws and regulations. (Gaini 2011) In contrast with Denmark, one of these laws is that the Faroe Islands do not allow for homosexuals to marry. With the population of less than 50,000 people, the Faroe Islands are a rather closed community where “everyone knows everyone”. This, in addition to the lack of homosexual rights, could allow someone to assume that living on the Faroe Islands as a homosexual individual can be complicated. The anti-discrimination law paragraph 226b was brought into force in 2006¹ (LGBT Føroyar 2013a) which allowed public debate and discussion on the topic of homosexual rights. Since then, people have had more courage to “come out” and reveal their non-heterosexuality to others.

Despite this change, homosexuals still do not *fit* into the heteronormative society of the Faroe Islands, which leads to the question; how have homosexuals on the Faroe Islands faced this society and how has it influenced their own perceptions about themselves in relation to identity formation. In order to complete the problem formulation and study this complex and sensitive topic, the research question is formulated as follows:

How does the notion of ‘otherness’ influence the homosexual identity management of individuals in the heteronormative context of the Faroe Islands?

In order to answer the main research question, the phenomenon will be examined through a case study using LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) Føroyar community member’s narratives. All of the informants are currently open about their homosexuality. Moreover, the following sub-questions are acknowledged to tackle the research topic:

¹ The anti-discrimination law, paragraph 226 b, makes it a hate crime to discriminate against someone simply because of his or her sexual orientation (LGBT Føroyar 2013a).

- *What is heteronormativity and how is it relevant in the case of Faroe Islands?*
- *What is 'Otherness' in the context of the dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality and how do the members of LGBT Føroyar experience this?*
- *In which ways can homosexual identity be managed?*

The aim of the project is to investigate and gain understanding about how is it to be a homosexual on the Faroe Islands, and furthermore to examine the possible internal and external encounters in identity formation. The community of LGBT Føroyar was founded in 2011, which indicates that the topic of the study is relevant as well as explorative. The data is collected by using the focus group method within the field of qualitative research. The purpose is to give examples of the participants' lives as homosexuals on the Faroe Islands, not to create a general theory. This is done by highlighting specific quotations from the participants' narratives for further analysis and discussion in order to answer research question.

1.2. Motivation

The motivation for conducting the project work is derived from the personal interests of the researchers; interests in general issues of identity, specifically sexual identity and how individuals are able to manage their different and sometimes contrasting identities.

The interest to look especially into LGBT issues on the Faroe Islands is due to the fact that the community of LGBT Føroyar is relatively new, since it was founded in 2011, and thus such issues on the Faroe Islands have not been researched extensively. This fact, that the topic of the project work has not been under closer academic examination before is a significant factor for motivation, as this project could work as ground work study for further research projects. Also, one of the group member's conducting this project work has a personal connection to the Faroe Islands as she is married to a Faroese man and had lived on the Faroe Islands for few years. This can be seen as an advantage when researching such a topic as one of the group member's had previous knowledge about the topic when starting the research.

1.3. Delimitations

The goal for this research project is to study the personal experiences of LGBT Føroyar members. The term LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) refers to other sexual orientations other than homosexuality. Because all the participants who volunteered for this study all identify as homosexual means the perspective of the study focuses only on homosexuals – gay women and men.

Due to time and monetary factors the data of the research is not collected on the Faroe Islands. The choice to interview members of the LGBT Føroyar community in Copenhagen is alone a decision of practical matters. Even though all the participants are currently living in Copenhagen, the project does not touch issues regarding LGBT issues in Denmark, or the relationship between Denmark and the Faroe Islands, nor about the aspect of migration.

The description of recent LGBT movements in the Faroe Islands is relevant in a sense that it illuminates the significance of the study. The political changes in the Faroe Islands concerning gay-rights only focus as a basis for this discussion, not as a central point. Albeit it is important to stress that the project does not focus on politics as such nor there will not deeper focus on LGBT rights and movements. These aspects are relevant for understanding where the participants come from and why this project is relevant. The same concerns the aspect of religion. It plays an important part in the Faroese society and is therefore essential to point out in this paper, though the study will not go any deeper in the issues concerning religion.

The quotations presented in the analysis represent ‘snap-shots’ of the participants’ lives in the Faroe Islands as the ‘other’, from the times before being open about their homosexuality and after. The aim is not to analyze all the collected data as a whole to produce a general theory of how homosexuals’ identity is formatted as a process in the Faroe Islands. Furthermore, as all the participants are open about their sexuality, this study does not look into those individuals’ perspectives that are denying their homosexuality or are hiding it from the society.

2. Methodology

The chapter begins defining the theoretical perspective of the project within social sciences. Afterwards, the section 2.2 introduces and describes the research methods used in this research project – focus group interview method within qualitative research techniques. Moreover the process of conducting the focus group and collecting the empirical data as well as the way of analyzing it is explained in a step by step manner in the section 2.2.2. The last section 2.3 of this chapter shortly goes through the report chapter by chapter and presents the structure of the report.

2.1. Social Science Theory - Social Constructionism

The idea behind the methodology in this project work is to first draw a rough framework of topics and theories of interests (i.e. sexual identity, categorization and notions of “otherness”), which are further used to design a guide line for the empirical work and data collection. During the process of data analysis, the final focus and perspectives for the research are formulated. In order to support and complement the empirical study and the overall project work, specific theories will be chosen and interpreted in order to complete the analysis and finally to answer the research question. Therefore, the problem formulation is reformulated during the process of conducting the research.

Assumptions of this research project are derived from social constructionist perspectives of the world and this perspective is reflected throughout the paper. Social constructionists view the world as many realities, rather than only one reality; for instance one reality for females and one for males that can be studied and observed. For social constructionists these realities are constructed via social interaction and interchanges. Social constructionism views the human body as a frame for culture to attach the fabric of meaning and social intercourse. From this perspective, the structure and shape of one’s identity is molded through interaction with individual selves and others. (Page & Peacock 2013)

Gergen (1985) presents the assumptions of the social constructionist view as follows: a) instead of only one true reality, there are multiple realities in existence which can be understood in numerous ways; b) social interactions differ in accordance to place and time which effects the way one understands the reality; c) stereotypical conceptualization of reality

can be persistent due to practicality rather than empirical validity; d) the way one constructs one's reality may have an effect on how someone else constructs their own reality.

2.2. Qualitative Research – Case Study and a Focus Group

In order to find an answer to the main research question, the research problem will be examined through a case study. Olsen and Pedersen (2005: 282) define a case study as “*a methodology that involves analyzing a research problem by a way of a practical example*”. The chosen case study for this research project is individuals from the LGBT Føroyar organization. The reasons for using a case study in order to conduct this research related to the fact that the LGBT Føroyar community functions as a social community for non-heterosexuals on the Faroe Islands. This is in connected to the finding of informants and further for the actual data collection. The case study is presented in greater detail in chapter 3 ‘Case Study – LGBT Føroyar’.

The method for conducting the study is a qualitative research technique. The qualitative technique searches answers to the questions like ‘how’ and ‘what kind’ to describe and explain the investigated phenomenon, especially when the phenomena is unique and complex. The decision to use this method is based on the explorative nature of the research topic and the fact that the consciousness of LGBT representatives on the Faroe Islands is a relatively new and ambiguous phenomenon. In order to gain authentic insight into Faroese LGBT member's identities, an open minded way to approach the object is applied within qualitative research techniques. This refers to open ended questioning and giving the ability for the study participants to speak about the issues which are most relevant for them. Another argument for choosing qualitative method over the alternative quantitative research technique is the sensitivity and complexity of the field of study, which is something that one cannot study or measure based on statistics. (Silverman 2006)

In terms of the exploratory nature of the research, as stated above, the data collection is conducted by using the focus group method within qualitative research techniques. The focus group is one of the major group interview methods within qualitative research and it is used as a primary source of data collection, combined with secondary data; literature about the Faroe Islands and LGBT Føroyar.

2.2.1. Focus Group Interview as a Method

One of the arguments in favor of using the focus group method with this research is based on the assumption that since the participants are openly part of the LGBT community, they will also be open about their sexual orientation and willing to talk about it. As Liemputtong and Ezzy (2005) argue; focus groups are suitable for research which involve ‘sensitive’ populations and examine ‘sensitive’ issues, due to the fact people may feel more relaxed to talk when they are discussing with others who have similar backgrounds and experiences. For this research project, a group of Faroese LGBT Føroyar community members are brought together to discuss their sexual identity and their experiences as the ‘other’ on the Faroe Islands. The objective is to make the participants feel comfortable and secure in order to discuss their personal issues and thus stimulate participants to analyze their own points of view more intensely in contrast to other participants. Further, this enhances the richness of the data (Liemputtong & Ezzy 2005). It is essential to stress that in the focus group, the primary interaction should be between the participants, and the role of the researchers, moderators is to control the discussion so that it stays within the certain frames of the topic of study. (Liemputtong & Ezzy 2005)

On the contrary, one could argue that such a flexible and open minded approach towards the study object can be criticized for lack of structure in the research (Silverman 2006) and participant’s point of views might be influenced by other participants. The presented arguments are also taken under consideration within this project, but as in real life, people are influenced and influencing others (Litosseliti 2003). Therefore the aim is to create a relaxed and informal environment for the focus group and let the participants to discuss the issues around the research topic, which are essential to them, and get an insight into the community of LGBT Føroyar. Therefore, it is important to build trust among the participants and the researchers (moderator) and keep the communication as open as possible (Morgan 1993).

Traditionally, in focus group interviewing, a group of people are gathered together to discuss a particular topic or issue, which is guided by a moderator. A moderator interviews the participants or aims to get them to talk among themselves about the particular topic of the study; therefore the purpose of the moderator is to function as an instrument in a focus group. It is ideal that the participants share the same goals as the researchers in order to produce useful information. (Morgan 1993) For the moderator it is essential not only know the topic of the study but also understand the culture of the participants as well as the overall community

being researched (Litosseliti 2003). The moderator should be prepared and attentive. In order to fulfill this position, the moderator should aim to create an open and permissive atmosphere that the participants feel free to share their points of view, and a personal connection or involvement towards the research topic is seen as a positive factor. (Morgan 1993)

Typically, the amount of participants usually varies between six and ten (Liemputtong & Ezzy 2005). Whereas in mini focus groups the number of participants is between four and six. This gives more room for all the participants to talk about complex, more controversial and emotional topics (Litosseliti 2003), such as sexual identity.

The focus group will be arranged in the Greater Copenhagen Area, in Denmark, and focus groups participants will consist of Faroese LGBT Føroyar members who are currently living in Copenhagen. The other option of going to the Faroe Islands and conducting the empirical work there was set aside due to the limited time frame for the project and due to monetary restrictions.

2.2.2. Focus Group as a Process

Finding the participants

At the beginning of the research project, informants needed to be found in order to be able to collect the data by organizing a focus group interview. The requirements for the prospective participants were that they needed to be non-heterosexuals and currently part of LGBT Føroyar community. It was also desirable that they would live in Copenhagen, since it was not possible for the group conducting this research to travel to Faroe Islands and do the focus group interview there. For a start the LGBT Føroyar community was contacted by email to inquire for prospective participants for the research. The email was written in English to address that the study would also be conducted in English, and in the email the topic and the purpose of the research project were shortly described as well as the method of the study was mentioned. As a respond to the email inquiry, Facebook contact information of six members of LGBT Føroyar was received. All of them were currently living in Copenhagen and had agreed to participate to the research. Afterwards the participants were contacted by private message through Facebook and added to a “secret group” (a group on Facebook, which only its members can see) which was created by the researchers to gather all the participants together. The group also worked as a tool to communicate and inform the participants of the

research about the place and time of the focus group meeting. All the participants gave their permission to be added to the Facebook group beforehand.

Arranging time and place

The first idea was to organize the focus group in the Faroese House in the center of Copenhagen. Due to its central location and the fact that the research participants are Faroese, it would have been the most ideal place. Because the cost of renting the room from the Faroese House was too high and after searching for an alternative place, eventually the focus group took place in one of the researchers' apartment in Høje Taastrup on one Saturday afternoon in November.

The time for the focus group was organized by using a program called 'Doodle', where participants could mark on the calendar the times when they would be available to participate. In this calendar, the participants were given 10 different time suggestions within a week to choose from. Based on the Doodle inquiry, the specific time with the most possible attendants was chosen at the end. After the place and time were decided, the participants were invited to the focus group interview through the created Facebook-group.

Preparations

Before the actual focus group took place, there were several things to plan and organize in order for the data gathering to be successful. Although the purpose of the focus group was to let the participants discuss the issues around the topic, which they would find the most essential, a short list of questions was prepared to work as a structure for the focus group interview (see 11.2 Appendix). Moreover, the questions were prepared in case the participants would run out of things to say and thus they could be used to start a new discussion. The questions were designed with regards to avoid possible bias and manipulation. This refers to being cautious of leading participants and encouraging them to respond in a certain way in accordance to the presented questions. (Litosseliti 2003)

The focus group discussion was decided to audio and video record. The decision to use both recording methods was because they would supplement each other while transcribing the data if necessary. From the video it could be seen who is speaking in case one's voice could not be

recognized from the audio record, and the other way around; if the speech cannot be heard clearly from the video, the audio tape is more accurate. The devices for the data documentation – camera and a voice recorder - were borrowed from Roskilde University.

Based on the knowledge of one of the group member's that Faroese people like to get together in the evenings to talk and have some cakes and coffee or tea, the aim for the focus group is also to try to create a similar atmosphere. Therefore, cakes and cookies were baked for the focus group meeting, which were served with some other snacks, tea, coffee and other beverages. This was essential in a sense that the intention was to create an atmosphere close to those Faroese evening-get-togethers. The aim was to make the participants feel welcome, relaxed and safe in a sense that they are aware that they are not being judged and that the discussion is confidential. Thus the servings would function as a compensation for the participants who joined the focus group.

Gathering the data - Focus group takes place

The focus group took place in one late Saturday afternoon in November. Four out of six who were invited arrived to the apartment in Høje Taastrup.

As all the group members of this study project were present at the actual focus group, there were three moderators; one main moderator guiding the discussion and the two others were following the conversation and asking supplementary questions when necessary. The member of the group, who was chosen to perform as a main moderator, is around the same age as the participants, has also lived in Faroe Islands and she is married to a Faroese, so she has an understanding of Faroese culture. In addition, the moderator is aware of the LGBT issues in Faroe Islands. Based on this, could be stated that the moderator shares relatively similar background as the participants and this fact might make them feel more comfortable to talk.

The recording devices were set to record, when the participants and the moderators went to sit around a table to start the official part of the focus group. At the beginning of the conversation two of the participants, who had strong personalities, were mostly talking. It is one of the challenges of using a focus group method, that some of the participants with strong personalities dominate the conversation and may therefore cause 'false' consensus (Litosseliti 2003). After all in the focus group session, this encouraged the other two to speak about their experiences after a short amount of time.

Overall the participants got along with each other really well and they did not seem to be ashamed about their sexual identity as they were all homosexual and shared the same background and language, what they used few times for some small talk with each other. The idea in a focus group is that the participants stimulate other participants to analyze their own thoughts and bring up memories and feelings. One of the participants said the following, which could conclude that this aim was achieved:

F2: "It's weird because before when I talked about like my experiences it seemed like there was nothing there, like everything was just smooth sailing, but then listening to their stories it brings back a lot of things" (Transcript page 11)

According to Morgan (1993: 82) *"focus groups should be conducted in the native language of the participants"*. In a case where the focus group is not held in the native language of the participants, problems and difficulties within interaction may arise (Morgan 1993: 82). In this study, focus group was conducted in English, not in Faroese, which is the native language of the participants. This is done due to the fact that none of the researchers of this project knows Faroese language. The process of recruiting the participants for the focus group was done in English; therefore the assumption was that the English skills of participants are sufficient. During the focus group the usage of English did not seem a problem; all the participants were fluent in English. Only a couple of times one was looking for a word in English and received help from other participants, they were complementing each other.

Going through the data

Due to time limitations for conducting the project, the aim is not to produce an analysis of the whole focus group session. The body gestures in the video, nor the speech tones would not be analyzed. Therefore after collecting the data, the documented material needed to be transformed into a written text. The recordings were divided equally into three parts to be transcribed among the group members.

When the transcribing process was done, although all the material was turned into written words, the method to analyze the transcript was neither to analyze it as a whole nor to do it word-by-word. This was due to the large amount of data as the focus group interview lasted 3 hours. Therefore, the analysis process was divided into two parts; first a preparatory analysis of the whole transcript to select quotations for further analysis. In a second phase, the selected

quotations were analyzed in greater detail by examining them through the theories presented in this paper.

The process of preparatory analysis meant reading through the whole transcript numerous times in order to find the most essential and interesting parts to be analyzed in greater detail and presented in the research report. This stage of the analysis was crucial in a sense that it determined the final focus and perspective of the research project. After several discussion sessions with the research group, the quotations for further, more detailed analysis were chosen to be used in the research. These parts of the participants' narratives were chosen, because they were key topics of the focus group discussion and demonstrated everyday life of an LGBT individual in the Faroe Islands. The quotations and the analysis of them are in the chapter 6 'Analysis'.

2.2.3. Limitations of the method

Although the method of the research is well planned and conducted, there are certain limitations, which have to be taken under consideration (Litosseliti 2003).

The collected data consisted three hours of recorded material transcribed into written words. This large amount of data caused difficulty for analysis and interpretation of it (Litosseliti 2003). Due to the limited amount of time it is not possible to analyze all the collected data and not even all parts of the transcript that are interesting. It was a matter of choice during the process of analysis, because many quotations from the transcript could have been selected to report and further analyze in order to answers to the research question. As the research project follows the social constructionist perspective, instead of one true reality – only one true answer to the research question; there are multiple realities in existence which can be understood in numerous ways (Gergen 1985). Different choices during the analysis would have made a different project. The chosen quotations of the participants' narratives presented in the report are analyzed by using the theories from the theoretical framework of this project report.

The collected data represents the personal experiences and opinions of the participants of this research. Therefore it is rather difficult to make generalizations according to the findings (Litosseliti 2003). As mentioned before the purpose of this study is not to produce a general theory of the homosexual lives on the Faroe Islands. Instead the findings of this research

present ‘snapshots’ of homosexual ‘otherness’ on the Faroe Islands give a directions to a broader perspective of the topic and foundation for further research.

2.3. The Structure of the Project Report

The report beings by introducing and defining the research problem and its background, as well as presenting the method for conducting this research project: chapters 1 and 2 (‘Introduction’ and ‘Methodology’), the following chapters 3; ‘Case Study - LGBT Føroyar’; 4; ‘Otherness and Heteronormativity; 5; Sexual Identity Management are the theoretical framework of this research paper.

Parts of the collected data; quotations from the transcript, will be presented along with the theory. The purpose is not to analyze the quotations in the theory chapters as such, but they are used to support the theories as practical demonstrations. Especially in chapter 3, which introduces the case study is a combination of collected secondary data; literature and data from electronic sources about Faroe Islands and LGBT Føroyar, and primary data; the quotations from the participants’ narratives. The quotations are used to give better illustrations and enrich the content of the research report.

As stated above, chapter 3 presents the case study of this project work; LGBT Føroyar. The chapter begins with introducing the participants of the focus group, whose narratives will be used in the data analysis, along with the introduction of the LGBT Føroyar community. This is followed by a discussion of Faroese Society, and a short history of LGBT rights on the Faroe Islands. This chapter of the project report is fundamental in a sense that it gives an impression of the LGBT issues on the Faroe Islands, and the foundation for the arguments and the relevancy of the study. In chapter 4 of the theoretical framework, the concept of heteronormativity is defined and its consequences as well as the concept of homonormativity will be discussed. Afterwards, the notion of ‘Otherness’ in the context of the dichotomy of heterosexuality and homosexuality is explained as well as the notion of ‘passing’ is introduced. Chapter 5 focuses on theories of sexual identity and discusses its formation in the context of homosexuality. Furthermore, the theory of ‘Strategic Outness’ in introduced, which focuses on ways one can manage homosexual identity.

Chapter 6 presents the analysis of the research. In this chapter, the chosen quotations from the participants narratives are analyzed in greater detail by using the theories presented in the

previous chapters; theories of heteronormativity, ‘otherness’, notion of ‘passing’ and sexual identity formation and management. This chapter is divided into three sections of different themes; religion, internal struggles and alone as the homosexual ‘other’. The main points are concluded in a small summary at the end of each section. In the following chapter 7, the key findings of the analysis are highlighted and discussed in relation to the sub-questions presented in the problem formulation. Finally, chapter 8 concludes the research report by presenting the main conclusions of the research. Furthermore, the purpose of this chapter is to answer to the main research question.

3. Case Study – LGBT Føroyar

To better understand the participants of the research project, it is important to know about their background and where they come from. This chapter begins by introducing the participants of the focus group and the organization of LGBT Føroyar, which connects the participants as they are all involved with the organization. The following section 3.2 describes where the participants come from – the Faroese Society. In order to give an impression of the prevalence and significance of the study topic, a short history of LGBT rights on the Faroe Islands is presented in section 3.3.

3.1. The Participants and LGBT Føroyar

Personal information of the participants, such as age, sexual orientation and hometown in the Faroe Islands, was collected with a very short questionnaire, which they were asked to fill in at the beginning of the focus group session (see Appendix 11.1). The participants of the research consisted of four individuals; two women and two men between the ages of 21 and 27. Throughout the report, quotations from the transcript will be presented and the reference to the participants is done as follows: shortenings F1 and F2 represent the two female participants, and M1 and M2 refer to the two male participants. Participants' names are not used because of privacy matters. These shortenings are also used in the transcript (see Appendix 11.3).

The participants were born and raised on the Faroe Islands and are now currently living in Copenhagen. They moved to Copenhagen for either study or work related reasons. The time they have been living in Copenhagen varied from a few months to almost ten years. Each participant is openly gay or lesbian and has the support of their parents. The participants were open and willing to talk about sensitive subjects and share very personal stories and emotions. Two of the participants (F1 and M1) grew up in the same small village and were able to express their shared experiences. One participant is from the capital, Tórshavn and the other from the second largest town of Klaksvík.

The participants are associated with LGBT Føroyar. In 2011 LGBT Føroyar an organization for the betterment for homosexual, bisexual and transgender people was founded in the Faroe Islands. LGBT Føroyar was founded as a platform to bring 'others' - LGBT people – together as a way to show them that they are not alone. Further on, the community has organized

marketing campaigns with the intent to show a positive light on Faroese LGBT peoples, which has further created change and awareness around the Faroe Islands. As said, all of the participants of this study are involved with LGBT Føroyar in some way, as they are members of it, except some of them have been a part of campaigns where their face and a quote of theirs is circulated around Facebook. Each participant feels that it is important to be involved and to show support for the cause. When discussing why they were involved and why they think LGBT Føroyar is important M2 said:

M2: “when we founded the organization we also, we also just wanted a common ground to each other. Like the LGBT people on the Faroe Islands. We wanted a social stand point. Where you could meet other LGBTs of the Faroe Islands. So people who had experienced the same stuff that you had experienced and people could relate to the stuff you had been through and I think that was quite important as well. But also because as soon as people could relate to each other you could see that you were not just fighting alone. So it created a kind of unity I guess. And all of a sudden you were not the four people who originally founded the organization, you were a lot of people.” (Transcript page 18)

3.2. Faroese Society

F1: “...it’s so easy to pick up a stranger (on the Faroe Islands), you can tell immediately if I recognize this person or not. If not, he’s probably not from here (laughing all together) and that’s true, everybody knows everybody...” (Transcript page 2)

The Faroe Islands are a small archipelago of 18 islands in the North Atlantic Ocean. This isolated island country is the home of the Faroese people. Faroese are descendants of Vikings from West of Norway who settled on the Faroe Islands in the early 9th century. (Gaini 2011) They have their own language, Faroese. *“The Faroese have a strong cultural identity with the language in its inner circle”* (Gaini 2011: 8). There are autonomous village communities along the coastlines which were mainly full of sheep farmers, (the number of sheep outnumber the number of people) until the 19th century brought on the very prosperous fishing industry. It is the fishing industry which thrives today which has turned the Faroe Islands into a modern society, with all the technologies of their Scandinavian neighbors. Modernization to the islands has come relatively quickly and because of this there is a strong sense of the traditional in Faroese Culture. (Gaini 2011) A good example of this would be the continuation of their traditional ways of hunting, such as the *grindadráp* (whale hunt), bird catching and

raising of sheep. It is in this way that Faroese culture can be easily seen, in the exotic sense of the word. Modern Faroese culture is more complicated and difficult to define. (Gaini, 2011)

“Faroe Islanders have not been presented as free “individuals” in modern connotations of the word but as parts of a corporate family and village groups, organized by traditional values and principles that are considered to be a part of the cultural adaptation to the given natural setting” (Gaini 2011: 134)

There are stereotypes of what it is like on the Faroe Islands, especially for Faroese men. *“In Danish media presentations, for instance, rural man is a comical archetype of a Faroese man leading a simple life amongst sheep and birds”* (Gaini 2011: 178). This stereotype comes from an exotic picture of Faroese culture and has been the dominate image used when describing the Faroe Islands. This view of Faroese culture is limited and will not give the full picture of life on the Faroe Islands. (LGBT Føroyar 2012)

The impact of Christianity

“Faroese society is relatively egalitarian, lacking elaborate class structures that reproduce distinct and rivaling cultural identities. As such, metaphorically speaking and to certain extent literally, it is like a peaceful family that gives its members wide liberties within the kin code and Christian religious ethics “(Gaini, 2011: 137)

The Faroe Islands is a Christian nation where three quarters of the population are members of the National Lutheran Church while the other quarter is a member of one of the several free-churches (Gaini 2011). The quote above gives an image of Faroese society as being that of a 'peaceful family', that allows their members quite a bit of freedom, but only within a Christian religious frame. This is where homosexuals fall out of the acceptable behavior. It is the traditional Christian teaching that says homosexual acts are a sin which conflict with the Christian religious frame Faroese society adheres to. While this may be true and reflected in the Faroese law it is important to note that not all Faroese are devoutly religious. Many of those belonging to the National Church are seen as having a 'passive' role in the church. *“The Faroese often split into binary poles regarding belief: on the one hand there are the so-called “believers” who belong to a myriad of evangelical free-churches; on the other hand there are the 'non-believers: who are modern “passive” members of the National Church.”* (Gaini 2011: 8) This fact was evident when the participants discussed their religious backgrounds;

they did not grow up in a religious family but have experienced religion through the Faroese society, as the following quotations are illustrating:

M1: “...it was kind of a paradox because none of my family are really religious or they don’t, they are okay people, it was just society in general...” (Transcript page 6)

M2: “...but the biggest struggle was definitely not external but internal because I was very religious, not because my family was religious at all, I was a part of very religious environment...” (Transcript page 9)

F1: “well my dad had an issue with it, all of a sudden he, like he has never really been like a Christian, like he has never really been interested in religion. Then when I came out he was it more or less caused my parents to divorce because all of a sudden my dad was claiming that, 'oh it was bad', and he said the bible said I was going to burn in hell and “my daughter's not gay, I could not have fathered a gay child.” I can't do that, I can't handle that. And everyone around him was just like, “where the fuck did that come from? You have had nothing to do with the bible you have not gone to church. You have never shown any sign of being a practicing religious person, and your daughter comes out and, that’s what you say?” I mean, everybody in my entire family was like, “you are such an asshole” I couldn't talk to him, I just could not, so we didn't talk for like over a year, but my entire family was just like telling it to his face, “that is a shitty attitude, you need to stop that,” so, we talk again, so it's fine, cause it turns out, I don't know, he was just really messed up in the head in a different way, but you know, we are good now.” (Transcript page 15)

It is interesting to note the difference between the Faroe Island and Denmark. While Denmark has had a large influence on the islands for hundreds of years, the extent of this influence has been reduced greatly. In fact the Faroe Islands has made a large effort in order to separate themselves from Denmark. Since 1856 when the Danish monopoly on the Faroe Islands was abolished to 1948 when the Faroe Islands gained home-rule the Faroese people have defined themselves as different then Denmark. “*In the 1880s the Faroese national movement, with the landowner and politician J. Patursson as leading figure, started its national "awakening" project that mobilized Faroese People to defend their culture and language against Danish "imperialism"*” (Gaini 2011, 8). Since then the Faroe Islands have taken over all aspects of government and church. It was this nationalism which kept the Faroe Islands unique from

Denmark. A participant described his different experiences when he moved to Denmark. He compares Danish religious people to those he grew up around, Faroese religious people.

M1: When I moved to Denmark and I met some religious people and I told them I was gay and they were really accepting I was like, “wow” what is going on? No one on the Faroe Islands had said anything towards me so I was kinda confused because the image that I knew of religious people from the Faroe Islands were conservatives, strict, judging. And then I came here [to Copenhagen] and they're drinking and going out partying and they're accepting who I am, and they want to know what I do, If I have boyfriend or, I don't know. I think, “wow, you really wanna know that?” Which is something I have never experienced from the Faroese religious people, because they are just being so nice, I mean, I'm not saying they are judging me, I'm saying that they have not even brought it up, they don't say anything about being gay. (Transcript page 13)

Encountering Intolerance

The previous presentation of Faroese society and the illustration of how Christian religion has a huge influence on it could create an assumption that Faroese people are intolerant of LGBT individuals. It is true that on the Faroe Islands there is no legal recognition of same-sex couples, they are not allowed to marry or adopt. This is in stark contrast to their Scandinavian neighbors, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Denmark who all now has a non-gender specific policy with it comes to marriage and adoption. (LGBT Føroyar 2013b)

One aspect of Faroese society is the view that Faroese people feel uncomfortable discussing difficult and controversial topics. This would describe why Faroese people have a difficult time talking about LGBT issues and never seem to 'bring it up'. *“In the Faroe Islands, it is often said there are so few people that they have has to learn the art of living together without provocation, avoiding controversial topics. Each and everyone lives his life his own way”* (Pon 2011: 86). Pon (2011) goes on by arguing that the recent years on the Faroe Islands must be taken under consideration as there has been a growth in the 'secular portion' of society and the religious majority has had to learn to deal with this (Pon 2011). The 266b law is a good example of this.

However, a recent study conducted on the Faroe Islands put these assumptions of intolerance into question. Mariah Schug (LGBT Føroyar 2013b) did a study on the Faroe Islands in order to figure out what Faroese people really felt and thought about allowing same-sex marriage to

be legal on the Faroe Islands. She wrote how she conducted her research and what her findings were in an article written for the community of LGBT Føroyar:

“Additionally, most of the respondents in my survey did not believe that same-sex marriage is damaging to society. Finally, the majority of the participants disagreed with the idea that homosexuality is impure, ungodly, or against nature. In light of the fact that some religious leaders have expressed concern over the morality of homosexuality, it is important to recognize that, however vocal these leaders are, they do not accurately represent the majority of Faroese opinions.” (LGBT Føroyar 2013b)

These findings show that perhaps the Faroe Islanders are not as intolerant towards LGBT individuals as was previously thought when discussing typical stereotypes of the Faroe Islands. Schug (LGBT Føroyar 2013b) also continues in her article that it is her belief that there is a momentum of change happening on the Faroe Islands. She says that those who are opposed to same-sex marriage have more likely not been in close contact with a LGBT individual, and that as more people are exposed to diversity than their opinions of the matter will change. This brings us to the history of LGBT issues on the Faroe Islands.

3.3. History of LGBT Rights on the Faroe Islands

Homosexuality is not an unknown issue on the Faroe Islands. The oldest mention of homosexuality in any Faroese literature is from an old ballad called *Ánániasartáttur*. Thought to be written around the year 1700 it describes a “love act” between two men. Homosexual acts between two men are illegal on the Faroe Islands, as well as in Denmark from 1887 until 1933 when law changes and homosexual acts are no longer a crime. There is no mention of women in this law. After 1933 there is not much attention on any gay or lesbian issues until 1988. In 1988 the Faroe Islands proposes to change the discrimination section of the criminal code, making it illegal to discriminate against someone based on their sexual identity, this proposal is called paragraph 266b. This proposal failed miserably, 17 votes against and only 1 for. (LGBT Føroyar 2013a)

There was an historic moment for gay and lesbian rights when in 1989 Denmark becomes the first country in the world where you can register same sex partnership. The law is not put into effect on the Faroe Islands and many homosexuals choose to live and “marry” in Denmark.

It was not until 2005 that the Faroese parliament votes again for paragraph 266b to try and add homosexuality to the discrimination laws, it again fails: 20 vote against and 12 in favor. A year later in 2006 a Faroese homosexual man is attacked which was covered heavily by the media and in this same year there is an international signature collection in order to change the discrimination law on the Faroe Islands. Between 25,000 and 30,000 signatures were collected from around the world. Now, for the third time the law is brought to the parliament for a vote, but this time they brought together politicians, a priest, a pastor and amnesty international to bring the proposal to the parliament. This time it passes; 17 votes for and 15 votes against. This law, paragraph 266b, is passed 20 years after Denmark passed its own similar law. It is this moment in Faroese history which our participants mention as an important turning point for LGBT people. (LGBT Føroyar 2013a) The vote brought about a new openness where LGBT people could come out and the issue of their rights could be discussed in public. (LGBT Føroyar 2013a)

M2: "...people became more accepting especially after the, that anti-discrimination debate in 2006. People became more aware of it and all of a sudden this tremendous change came around, people were more excepting and more embracing and loving and understanding most of all." (Transcript page 9)

After the Breaking Point in 2006

After the anti-discrimination law was brought into force in 2006, it can be seen as a breaking point for open and deliberate debates of homosexual issues. Since then, a gay pride movement can be observed as LGBT issues can be seen as "blooming" on the Faroe Islands, in a sense that after 266b was being debated in 2006, a lot of LGBT people were encouraged to 'come out' publicly and it was not forbidden to talk about anymore. As such, the phenomenon is relatively new in Faroese society, and the participants have very strong feelings about making sure they 'put their face out there' for the Faroese people to see. When discussing about the effects of 226b in the focus group, F1 said the following;

F1: "...and then people started talking more, and people actually got the courage to come out, and all of a sudden there wasn't just that one guy who was gay, there were a lot of people who were gay and they were all across the age spectrum, they were young, they were old..." (Transcript page 9)

She describes a snow ball effect which occurred after 2006, the more people who 'came out' on the Faroe Islands encouraged and gave others strength to 'come out' as well. This was even

furthered when LGBT Føroyar was founded in 2011. They immediately began by 'getting their faces out there'. They collected pictures of LGBT Faroese and spread their faces, especially through internet mediums such as Facebook.

Additionally, the following quote illustrates the time before 2006 in contrast to current time in 2013. F1 tells an example about how this change after the anti-discrimination law has made a difference in the younger generation:

F1: “(...) it is changed so much that my baby sister, who is six years younger than me (...) They have been living together in the same village we are from for years and nobody has a problem with it, like my sister works at the fish factory and her girlfriend (...) works at the cafeteria at the airport, you know, they share a car, they have pets, they rent a house, and that's completely normal. So I had to, I felt like, I had to leave to be able to be gay. The way I wanted to. My sister, now after the whole debate, after the change of tone, my sister has felt that she doesn't have to leave. She can be happy where she is. So that's an interesting change I think. It's just to say that things can happen, there is evolution, people talk about it now and it's okay.” (Transcript page 7)

This quote about F1's younger sister is used to show a contrast, to show how different it was when F1 grew up to when her baby sister grew up, only 6 years later. After the 2006 change more and more individuals began to 'come out' as homosexuals. A young gay individual would no longer need to feel as if they were alone in their 'otherness'. This would create a sense of freedom. This same freedom is what F1 felt when she left the Faroe Islands. It gives you the freedom to develop an identity as an 'other', not on your own, but with the help of others.

4. The ‘Norm’ and the ‘Other’

The concept of ‘otherness’ cannot be established without the concept of ‘normativity’; which in this particular case is heteronormativity. This chapter begins with defining the concept of heteronormativity followed by the discussion of the consequences of it as well as the issue of homonormativity in section 4.1. Afterwards in the section 4.2 the notion of ‘otherness’ in the dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality is described. Additionally, the notion of ‘passing’ will be introduced, since it is a relevant concept while discussing these two categories of sexuality.

4.1. Defining Heteronormativity

“It is no accident that compulsory heterosexuality works powerfully in the most casual modes of conversation. One asks: “Do you have a boyfriend? (to a girl), or one asks: “Do you have a girlfriend” (to a boy). Queer subjects feel the tiredness of making corrections and departures;...No matter how ‘out’ you may be, how (un)comfortably queer you may feel, those moments of interpellation get repeated over time, and can be experienced as a bodily injury...”
(Ahmed 2004: 147)

Sara Ahmed in her book *'Cultural Politics of Emotion'* gives an example of heteronormativity at work in “the most casual” of situations. Heteronormativity is defined by Oesterreich as “*the idea that society and political economy presuppose the consistent pairing of women and men*” (Oesterreich cited in Dreyer 2007: 6). Heteronormativity is all around which makes it difficult to ‘see’ unless one does not ‘fit’ comfortably in the heteronormative world. Those who do not ‘fit’ are constantly reminded of their discomfort the above quote being a perfect example of this. M1 describes this very encounter and how it makes him uncomfortable:

“I also think it's, sometimes when I am with a boy of a girl, for example if I am with a girl people will ask “oh, is she your girlfriend?” and then there is this internal struggle, well should I say “no because I am gay” or just say “no”. Because first of all it is none of their business what I am, but second of all, if they assume that, and if they keep asking should I say something or shouldn't I say something?” (Transcript page 24)

It is this assumption that everyone that is encountered is straight that is a product of heteronormativity. Heteronormativity is ingrained into every aspect of society, from religion to schools to places of work. It is also ingrained into culture, such as: art, movies, music,

books and television. It is understandable that popular culture would cater to the majority of the population, which is heterosexual, but at the same time it is important to understand the consequences of heteronormativity to those individuals who do not 'fit' in. Heteronormativity created heteronormative binaries between the homosexual and the heterosexual such as; abnormal and normal, secrecy and disclosure, and private and public. (Rosenfeld 2009)

Consequences of Heteronormativity – Homophobia

Yolanda Dreyer (2007) in her paper, *'Hegemony and the internalization of homophobia caused by heteronormativity'* identifies two main consequences of heteronormativity. The first being hegemony, and the second internalized homophobia. She finds that, *“blind submission to heteronormativity, an outdated social construct, traumatizes those who do not conform to the hetero norm...”* (Dreyer 2007: 1) Internalized homophobia would be when a gay or lesbian individual knowingly or unknowingly picks up on the negative attitudes from society towards homosexuals and then directs homophobic thoughts and actions towards themselves. It is not difficult to understand how this could happen, especially in the context of religion. Dreyer (2007) argues that heteronormativity gives two options: heterosexual marriage or celibacy. She goes on further by stating; *“since this is the stance still taken by most churches, one cannot but conclude that most churches display homophobic attitudes which are harmful to people- not only to sexual minorities, but to all people”* (Dreyer 2007: 14).

This internalized homophobia and very destructive and dangerous and create an internal struggle within a homosexual individual. There is a conflict within the homosexual, on the one hand there is a craving for love, but on the other there is disgust in the way in which you crave that love. This struggle is what often leads homosexuals into suicide. (Dreyer 2007) It is something in which our participants have had to overcome.

Gough (2002 cited in Dreyer 2007) did a study with young men and found that they had four different ways of homophobic speaking: *“tolerance, privacy, difference, and individualism”* (Dreyer 2007: 10-1). The first 'tolerance' is when someone in public speaks of tolerance toward homosexuals but at the same time they will say homophobic statements. Second, 'privacy' is when someone believes that homosexuality is a private matter and should not be out in the open or discussed. Third, 'difference' is when there are clear distinctions in the way something speaks about homosexuals emphasizing the difference between homosexual and heterosexuals. The forth way someone may speak in a homophobic way is called

'individualism'. 'Individualism' means that your sexuality is a personal choice and it is unconnected to the rest of society. (Dreyer 2007)

Dreyer (2007) writes about how Blumenfeld identifies four different kinds of homophobia: personal homophobia: a belief system where one believes homosexuality is immoral, sinful and disgusting. Interpersonal homophobia: labeling, telling jokes and excluding homosexuals from society. Institutional homophobia: churches, government, business and educational discrimination, the example of the preacher preaching that homosexuality is evil and the homosexuals should be excluded. Cultural homophobia: which is expressed in social norms, homosexuals are denied histories and role-models. (Dreyer 2007)

Homonormativity

Heteronormativity has been superimposed on to homosexuals to create what is called homonormativity. Homonormativity is when homosexual lives are following the script of heteronormativity. It is homosexuality molded off the heterosexual family – which is seen as the 'ideal' from the heteronormative perspective. (Ahmed 2004) Homonormativity would mean that the homosexual would need to follow the same 'ideal' which heteronormativity praises. The homosexual should choose a partner, settle down and get married, have children, be involved in the community and blend in as a good citizen. This concept of homonormativity is critiqued by queer theorists because of the belief that homonormativity helps perpetuate heteronormativity in society. (Ahmed 2004)

Ahmed (2004) is also very critical of homonormativity. She describes queer theory as being anti-heteronormative but also anti-normative. Queer theory is against any 'ideal normal'. When discussing gay marriage she says, “*Do these non-married queers become the illegitimate others against which the ideal of marriage is supported?*” (Ahmed 2004: 150) Just as heteronormativity hurts heterosexuals who refuse to marry homonormativity hurts those homosexuals who refuse to marry.

Dada Rosenfeld (2009) writes that it is heterosexual assumptions which allow homosexuals to pass as a heterosexual. A homosexual could fulfill the 'ideal' lifestyle according to heteronormativity and no one would question their sexuality. Rosenfeld calls this postwar homonormativity and claims it is what allowed homosexuals to pass as heterosexuals. It is this homonormativity which created “the closet”. (Rosenfeld 2009)

4.2. The Notion of “Otherness”

In the case of the dichotomy between heterosexuality and homosexuality, heterosexuals are the dominant group, while the homosexuals are the inferior group (Dibyendu 2013). The concept of ‘otherness’ cannot be established without the concept of ‘normativity’. ‘Normativity’ in the case of this research paper refers to heteronormativity presented in the previous section. In general, society exists of two main groups: the norm – which is the dominant group – and the ‘other’ – the inferior, minority group (Staszak 2008). As discussed earlier in this paper, society is heteronormative, where the dominant group, heterosexual ‘norm’, excludes the other group on the basis of their differing sexual orientation and preference (Dreyer 2007). Therefore, homosexuality (and queer identities in general) functions as the ‘other’ in the heteronormative society (Dibyendu 2013). Through the concept of difference and opposition between the ‘other’ and the ‘norm’, the conformation of identity is made possible Muehlenhard (2000) argues:

“Heterosexuality needs homosexuality, to be reassured that it is different. It also needs the illusion of dichotomy between the orientations to maintain the idea of the fence, a fence that has a right (normal, good) and a wrong (abnormal, evil) side to be on, or fall from. To the extent that we collaborate in seeing homosexuality as an opposite polarity (not part of a divine range of human sexuality), we perpetuate this unhealthy, unrealistic, hierarchical dichotomy.” (Hutchins & Kaahumanu 1991 cited in Muehlenhard 2000, 101)

The category of the ‘other’ is based on – often traditional – stereotypes (Muehlenhard 2000). Those stereotypes are used in order to distinguish between different social groups. This way individuals are labelled, which creates a social hierarchy in which the dominant group aims for ‘social control’. (Dreyer 2007) There is a boundary between these groups and the creation of an ‘other’ plays an essential part in keeping this boundary (Dibyendu 2013). There are continuous power relations as the dominant group overpowers the other. This means that the majority group oppresses the minority group due to the fact that they want to keep their power and control (Dreyer 2007). This shows that the notion of ‘otherness’ is very closely related to the concept of power relations. This power concept functions more or less as the basis for social exclusion and inequality based on the notion of ‘otherness’. (Dibyendu 2013, 26)

Staszak (2008) describes the concept of ‘otherness’ as *“the result of a discursive process by which a dominant in-group (“Us”, the Self) constructs one or many dominated out-groups (“Them”, Other) by stigmatizing a difference – real or imagined – presented as a negation of identity and thus a motive for potential discrimination”* (Staszak 2008: 1).

The majority group, heterosexuals, has a large influence on the oppressed and excluded group of homosexuals. This creates a constant tension between the two groups (Dibyendu 2013). Stepping out of the norm is often connected with problems and difficulties of acceptance. Members of the ‘outside’-group are faced with several struggles in society. Because of certain prejudices towards ‘the others’, homosexuals are often confronted with discrimination. This can also lead to physical violence and harassment. (Dreyer 2007) *“Homosexuals are the ‘Others’ precisely because they are subject to the other category and they are unable to prescribe their own norms. For this reason, harassment is everyday reality and pain for many homosexuals”* (Dibyendu 2013: 27). Dreyer (2007) writes that feelings of fear and hate are often the source for this kind of behavior. In order to keep up their dominant power, the majority group creates a negative connotation of the ‘other’. In other words, it means that heterosexuals create negativity towards homosexuals.

Exclusion of the ‘other’ can be on a political level when legal protection is denied, as well as take part on a more private level. The exclusion by other individuals such as a friend or family member can be very harmful (Dreyer 2007). This demonstrates that there are many ways in which ‘the others’ are separated from the ‘norm’ of society. Creating negative associations of the other group is a large part in this process. Since homosexuals are forced to identify themselves as the ‘other’, this can lead to internalized homophobia, as discussed in the previous section on consequences of heteronormativity; *“Internalized homophobia has both a social and an individual facet. It refers to the internalization of the dominant culture’s prohibition and exclusion of homosexuality, as well as to the personal ways in which homosexual individuals try to cope with the interaction against homosexuality”* (Dreyer 2007: 12).

Linkage between ‘otherness’ and identity

The concept of ‘otherness’ is inseparably connected to the formation of one’s identity (Dibyendu 2013). According to Staszak (2008: 2) both, identity and ‘otherness’ are *“based on binary logic”*. This means that there are two contrasting groups that identify with each other by their contrast. The ‘other’ is created in contrast to the ‘self’, which embodies mostly positive aspects (Dibyendu 2013).

Identities are created through positioning within a social context and since identities are not fixed, that means that individuals constantly inscribe themselves – and are inscribed – into specific social categories. By doing so, social groups are created. (Muehlenhard 2000)

Furthermore, social categories are created in binary and dualistic terms in order to point out a difference and classification (Li *et al* 2010). The division of heterosexuality and homosexuality makes this obvious. Muehlenhard (2000) specifically points out that both, homosexuality and heterosexuality are categories that are created in a social context. Li (2010) goes on by explaining that especially in the context of sexuality; homosexuality and heterosexuality are contrary to each other. They function as opponent groups which mark a clear difference in a creation of one’s own identity. It is also a means of separation between individuals. (Dibyendu 2013) This also demonstrates that other people have an influence on one’s own identity. With the help of ‘cultural standards’, the sexual identity is constructed (Page & Peacock 2013).

The Notion of “passing”

Sexual orientation is a social category which is not necessarily obvious. Many homosexuals do not fulfill the stereotypical picture of a gay or lesbian. Therefore, they are not automatically categorized as the ‘other’. They ‘pass’ as heterosexual. It also means that these people are constantly forced to ‘come out’ over and over again in order to show their difference. Alexander (2004) describes the notion of passing as followed:

“Passing regardless of its political implications is a performative act in which cultural members cross borders of identity, both real and imagined.” (Alexander 2004: 397)

Therefore, ‘passing’ is a performative act. This means that identity is created by acting out a certain role in a social context. Individuals perform a certain role in a social context which allows them to be accepted within a different category (Alexander 2004). Passing is connected to the crossing of socially constructed identity boundaries (Alexander 2004). An individual is given membership into a category that she/he does not really belong and the members of this group also accept the performative act of the individual (Alexander 2004). In the context of sexuality this implies that homosexuals pass as heterosexuals or vice versa (Alexander 2004). Alexander points out that trying to pass as heterosexual includes the wish to not be confronted with limitations and struggles one has to face as a homosexual (Alexander 2004).

5. Sexual Identity Management

The chapter begins with explaining the ambiguous concept of sexual identity. Besides, the first section defines the concept of sexual orientation and looks into aspects of gender identity, as it is very intimately intertwined with one's sexuality. The second section (5.2) focuses homosexual identity formation and furthermore points out how 'coming out' is an essential phase at one's identity formation. Afterwards, the theory of 'Strategic Outness' will be presented, which considers 'coming out' more as a continual homosexual identity management than a onetime event.

5.1. Making Sense of Sexual Identity

“Sexual identity is the term an individual assigns to himself or herself based on the most salient sexual aspects of his or her life – such as sexual attractions, fantasies, desires, behaviors, and relationships”. (Savin-Williams 2011: 671)

Sexual identity, as other aspects of identity, is culturally and historically bound and it can be altered over an individual's lifespan or even from day to day. Sexual identity usually falls within the existing social categories of sexual orientations, such as heterosexual, homosexual and bisexual. The term an individual uses to ascribe his or hers' sexual orientation may accurately reflect the totality of one's sexuality. On the contrary, the self-ascribed term may give priority to some domains which overpower others, for instance sexual attractions over sexual behavior, or alternatively an individual may either consciously or unconsciously endeavor to deceive oneself or the others about the true nature of one's sexual identity. (Savin-Williams 2011) Weeks (1995) notes that one's sexual identification is a strange thing as he exemplifies following; *“There are some people who identify as gay and participate in the gay community but do not experience or wish for homosexual activity. And there are homosexually active people who do not identify as gay”* (Weeks 1995: 79).

Sexuality is expressed through emotions, thoughts and behaviors which have an erotic meaning (Page & Peacock 2013) and frequently sexual identity is mistaken or conflated with the concept of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is strongly based on predispositions toward sexual or erotic thoughts, affections, fantasies, affiliations or bonding with members of

the same sex (homosexuality), the opposite sex (heterosexuality), both sexes (bisexuality) or neither (asexuality). (Savin-Williams 2011)

While examining sexuality, the issue of gender cannot be neglected. These concepts are separately constructed, but one intimately influences the other. The erotic emotions, thoughts and behavior which reflect one's sexual identity are thought to coincide with one's gender – physical sex, to be a man or a woman. The generalized understandings about people's behavior in erotic situations are generated from the socialization of these two concepts; sexuality and gender. To exemplify this in other way; as sexuality is expressed, gender imparts different norms and expectations for one's behavior, especially while considering individuals whose sexuality differs from the majority, heterosexuality. (Page & Peacock 2013)

Gender identity has a major role in the development of sexuality as a part of the whole process of adopting a sexual identity. In turn, one's gender identity is influenced by expressions of sexuality. In view of the fact that sexuality and gender are intimately intertwined, individual's particular gender identity consequently has an influence on behavior and the way one is perceived in performing one's espoused gender role. Therefore, the relation between expression of sexuality and the acceptance of the particular sex identity is highly determined by one's espoused gender role. Sexual identity is assessed by the individual and by others according to the society's cultural standard. Hence the standards of appearance and adherence, in terms of beauty, are associated to evaluate women whereas men are usually evaluated in terms of performative abilities. Thus, sexual expression and socialization of men and women are strongly effected by an individual's gender identity. (Page & Peacock 2013)

From a social constructionist perspective sexuality is seen preferably as fluid rather than frozen. Page and Peacock (2013: 643) present sexuality as *“contextual in nature and derives from the gender stratification and socialization that is present in the existing society... with the privileged groups constructing the relevant definition”*. Identities emerge in practice and link individuals to social groups through the combined effects of agency and structure. In the context of homosexuality, the sexual identity is seen as bivalent – sometimes individual manifests as a marginal subject and sometimes as a mainstream heterosexual (Li *et al* 2010)

5.2. Homosexual Identity formation

Generally speaking, identity is always relational in the sense that an individual always defines oneself relative to others and their interactions with others. Essentially, sexual identity is created through relational negotiations in contexts where social actors are responding to different and occasionally temporary contingencies. (Li *et al* 2010) Considering identity creation in the context of the research project, Page and Peacock (2013) argue about homosexual identity formation in the heteronormative contexts as follows:

“Society prescribes a set model of heterosexual development toward a gender and sexual identity. Individuals with gender and sexual identities that do not conform to the prescribed heterosexual identities must essentially develop their own way, that is, they must privately negotiate their path through identity development and identity adoption. However, while negotiating their private reality, they must rely on existing concepts of other” (Page & Peacock 2013: 639)

In spite of the fact that the majority of society negotiates their identities from the mode of heterosexual development, individuals with sexual identities which differ from the mainstream heterosexuality, have to develop their own way. In other words, those individuals are obligated to privately negotiate their own course through identity formation. This might often include portraying heteronormative identities that are socially prescribed in major societies. The contexts change over time in which one explores, defines, interprets, enacts and performs one's sexuality. Sexual identity, and identity formation in general, is a never ending process. The fact that identity is constantly evolving and changing requires a more reflexive and fluid model of identity formation, especially in the case of individuals who are negotiating identities differing from the heteronormative ones. (Page & Peacock 2013)

While considering identity development within the context of homosexuality, the process of identity formation cannot neglect the notion of 'coming out'. The concept of coming out has been casually used within the contemporary field of research, due to the fact that the concept has faced a conceptual inflation. The definition of the concept has been conflicting, since it has accrued multiple meanings, but as the concept is used casually, it is often assumed that researchers and readers have a shared understanding. Additionally, casual usage of coming out allows the researchers and readers to fill in their own thoughts and ideas. (Orne 2011) The casual use of the concept of coming out is also applied with this research project that is, the process in which an individual reveals his homosexuality or 'otherness' to family and friends as well as to the public in general.

In order to try to understand ambiguous sexual identity, social scientists representing a variety of disciplines have developed models of sexual identity formation, and further theoretical interpretations led to see coming out as developmental process of identity formation. (Savin-Williams 2011) Furthermore, theorists such like Erik Erikson and Vivienne Cass have presented theoretical models of identity development seen as a stage or stages among a larger series. The concept of coming out was perceived as - adoption of homosexual identity as a part of a larger framework (Orne 2011); ranging from the stages of beginning, where one recognizes his or her non-heterosexuality to the end point, where one identifies oneself to others as non-heterosexual (Savin-Williams 2011). Additionally, Cass presents coming out as a onetime developmental event, whereas for social constructionists being out is a continual phase as identity development is viewed as more fluid. While stage models of coming out did not serve a conceptual clarity, social constructionists propose a more multidimensional perspective by taking a look into other various domains in relation to sexual identity such as sexual desire, behavior, history, knowledge in specific time and place, emotions and relationships. (Orne 2011, Savin-Williams 2011)

‘Coming Out’ as ‘Strategic Outness’

Jason Orne (2011) tackles the ambiguous concept of coming out by reconsidering it as ‘strategic outness’. In his article, *‘You will always have to “out” yourself’: Reconsidering coming out through strategic outness’*, Orne develops a perspective of strategic outness, which considers “coming out” as identity management more than identity development, more specifically contextual, continual and social management of identity. Orne’s (2011) conceptualization of strategic outness shares a social constructionist view as it defies notions of an end point to the process of coming out, while it emphasizes identity management of both sides of the closet; people who are out, and people who are in.

With strategic outness, Orne (2011) draws attention to the contextuality of coming out, which refers to the type of information and the methods used to control one’s identity. The perspective suggests that homosexual individuals use different strategies, practices and tools on a daily basis to manage who knows and who does not know about their sexual identity, as well as how others will know about it and why. The emphasis is on managing different audiences – social relations – in different ways, such as family, friends and the community. One motivational aspect behind the concept of strategic outness it that the information individuals reveal to others about one’s sexual identity must be controlled in order to avoid

negative consequences. The repercussions might be that the individual might be judged or other people might interact or talk with one differently. This reflects the need to consider contextuality as the consequences are not inherent, but they are observed or expected, based on stereotypes. (Orne 2011)

6. Analysis

In this chapter the analysis of the research is presented as the chosen quotations from the transcript are analyzed in greater detail. The quotations presented in this chapter were selected through the preparatory analysis of the overall transcript. Furthermore, these quotations were chosen due to the fact that they were found to be essential parts of the focus group discussion and presented different aspects of how the participants experienced their homosexual ‘otherness’ on the Faroe Islands, and what kind of internal and external encounters they were facing.

This chapter is divided into three sections by different themes of quotations; Religion and Internal Homophobia (6.1), Internal Struggles (6.2) and Being Alone as the ‘Other’ (6.3). At the beginning of each section, a short explanation of why the particular quotations were chosen to report is presented. Furthermore, the quotations in each section are analyzed by using the theories presented in the previous chapters; theories of heteronormativity (section 4.1), ‘otherness’ and ‘passing’ (section 4.2) as well as sexual identity formation and management (chapter 5).

6.1. Religion and internal homophobia

The specific quotations in this section were chosen, because religion was a key topic throughout the focus group discussion and seemingly had an impact of their identity formation. Thus religion as a factor aggravated their experiences as the ‘other’ internally as well as in the social context. The participants have experienced homophobia in all aspects of their lives, particularly while they were living on the Faroe Islands. When the participants talk about their experience on the Faroe Islands it seems that society and religion become one in the same. This exemplifies how immersed religion and religious doctrine is ingrained in Faroese Society.

According to the participants, this discourse of saying homosexuality is a sin, and it is deserving of an eternal punishment is the message of the church. Despite the history or validity of this claim, it is the main message the Christian society of the Faroe Islands has given the participants. The relationship between heteronormativity and the history of the church in the Faroe Islands is interconnected and at times complicated. The participants blame the church for these views they learned growing up and also blame the church for this internal

homophobia, whether they call it homophobia or not. This internal homophobia seemed, for our participants, to be more prevalent before the 'coming out'. It is important to note that because of this message from religion the participants have formed their identity through this. As described earlier in the Case Study, chapter 3, the Faroe Islands can be described as a religious environment. The following quotations present two participants' similar internal struggles with their relationship with the church and their sexual identity:

M2: "It [homosexuality] was a sin (...) or it should always be changed (...) so I just spent nights and nights praying and hoping to be saved and cured and all that stuff. And I think I tried most of the things that the, the... church was offering. Prayers, and groups and with a pastor, and be baptized and all that stuff. Obviously it didn't help. (Laughing) That was quite probably the most traumatizing thing... the whole religion" (Transcript page 11)

M1: "I grew up in the church so I tried to pray to God, to turn me, and it didn't work, and I prayed to God to die because I didn't want my mother to find out, I would rather be dead and then she would cry over my body rather than cry because I was gay" (Transcript page 14)

The quotations above represent participants' feelings before the full acceptance of their gay identity as they tried to 'cure' themselves from it.

Identifying Heteronormativity

Religion on the Faroe Islands according to the participants has a heteronormative message; that there are only two options for them: heterosexual marriage or celibacy. For our participants both options are undesirable. Heteronormativity, which says that the ideal is for the pairing of man and women, comes into conflict with our participants who find this ideal undesirable. One of the consequences of heteronormativity is homophobia. (Dreyer 2007) Four different kinds of homophobia could be identified in society; personal homophobia, interpersonal homophobia, institutional homophobia, and cultural homophobia (Dreyer 2007). In the quotations above you can identify these different homophobias. When M2 says, "*It was a sin...or it should always be changed*" he is describing the views of the church on the Faroe Islands. This is an example of both personal homophobia and institutional homophobia. It is personal homophobia because it indicates a belief system. He 'believes' that it is a sin, therefore he tries to change. Secondly, it is institutional homophobia because the source of this belief comes from religion, or the church. It is the institution of the church on the Faroe Islands which is telling the participants that they are sinners.

According to Dreyer, a consequence of heteronormativity is internal homophobia (Dreyer 2007). The participants have these beliefs about themselves, that they are sinners. They know they are different, and that difference is unacceptable, therefore they try and change and use the tools of the church to do so. This internal conflict was very traumatic for the participants and has resulted in a lasting 'scar'. When their attempts at 'fixing' themselves through prayer etc. failed there was a feeling of despair. This dangerous conflict is seen strongly in the latter quote. M1 prays for death because nothing he does to cure himself seems to work. This feeling, of needing to be 'fixed' because he is a sinner for being gay, is internal homophobia. This quote is an example of how dangerous internal homophobia can be.

Encountering 'Otherness'

The participants believed that the ideal way to live was that which was dictated by heteronormativity and the Christian religion. On the Faroe Islands the 'norm', the dominate group, was that of the heterosexuals, and more specifically religious heterosexuals. This norm is compared to the participants who did not feel they 'fit' in this dominate group and labeled themselves as 'the others' or the inferior, minority group. (Staszak 2008) This created a dichotomy between the participants and those who fit into the ideal heteronormative church. (Dibyendu 2013) Both M1 and M2's fear of being found out as the 'other' made them want to change from being the 'other' to being accepted into the norm. It was because of this fear of being found out that cause them to try and 'cure' themselves. The churches teaching on homosexuality could be seen as the 'dominant power' using prejudice and discrimination in order to maintain their power as the norm. (Dreyer 2007)

Sexual Identity Management

According to the findings and the quotations presented above, religion evidently had an important impact on the informants' life and religion was a large part of their Faroese Identity. All in all the toughest encounters with the church seemingly were during the time when they find out about their homosexuality and were still 'in the closet' as gay from the society. They clearly did not accept their own sexuality as being gay as they tried to heal themselves from homosexuality and become heterosexual – the norm in the society of Faroe Islands. It makes sense that the participants would have used these tactics of religion to 'cure' themselves. In order to avoid being identified as the 'other' these participants turned to their religious identity. This identity was bound up with their friends and families who were also a part of

this community. The participants had difficulty negotiating their religious identity with their sexuality. They went through a process where they made a decision to choose their sexuality over their religion. This may be because they found that their religious tactics did not in fact work and they were not cured. When they affirmed their sexual orientation they then decided that they could no longer be a part of a community which does not accept them. It is this conflict and negotiation between their religious identity and sexual identity which helped shaped them into who they are today. (Page & Peacock 2013)

Considering M1's quote, death seemed a better option than being homosexual and causing his mother the pain of knowing that her son was gay. M1 was considering the consequences of coming out and predicted the way his mother would react to the news. Since heteronormativity is ingrained into the society and M1 had completely internalized it; he sees homosexuality as negative and attributes this to the church. Furthermore, he is negotiating his identity of being homosexual and thus excludes himself from society and is identifying as the 'other'. Furthermore, M1 continues to explain a shift in his relationship with the religion by saying:

M1: "(...) so I was really like demonizing Christianity or religion because I felt like shit because of it, and then afterwards when I got rid of all of that, that stayed in me (...) I think I have a scar from religious people and every time, (to II) like when you said you went to bible school I immediately go to that stereotype, well (...) very judgmental, or traditional or something like that' I always think that when I hear they are religious. Always, even though it's not true. It is just something I have from my past. So every time that I meet someone who is religious I always wonder, okay, are they going to judge me or are they open minded"
(Transcript page 14)

The quote above exemplifies how the earlier experiences with religion have affected the participant M1 and is still affecting him to this day. In the following quote below, M2 continues about his experiences after trying to heal himself from homosexuality and after coming out and unveiling his sexual identity to others:

M2: "when I came out I lost a bunch of friends who were quite religious, but I also gained others. And um, some of them were very accepting, and some of them were just shoving it under the rug" (Transcript page 14)

In the quotation above, M1 no longer identifies as being religious and has negative attitudes toward those who do. It was this conflict between the teaching of the church and his sexual identity which is why he is no longer religious. M1 felt that there was no room for him as the ‘other’ to ‘fit’ into the heteronormativity of the church.

Identifying Heteronormativity

Considering the quotation, M1 has expectations when he encounters a religious individual. He expects they will be judgmental. This can be seen as an example of heteronormativity in the sense that he assumes not only that the religious person is going to be judgmental but also heterosexual. It does not enter his mind that he may in fact be talking to a religious homosexual.

Encountering ‘Otherness’

The concept of ‘otherness’ cannot be established without the concept of ‘normativity’ and in this specific case, heteronormativity (Staszak 2008). While considering the quotation above from M1, the negative encounters with the church, and the further repercussions of being rejected when coming out, have later forced one to consider religious people as homophobic as they probably would judge one for being a homosexual.

There is still a fear in the participants - they fear being labeled and judged and they equate this fear with religion. This makes them fearful of religious people. They do not want to be taken back to how it was when they were young, the feeling of being the ‘other’ and being helpless to change. As mentioned before in this paper; the consequences are not inherent, but that are either expected or observed as well as they are based on stereotypes (Orne 2011). In this case, the current perceptions towards the church and religious people are based on previous experiences and the participants’ notion that religious people do not accept non-heterosexuals.

Sexual Identity Management

According to the second quotations from M2 he lost a ‘bunch of friends’ when he came out, this can be seen as a non-desirable consequence. This is a concrete example of the possible consequences of being and identifying as the ‘other’. It exemplifies the strong influence that religion can have on people, which can even lead to abandonment of friendship. After his

attempts to cure himself from his sexuality with the tools of religion were unsuccessful, he seemingly accepted himself and made the decision to be true and honest about himself and to others as well. This refers to the ideas of ‘living a lie’, as not being true to yourself of who you are, and the closet metaphor to describe coming out and reveling your homosexuality. Furthermore the metaphor of being ‘in the closet’ can be described as confining, unhappy and dark, in contrast to the outside of it; liberate, happy and bright (Orne 2011) – as one is not ‘living a lie’ anymore and trying to hide among the mainstream of heterosexuals. The bright and more positively seen side of the closet is apparently not always the case.

The idea of strategic outness presented before in this paper, argued that one considers to whom they decide to tell about their homosexuality as a part of their sexual identity management (Orne 2011). Obviously M2 considered those people as friends, to whom he told, and was expecting them to accept him, but the opposite happened and he lost them as friends. On the contrary, after coming out and openly identified as the ‘other’, it seemingly shaped his social relations and thus opened a way to new social relations, as he could identify himself with the other ‘others’.

While considering all the quotations of this section of the analysis; heteronormativity, being the ‘other’ and sexual identity formation are interconnected. First both participants struggled with their identities as religious individuals and as gay individuals. The quotations give you an example of heteronormativity in the teachings of the church, that homosexuality is a sin and heterosexuality is not. This dichotomy between the heteronormative ideal and their own gay identity forced the participants into the category of the ‘other’. This category was uncomfortable to the participants at first and they attempted to ‘cure’ themselves of their ‘otherness’. As the participants did not succeed there was a turning point in their sexual identity formation when they choose to accept their ‘otherness’ instead of fighting it. This experience can be seen as an emotional pain which had a large impact on their future identity management. They separated themselves from their former religious identities because it did not comply with their other identities as gay men. After negotiating homosexual identity in regards to religion, the participants were facing their ‘otherness’ in other types of situations, which also resulted in internal struggles. The next section of the analysis focuses on the self-questionings what the participants have gone through as a part of their homosexual identity management.

6.2. Internal Struggles

The quotations of this section were selected to report because they demonstrate heteronormativity and how it emerges in casual situations. The quotations illustrate what the participants are going through as they do not ‘fit’ into the heteronormative society and how they perceive questions and comments indirectly regarding their sexual identity.. Although, these particular quotations do not specifically represent situations only typical for the case of Faroe Islands, it is because of universal interest which makes it relevant to look into them. These quotations very likely represent homosexual ‘otherness’ what could be witnessed in numerous other circumstances and societies as well.

From a social constructionist perspective homosexual identity development is seen as fluid and ‘coming out’ is essentially a part of a continual phase (Orne 2011; Savin-Williams 2011). One might need to ‘come out’ numerous times through one’s life to different audiences and in different social situation. The contexts of those social situations are always differing, which also impacts the differing ways one perceives and experiences those situations. This section of the analysis focuses on the internal struggles of two participants, M1 and M2, which have been a part of their homosexual identity negotiation. The quotations represent social situations, what the majority of the heteronormative society would consider as casual and ordinary. On the contrary the participants have experienced them differently, since they do not ‘fit’ into the dominant group of heterosexuals.

M1: “I also think it’s, sometimes when I am with a boy or a girl, for example if I am with a girl people will ask “oh, is she your girlfriend?” and then there is this internal struggle, well should I say “no because I am gay” or just say “no”. Because first of all it is none of their business what I am, but second of all, if they assume that, and if they keep asking should I say something or shouldn’t I say something?”(Transcript page 24)

The first quotation illustrates an internal struggle of M1, when he is negotiating with himself whether the particular social situation is appropriate for him to unveil his homosexual identity. Sexuality is a private matter for him as he says “*it is none of their business what I am*” and while he considers just answering “no” to the posed question about a girlfriend. At the same he seemingly has the urge to stay true to himself and point out that he is not attracted to the opposite sex as he considers the alternative way to answer “*no, because I am gay*”.

Identifying Heteronormativity

The quotation is an example of how heteronormativity is ingrained in society and how it emerges in very casual situations (Ahmed 2004). The assumption of heterosexuality is made by the person posing the question to M1; whether the girl with whom he is with is his girlfriend or not. It means that society ‘assumes’ that its members are heterosexual – as men are paired with women and vice versa (Dreyer 2007). In other words, the person posing the question assumes that M1 is straight, which is a typical representation of heteronormativity (Rosenfeld 2009). The quotation above illuminates heteronormativity as its ordinariness in the society; it can be difficult for one to see it, except for those, who differentiate from the mainstream of heterosexuals (Rosenfeld 2009). The posed question reminds M1 about his ‘otherness’ – as being homosexual – and thus the fact that he does not ‘fit’ in the heteronormative world is emphasized. This creates discomfort for M1 while he is forced to consider his ‘otherness’ and how to cope with it.

Sara Ahmed (2004) argued that heterosexuality is overpowering the most casual interactions between individuals, and this can cause non-heterosexuals to feel tired of making corrections as they have to constantly come out. From the latter part of the quotation “...*second of all, if they assume that, and if they keep asking should I say something or shouldn't I say something?*” tiredness of M1 can be sensed while he predicts that the question might be repeated. Hesitation of whether to reveal his sexual identity or not is still present, although he is aware that the others might assume that he is gay when repeating the question.

Encountering ‘Otherness’

Derived from heteronormativity, the binary between heterosexuality and homosexuality is further assessed as normality and abnormality and thus homosexuality is seen as the ‘other’ social category (Rosenfeld 2009). Identity is created and constantly developed by positioning oneself in a social context and by this social categories are constructed (Muehlenhard 2000). To ask a person if the person they are with is their partner is an act of positioning, and thus an attempt to categorize the dialog partner. As homosexuality is the ‘other’ in the heteronormative society M1 is forced to position himself in contrast to the norm – heterosexuality (Dibyendu 2013). The question about a girlfriend might be casual for the person posing it, but for M1 it is uncomfortable because his ‘otherness’ – sexual identity - is constantly present. In this particular context, M1 perceives this question rather as an indirect

way of asking about his sexual orientation and thus forces him to locate himself in a social context – as the norm or the ‘other’. In other words, M1 is in a situation where he is forced to categorize himself; both to hide and integrate to the majority of heterosexuals, or to ‘come out’ as homosexual and identify himself to others as the ‘other’.

Furthermore, M1 is seemingly concerned about how to position himself in the social contexts, because the notion of his ‘otherness’ is also a matter of power relations (Dreyer 2007). As heterosexuality is the majority, and in order to keep up their dominant power, this group more or less socially excludes and creates inequality towards the minority group – homosexuals (Dibyendu 2013). Consequently, M1’s social positioning as the ‘other’ would exclude him from the ‘norm’ and place him under the dominance of the majority group, which might lead to social exclusion to some extent. The heterosexual majority group suppresses and controls the other and they act in order to maintain their dominance (Dreyer 2007). When M1 says: *“...if they assume that [he is homosexual], and if they keep asking should I say something or shouldn’t I say something?”* can be interpreted that the others already suspect that M1 differentiates from the norm. Further, the repetition of the question indicates that they are seeking for confirmation for their suspicion in order to maintain the overpowering position as the majority. While M1 is hesitating in a situation where the others already assume that he is homosexual and repeat the question; he must also consider the role of power in which way he positions himself in a social context.

Identifying as the ‘other’ is often connected with problems of acceptance (Dreyer 2007). Throughout the whole transcript, it is clear that M1 is looking for others to accept him and his sexual identity. The particular quote above mirrors that while M1 hesitates, he considers which answer would make others to accept him. This varies from the other persons present and the context of the particular social situation, what M1 has to take under consideration in order to manage his sexual identity.

Sexual Identity Management

M1, as a homosexual individual, is obligated to negotiate his own path through identity formation in a heteronormative context, where heterosexuality is the majority in society. In the case that he does not want reveal his homosexuality; he is portraying a heteronormative identity, while he positions himself as part of the majority in that particular social context (Page & Peacock 2013). This does not necessarily mean that he wants people to think that he

is hiding his sexuality, referring to his statement; *“first of all it is none of their business what I am”*. Not mentioning or hiding one’s sexuality by answering “no” could mean for the others that M1 is ashamed of himself or it could even refer to internalized homophobia - as discussed earlier in this paper as a consequence of heteronormativity (Dreyer 2007). On the contrary, the other option of an answer; *“no, because I am gay”* signals that he has the urge to stay true to himself – what he really is – and point out that he is not attracted to the opposite sex.

The notion that sexuality is intimately intertwined with gender indicates the way one is expected to perform one’s espoused gender role (Page & Peacock 2013). In the context of the heteronormative society of the Faroe Islands, M1 seemingly is aware of these cultural standards where men are only supposed to pair with women (Page & Peacock 2013). M1’s gender identity forces him to consider how he will be perceived in performing his espoused gender role if he unveils his homosexuality by answering *“no, I’m gay”*. The quotation illustrates an internal struggle as one is negotiating with oneself on how to answer. As identity is seen as relational and individuals define themselves in contrast with others; M1 is negotiating with himself how to identify with others. He could identify as being homosexual or not mention his sexual identity and therefore adjust to the mainstream of heterosexuals; the norm (Li *et al* 2010).

The quotation can be examined from the aspect of ‘strategic outness’ presented before in the theory section 5.2. The used methods as one manages their sexual identity in a social context are continual and one might be obligated to come out numerous times throughout a lifespan (Orne 2011). This leads to the matter of managing different audiences (social relations) in a particular social situation. Managing these audiences depend on who is involved in the situation and who is posing the question to M1 as well as whom does he want to tell about his sexuality and how much does he wants to reveal (Orne 2011). As the quotation illustrates, he hesitates when deciding how to answer as he considers the possible consequences; what is the desired outcome and what is the worst possible consequence? Hesitancy and self-negotiation reflects that the over-powering of sexual identity over other aspects of identity is not desired. In other words, he does not want his sexual identity to be his dominant identity, nor for the others (Orne 2011). M1 does not want to be perceived differently in a social context because of being gay. For this reason the possible consequences has to be considered before ‘coming out’ because afterwards one might be perceived differently and treated differently.

The following quotation is from another participant, M2, and it demonstrates a different type of internal struggle concerning expectations from society:

M2: *“I think did feel that about those moments like kind of the need to raise the stereotypes, hmm especially about, it seemed like it was expected that you would be feminine or flamboyant as a gay man. So the beginning when you were told, when people told you that “oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant” hmmm it felt kind of like a compliment, you were kind of happy at the beginning, oh okay that’s good you know, people don’t think I’m gay, but then I kind of suddenly realized that why is that a compliment hmm (...) why should I not be able to be feminine and flamboyant if I wanted to. Hmmm so at the beginning it was definitely about braking stereotypes and not fitting into the stereotypical gay man.” (Transcript page 10)*

The quotation gives an impression of a change in opinion. M2 receives a comment about his ‘passing’ as straight, because he did not fit into the stereotypes of a gay man. The comment *“oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant”* is first perceived as a compliment. After a re-consideration of the meaning of the comment, he realizes that he should be able to live up to the stereotypes if he wanted to. Although what he says at the end, points to the possibility that he did not want to represent a stereotypical gay man.

Identifying Heteronormativity

As discussed before in section 4.1 of the paper, postwar homonormativity is a heterosexual assumption which allows homosexuals to pass as heterosexuals. In other words, in a heteronormative society, a homosexual could perform the ‘ideal lifestyle’ and not be questioned about their sexuality. (Rosenfeld, 2009) Postwar homonormativity can be conceived from the quotation above; M2 was apparently ‘passing’ as heterosexual till he came out of “the closet” and told people about his sexuality. As M2 was not following the stereotypes of a homosexual as being feminine, his espoused gender identity (of being a man) was signaling that he was part of the majority, the heteronormative society, and therefore his ‘manliness’ supposedly indicated that he was heterosexual. It is typical that heteronormativity assumes everyone is heterosexual (Rosenfeld 2009).

In the encounter which M2 is speaking about in the quote, he was aware of his ‘otherness’ and the fact that he did not actually fit into the major category of heterosexuals. This is first perceived as a compliment when he was told that he could ‘pass’ as straight. As discussed earlier in the paper, Rosenfeld (2009) argued that heteronormativity creates discomfort for those who do not ‘fit’ comfortably in the society, and they are constantly reminded about it. M2 does not seem uncomfortable about the fact that he ‘fits’ in the eyes of others, on the other

hand, it seems to create some discomfort for him when he does not completely fulfill the category of the ‘other’ because he is not a stereotypical feminine and flamboyant gay man.

Encountering ‘Otherness’

The notion of ‘otherness’ is inseparable in connection to one’s identity development (Dibyendu 2013). Due to social encounters, identity is under constant formation, one constantly needs to describe oneself, as well as be described by others into specific social categories. M2 creates his sexual identity through positioning himself in a social context, and by revealing his sexual identity he places himself into the category of the ‘others’. Thus the category of ‘others’ is created through stereotypes. (Muehlenhard 2000)

In the quotation M2 refers to the fact that people get surprised when they ‘find out’ about his homosexuality. When someone says to M2, *“oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant”* it indicates that before coming out, M2 was clearly ‘passing’ as a part of the major category of heterosexuals. He did not fulfill the stereotypes of the ‘other’ – homosexual, by being feminine and flamboyant. Labels and stereotypes of the ‘others’, are seen as a method of social control across social groups (Dreyer 2007). In other words, society creates a certain image of a particular social group based on stereotypes. In this case it is a matter of associations which are connected to behavior and appearances of a homosexual person. Therefore, when M2 did not follow the traditional stereotypes of a gay man, he could not be labeled as the ‘other’ in the society and thus created confusion to the person to whom he revealed his sexual identity.

The comment *“oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant”* was a compliment first for M2 as he says *“hmmm it felt kind of like a compliment, you were kind of happy at the beginning, oh okay that’s good you know, people don’t think I’m gay”*. This could be interpreted in a sense that as M2 was not identified by others as the homosexual ‘other’ he was feeling positive because he would not be facing discrimination from the heterosexual majority. According Dreyer (2007) ‘others’ outside the majority are facing struggles in society and have difficulties being accepted. As M2 was not a stereotypical gay man who could not be identified easily it probably meant that his sexual identity would cause less struggles for him in a social context.

Sexual Identity Management

Homosexual identity can be seen as bivalent as sometimes one manifests the mainstream heterosexuality and sometimes the marginal group of ‘others’ – homosexuals (Li *et al* 2010, 403). The same phenomenon can be recognized as M2 says in the quote, that others could not identify him as homosexual and he was portraying the mainstream group of heterosexuals. During this phase of his sexual identity development he was ‘coming out’ for the first time as a homosexual, and he was relying on the existing concepts of heterosexuals. This leads to the arguments of Page and Peacock (2013, 639) that the group of individuals whose sexual identities do not conform to the heterosexual identities prescribed by the heteronormative society, are forced to negotiate their own path in the identity formation.

The quotation represents the way he explores, interprets, defines and also performs his own sexuality. The process of sexual identity formation is reflexive to social encounters (Page & Peacock 2013). It is evident in the quotation, that M2 switches his opinion about the comment *“oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant”*. M2’s sexual identity reflected this comment and made him to reconsider his sexuality and the way he performs it. This leads to the notion of ‘passing’; as one is included or excluded from a particular social group. ‘Passing’ is seen as a performative act. M2 is creating his sexual identity through acting out a certain role; while he is not performing a stereotypical gay man as being feminine and flamboyant, causes him to ‘pass’ as straight. (Alexander 2004). Moreover, this has connected him to the social group of heterosexuals in the eyes of others, if only the visible and external factors of M2 are taken under consideration. This forces M2 to consider how to position himself in a social context. Further M2’s ‘coming out’ is observed by others and the way he is perceived as homosexual is based on stereotypes (Orne 2011, 693), and by not being feminine and flamboyant, M2 was not immediately positioned into the category of ‘others’.

The quotation represents M2’s sexual identity formation; while he first takes it as a compliment that he is ‘passing’ as heterosexual, he later changes his thoughts to where it is no longer a compliment. It could be sensed, that M2 begins questioning his homosexuality and the way he performs it. Although, M2 does not question his homosexuality in a sense that he is not sure about his sexual orientation, it is more about how he manages his sexual identity as a homosexual and also how others identify him. It could be interpreted that it is not ideal for M2 to be identified according to stereotypes. M2 does not want to be seen as a stereotypical

gay man, and he does not want to be identified as straight either by saying *“Hmm so at the beginning it was definitely about braking stereotypes and not fitting into the stereotypical gay man”*.

Considering the possible consequences of one's 'coming out' the way one manifests his sexuality is an important part of homosexual identity management. One of the consequences one has to consider before revealing homosexual identity to others is the fact of being labelled as “the gay” in the social context. Evidently this was not desirable for the participants as they were living in a close-knit community on the Faroe Islands, where not so many homosexuals are known in the society. The following section of the analysis focuses on this aspect of the participants' narratives; how they did not want to be identified only because of their homosexuality.

6.3. Being alone as the ‘other’

The quotations of this section were selected because they represent Faroese society – as it can be described as an isolated and closed community, where “everyone knows everyone”. In such a context one who does not ‘fit’ in is very likely to stand out from the majority. These quotations are giving an impression about participants' experiences of how it is to be one of the homosexual ‘others’ in a rural environment and what thoughts it had raised and actions it has caused in accordance to their homosexual identity management..

Being identified as homosexual by society can include problems. Members of the social category of the ‘other’ are faced with exclusion and harassment by members of the dominant group. In terms of sexual identity this means that homosexuals are prohibited. Being different automatically refers to being ‘abnormal’. It also means that the individual becomes ‘visible’ in a social context because he/she is not performing according the ‘norm’. (Dibyendu 2013)

M1: “I felt very bad, because, well, I don’t wanna be known as; ‘oh the gay’. And the only person I knew who’s gay at that time before I came out was Ron (name changed) (...) and I was thinking, okay the entire Faroe Islands knows who’s this person and only because he’s gay and I was thinking okay I’m not gonna, I don’t wanna come out and everyone is gonna know who I am and just because I’m gay.” (Transcript page 7)

In the quote above, M1 clearly mentions the fear of being excluded from the ‘norm’. It represents a conflict within the participant. The fear is that if he were to ‘come out’ as gay the others would only see him as “the gay guy”.

Identifying Heteronormativity

The Faroe Islands are a small and isolated community. This means that in terms of sexuality in a heteronormative society, the majority group of society is heterosexual. (Dibyendu 2013) It also includes that there is a negative attitude towards homosexuality as it is the dominated group. By functioning as the opposition, homosexuals are excluded from society. (Li *et al* 2010) This can be seen with the given example of Ron. M1 mentions that Ron was known all over the Faroe Islands just because of his sexual identity. He was excluded from society because he did not fit into what is considered as ‘normal’. He was treated differently. Not belonging to the norm brings struggles and difficulties for the members of this outside-group (Dibyendu 2013). This is the reason why M1 was afraid to come out as ‘abnormal’.

Encountering ‘Otherness’

This fear of exclusion that M1 describes in the quote above is also closely linked to the creation of an ‘other’ (Dibyendu 2013). Due to the heteronormative society that he was brought up in, M1 knows that he will no longer be part of the ‘norm’ once he comes out. Rather, he will be faced with exclusion and the necessity to identify as the ‘other’ (Page & Peacock 2013).

M1 further points out that he does not want to be known and labeled just because of his different sexual identity. This also means that he does not want to be excluded from the ‘norm’ and seen as the ‘other’ which may mean being treated differently or even being faced with harassment and discrimination. (Staszak 2008) Moreover, the quote also shows that there is no real ‘out-group’ on the Faroe Islands. The only other person that is belonging to the category of sexual difference is Ron. Therefore, there is no new group membership in the ‘group’ of the ‘other’. M1 is not able to create a new feeling of belonging. There is only a negative feeling about coming out. This means that the only thing that he is left with is being alone as the ‘other’.

Sexual Identity Management

Clearly, M1 does not want his sexual identity to overpower the way he is perceived in a social context. The negative personal experience about the consequences with coming out shown with the example of Ron, impacts his future strategies in identity management (Orne 2011). Being identified as the 'gay guy', means one is automatically labeled and categorized through negative and traditional stereotypes. These stereotypes are used by the dominant group in order to control the minority and establish their own power. (Dreyer 2007) M1 does not want to be identified as the 'gay guy'. He does not want his 'gayness' to dominate his identity. M1 later says this more clearly:

M1: "So therefore I don't feel I have a gay identity I feel like Faroese. It's an identity: it's a language, it's a culture. Being gay is not a language, not a culture just who you are... So I, I don't... I wouldn't identify as being gay than that would be defining being gay. It's defining who I am. Being Faroese defines slightly who I am more, more than being gay." (Transcript page 33)

When M1 was younger, and before he came out he had a narrow view of what being gay and Faroese was. He only knew of one person on the Faroe Islands who was gay and this individual was in a sense 'famous' just because he was gay.

This quotation gives you further evidence that M1 has a fear of being labeled. If the first quote is also considered, one could say that the first influences the second. The participant does not want to be 'known' as being gay in the sense that his gayness overrides any other part of his identity. M1 is denying that his different sexuality has an impact on the identity creation as pointed out from Staszak (2008: 2) "*Otherness and identity are two inseparable sides of the same coin*". Even though he is not able to deny his membership of being the 'other', he still does not want to be identified as being an 'outsider' by other people. For example when he says; "*I don't feel I have a gay identity, I feel like Faroese*" he wants to make sure the others know that he is Faroese. He is first Faroese, and the fact that he is gay is only one small detail in his identity. Speaking of his identity in this way is an attempt to lessen his differences from the majority group by emphasizing his sameness, not his difference. Again, M1 tries to challenge the creation of categorization in society. As pointed out by Muehlenhard, social beings tend to focus on the differences between socially constructed groups in order to create identity, rather than exaggerate the sameness (Muehlenhard 2000). M1 sees himself as Faroese, not different from his fellow Faroese. This attitude may have come about because of

the lack of gay role models on the Faroe Islands during his childhood. Furthermore another participant, F1 describes this feeling of being not only an 'other', but alone as well.

F1: "I moved to Copenhagen in 2004 because hmm to quote "I was tired of being the only gay in the village"... Ifelt, I felt seriously like the only gay in the village, there was nothing there, there was no one, I didn't know any gay people at all, so if... I was like if I want to meet other gay people, I have, I can't be here" (Transcript page 7)

Identifying Heteronormativity

F1 describes herself being labeled as *'the only gay in the village'*. She was the only person who was openly different from the 'norm'. Due to the heterosexual/homosexual dichotomy, F1 was excluded from society when she positioned herself as being different (Staszak 2008). The heteronormative society categorized her as 'abnormal' and 'wrong' (Li *et al* 2010). Additionally, F1 came out before the anti-discrimination act in 2006. This means that she was faced with even more pressure from society and gained even more attention because of her other sexual identity. F1 was faced with a majority group that transferred all the negativity and discrimination that comes along with the creation of the opponent group on her alone (Dreyer 2007). The fact that she was the only one who was openly homosexual added an extra difficulty for F1. Not only did she have to overcome not fitting into the mold of heteronormativity, she also had to overcome this alone. Therefore, she felt the need to leave the Faroe Islands in order to find a group where she could belong.

Encountering 'Otherness'

By openly coming out as homosexual, F1 inscribed herself in a new social category. As described before, she was excluded from society and alone in the category of the 'other'. This means that she is also now a part of the inferior group in society which is dominated by the heterosexual 'norm'. (Dibyendu 2013) Because of her looks and her performance in a social context, she is unable to 'pass' as straight or 'normal'. She fulfills certain stereotypes which clearly show that she is different. Therefore she is excluded from society and labeled as the 'other'. (Muehlenhard 2000)

The main problem, however, was the aloneness: "...*there was nothing there, there was no one, I didn't know any gay people at all*". Since there was no other obvious homosexual in the

village, F1 felt alone in this category and felt the need to find a place where she is no longer alone as the ‘other’.

Sexual Identity Management

Different from M1, F1 is not questioning the influence that her sexual otherness has on her identity formation (Staszak 2008). Other than having the fear of being excluded, she is complaining about the consequences this has on her. She was completely separated. Since she was the only openly gay person in her village, she had to function for the whole group of ‘others’. The majority group – which was everyone else – demonstrated their power and control on her alone. She was confronted with all the negativity and struggles that the overpowered group is faced with on her own (Dibyendu 2013). People were saying ‘the lesbian’ when refereeing to her.: M1: *“if people were talking about her, they would say “oh the lesbian”* (Transcript page 7). Her sexual identity seemed to be the only identity people categorized her in. The main problem for F1 was not the self-identification, but the way other people identified and labeled her in order to keep ‘social control’ (Dreyer 2007). The only way for her to be a part of a society again was to leave the Faroe Islands and go somewhere where people were more open and accepting, but more importantly be somewhere where she could meet others who were just like her.

7. Findings and Discussion

This chapter summarizes the major findings of the analysis presented in the previous chapter. Also, some of the main aspects from the Case Study (chapter 3) will be brought up in the discussion to support the key findings of the analysis. The purpose is to highlight and discuss the key arguments of the analysis, which further leads to answer the overall research problem.

The Faroe Islands can be seen as a small and isolated community, where people are sharing close relationships in a sense that “everyone knows everyone”. According to the analysis, and the introduction on the society in the Faroe Islands, heteronormativity is evidently present in this particular setting. Rosenfeld (2009) argued that heteronormativity is ingrained into every aspect of society. This is also evident in the case of Faroe Islands; as the analysis showed that heteronormativity is manifested through casual everyday conversations. There are expectations from society for one to fulfill one’s espoused gender role; as men are supposed to pair with women and vice versa. Religion on the Faroe Islands is a major source of heteronormativity, because it has had an effect on peoples’ general assumptions and attitudes towards right and wrong – heterosexuality and homosexuality. As such, it can be seen as a difficult encounter in the participants’ lives, in the sense that even though one would not be religious by him- or herself, one is still surrounded by a religious environment and thus affected by it. The fact that one tried to ‘cure’ oneself from homosexuality by using the tools of religion demonstrates one’s sexual identity negotiation and the power of the church on the Faroe Islands.

Heteronormative society categorizes homosexuality as the social group of ‘others’, as abnormal. In the context of the Faroe Islands, homosexuality has been taboo and unacceptable. The beliefs and attitudes derived from traditions and religion have created a greater gap between these two sexual categories. Because of this the participants could feel their ‘otherness’ being present at all the times; being a sin, being questioned about having a partner of the opposite sex, and being alone as a homosexual without knowing anyone like you.

Sexual identity is fluid as it is constantly reshaped through different social situations as one needs to position oneself and is positioned by others. Therefore, the participants needed to consider the possible consequences of their actions, for instance in what context and to whom they could reveal their homosexuality – to ‘come out’. The context of the social situation and thus the possible consequences needed to be considered, due to the possibility of facing

discrimination and negative attitudes from the overpowering majority group of heterosexuals. When the participants were already aware that their sexuality was differing from the majority of heterosexuals, they used different strategies in managing their homosexual identity. These strategies affected whether or not they could ‘pass’ as straight or as homosexual. Sexual identity is an ambiguous thing, as it is under continuous change. The analysis indicates that in the phase of sexual identity formation, ‘passing’ as straight meant an “easier time” for some of the participants (M1 and M2) in the sense that they would not need to face the negative consequences of their ‘otherness’. This is found when the participants try to ‘cure’ themselves from homosexuality, and consider whether or not to reveal one’s homosexuality. Nevertheless, the participants did not want their homosexual identity to overpower the other aspects of their identity, which in other words means, that they did not want to be directly and purely identified as 'others' because of their sexuality. Although, homosexuality is evidently a significant aspect of identity for them, that the participants were ready to give up their faith and move away from the Faroe Islands, from their home.

Another important finding was the interconnection between the theories used in the project. Throughout the analysis it became clear that heteronormativity, 'otherness' and sexual identity formation were depended on one another. It is heteronormativity which creates a society in which homosexuals are categorized as the 'other'. It is this 'otherness' which homosexuals must negotiate with when forming their sexual identity.

8. Conclusion

The main objective of this project work was to investigate the relativity of heteronormativity on the Faroe Islands and explore how homosexual ‘otherness’ is negotiated as a part of the sexual identity formation in this particular case. The research was conducted through a case study – a closer examination on the community LGBT Føroyar and its member’s narratives. The data was collected by arranging a focus group interview for four members of the community. Furthermore, the recorded material was transcribed into a written text, and first roughly analyzed as a whole in order to select the most interesting and significant quotations for more detailed analysis. The chosen quotations were analyzed through the theories presented in the paper; theories of heteronormativity and ‘otherness’ in the context of heterosexuality and homosexuality, as well as theories of sexual identity and ‘strategic outness’. Moreover, the aim of the study was to gain insight into the lives of homosexual individuals on the Faroe Islands and present them as examples, not as a general theory.

According to the findings, homosexual 'otherness' is present in all aspects of an LGBT Føroyar member’s life; although the ambiguous sexual identity is under constant formation through internal and external encounters in social situations. Undoubtedly, homosexuality is an important and stable aspect of one’s identity. Sexual identity needs to be managed; the way homosexual identity is negotiated and manifested privately as well as to others, and the possible negative consequences need to be taken under consideration. On the Faroe Islands, religion evidently plays a major role as an internal and external influence on the participants. The social expectations of a heteronormative society of pairing only with the opposite sex have highlighted the feelings of not ‘fitting’ in and thus caused pressure and feelings of loneliness, as not many homosexuals were out on the Faroe Islands. It is not desirable for one to be identified and known by others only because of homosexuality. As one does not want to be known solely because of one’s sexual orientation, ‘passing’ in a category of the majority of heterosexuals is seen as beneficial in some phases of homosexual identity formation, as it would lessen difficulties in a social context. At the same time, it is a matter of being true to oneself as the empirical evidences indicates that one has a need to cope with one’s sexual identity in order to reach self-satisfaction and acceptance. It is essential for one to be accepted as homosexual in a social context after one has first accepted oneself. Further, it is important, through sexual identity management, to find a phase where one feels comfortable with one’s own homosexuality – whether on the Faroe Islands or elsewhere.

9. Future perspectives

Criticism of the Research

It is important to be critical of one's own work. In this section there will be examples of ways the research is lacking as well as ways there could be improvement. First, this project was done over the course of a semester. This means there are time constraints which gives the research limitations. The purpose of this research was not to produce a general theory; instead the aim was to give some perspective of LGBT individuals' lives on the Faroe Islands by presenting examples. The fact that there was only one focus group conducted with four participants can be seen as a limiting factor, because it is impossible to determine how it 'really' is on the Faroe Islands for LGBT individuals with such a limited perceptive. In case, there would have been more participants or focus group interviews, the research would have had a broader perspective and thus increase the reliability of the study. Additionally, all the participants were currently living in Copenhagen. In the case that it would have been possible for the researchers to travel to the Faroe Islands and collect the data there, it would have increased the validity of the results. Furthermore, the members of LGBT Føroyar who were informants for this research represent the homosexual 'others' who are open about their sexuality. In other words, this research neglected those homosexual individuals who are still in 'the closet'.

Another limitation encountered was that the richness and the amount of data, which was too large for the given time to conduct the research. The discussion lasted almost three hours which required many hours of transcribing. The data was so large it made it extremely difficult to decide which quotations should be used for the analysis. Also the data was very diverse; there were so many possible topics to analyze it made it difficult to know which were most relevant for the research question.

Another criticism is how the topic of study is difficult to discuss without having to make assumptions about experiences and stereotypes. Stereotypes are so ingrained in our society that it is difficult to keep them from directing the research and analysis. It is also difficult to remain unbiased because the topic of study often brings up strong emotions and opinions on one side or the other.

Ideas for Further Study

Throughout the process of researching theories, doing the focus group and analyzing the data it has been clear that the data collected could be further studied in several ways. Some recommendations for further study are below:

Gender perspective: The data showed a difference between the female participant's experiences and the male participant's experience. This shows it could be beneficial to study the different gender roles on the Faroe Islands and how that has influence LGBT Faroese. More specifically to study Faroese masculinity and how that has shaped the gay men on the Faroe Islands would be an interesting study.

The matter of age: The participants in the focus group were from the ages of 21 to 27. This greatly affected the data collected. The participants were coming into adulthood during the important shift in 2006. This means they have experienced the shift during an important time in their lives. Further study could be made with other age groups. To study the older generation would give a contrast to the younger generation and would allow for comparison. It would also be beneficial to study a younger age group, those who are teenagers. This would give an example of how experiences have changed in the most recent years since the participants in this study came of age.

Political and Social Movements: When analyzing the data it was made clear how important the recent social change, in regard to LGBT issues, on the Faroe Islands has been to the participants. This means it would be beneficial to look deeper into what those changes are, how they have come about, and where they are headed. A person who knows the Faroese language could do a study of newspaper articles and television reports over the last 6 to 7 years and analysis the change which has occurred. It has been clear also during the duration of this project that much has been happening in Faroese politics about LGBT rights right now, which has brought a lot of discussion into a public forum. It is this which would be beneficial to be able to follow in order to be up to date on current discussion.

Denmark vs. Faroe Islands: The participants in the focus group are all born and raised on the Faroe Islands but are now choosing to live in Copenhagen. Further study could be made in this relationship between the Faroe Islands and Denmark and how this relationship has been utilized by LGBT individuals. In the data collected the participants make comparisons between the two countries and this seems to have a big impact on them. It would be possible to look at how this relationship has evolved over time. For example, it may have been more

common for LGBT Faroese individuals to move to Denmark in order to have legal rights and to escape discrimination. You could explore this to see if it is still happening to the extent it did in the past or if the new movements on the Faroe Islands are encouraging LGBT individuals to stay on the Faroe Islands.

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11. Appendix

11.1. Questionnaires for participants

Name: Male 1 (M1)

Age: 25

Sexual Orientation: Gay

Are you planning to move back to the Faroe Islands in the future? I don't know

Name: Female 1 (F1)

Age: 27

Sexual Orientation: Queer

Are you planning to move back to the Faroe Islands in the future? No

Name: Male 2 (M2)

Age: 21

Sexual Orientation: gay

Are you planning to move back to the Faroe Islands in the future? I don't know

Name: Female 2 (F2)

Age: 21

Sexual Orientation: ? Gay, I guess.

Are you planning to move back to the Faroe Islands? I don't know

11.2. Focus Group Questions

- How would you describe a Faroese person? What does it mean to be Faroese?
- Did their sexuality have an effect to the decision to move away from Faroe Islands?
- How would you describe an LGBT person? / How could you describe an LGBT member?
- What was your motivation being involved in LGBT Føroyar?
- How open they could be about their sexuality in Faroe Islands?
- Where were you out on Faroe Islands? (family, work, friends, health care providers)
- What are your thoughts and motivations for moving or not moving back to the Faroe Islands?

11.3. Focus Group Transcript

The focus group began with introductions by the moderators as well as a general explanation of the topics which was about to be discussed. The following transcript is in the order it has been spoken but has been divided into themes.

Female 1	=	F1
Female 2	=	F2
Male 1	=	M1
Male 2	=	M2
Grace	=	I1
Ramona	=	I2
Linda	=	I3

I1: This is a focus group so it should be more of a discussion, not so much group interview. So it's like speaking to each other about your own experiences and your own thoughts. Mmm. And we thought maybe we could first start out umm hah we are focusing a little bit on stereotypes umm but umm what ...

Faroese Society and Stereotypes

I1: What does it mean to be Faroese?

M1: Complicated

I1: Yeah it's complicated, but I thought maybe we could try to hash that out a little bit, like what does it mean to be a Faroese, what is, who is a Faroese person, like what is umm there is also, you know, the extremes, like you know some people are more Faroese, than others. For example, the fisher man, the.. the whale hunter, the bird catcher, the you know. umm. Team worker, you know, those are stereotypes of course and I think that would be interesting to start out the discussion on that.

M2: Umm

I1: Yeah (some laughing)

M1: I think you can talk about to stereotypes, one bad, one good or positive, negative, because my negative stereotype is a fisher man or farmer, someone old, dresses in rubber shoes or (...) jeans and umm a brown shirt, sweat shirt, goes up to the mountain to take care of the sheeps umm very traditional, kind, ... Would be my opinion a negative stereotype, whereas a positive is, I think, Faroese people are very loyal and family oriented, and a (...) generous and warm, which would be the positive side. But again it depends on if you know them or not. Cause Faroese people are very excluded so if you don't know them, they don't very likely to be very warm and open and kind towards you.

F1: I'd say that kind of depends

M1: Yeah?

F1: Because umm my general impression is that a lot of the people I have met have been really open and welcoming even as ... almost especially to strangers, because it's so easy to pick up a stranger, you can tell immediately if I recognize this person or not. If not, he's probably not from here (laughing all together) and that's true, everybody knows everybody, so if you see someone you don't know well it is possible (...) my perception is that a lot of people see that as a positive thing like, they wanna get to know you. Even especially with tourists and strangers, they will sort of, you don't need to you know ask them for anything, because they will approach you and be like 'do you need help' like, do you, can you do something.

M1: That's the minority, I don't think that the majority would go to a stranger and ask him to

F1: Really?

F2: I feel like Faroese people are maybe a little shy, but if they drink a little bit then they are (laughing) ...

really like whaaaa (with the hands) (more laughing)

F1: They are super like, if you approach them in at the right angle, they will be super friendly, they will just give you their shirt off their back or ... it's ridiculous. umm.

M1: Yeah but in general I would not say, if you include alcohol, I mean that's a different subject, but still in general Faroese people are shy to say and a majority would not go to a stranger and ask him hey can I help you or what's are you doing here or something.

F1: hmmm

M1: Very few

F2: I feel like a lot of people are scared to speak English or even Danish, because they feel stupid speaking in other languages, and that's why they are well...

M1: Shy

F2: Yeah

...

F1: I'm mostly using my family as an example, apparently my family is crazy (everyone laughing).

M1: No, but you know other Faroese people, I mean.

F1: But then again I haven't lived there for ten years, I, I... there's a lot of things I don't know anymore.

M1: Or maybe you disagree, but I would say they are shy and intimidated

F1: Oh that's true

F2: But some of them are like whaaa (using hands)

M1: Yeah, but still a minority I mean

F1: Apparently my entire family, my entire family is like that.

F2: uh

M1: I mean I can bring an example, I mean once I was driving with my mother to another town and it was raining and we saw a tourist and I asked my mother should we stop and ask him to join, I mean take him for a ride and she said “no why we don’t know him” (everyone laughing)

F1: What’s funny because...

M1: “I don’t know how to speak English, I mean what are saying to him”.

F1: What’s funny because, my mom would do the exact opposite, my mom, my dad, my grandfather, everyone they would stop and be like “oh a stranger, let’s pick him up and see what he has to say”.

F2: My mom does that too

F1: “I want to talk to someone new”. My grandfather can’t speak English, he can’t speak Danish, but he will god damn try his very best to, he will talk to you at a whatever mixture of everything and you would usually be like ... (makes a face, thumbs up) good. So... I think. You might be right, it could only be the minority.

F2: Also because, (...) I have done a lot of volunteer work with the exchange students, so when I go out, all of the exchange students, people don’t talk to them, they come up to me and like where are they from and stuff. They won’t talk to the foreigners.

M1: In Faroe Islands or Denmark

F2: Yeah Faroe Islands

I1: ...everyone knows everybody. Yeah or at least you know somebody who knows that..

M1: Yeah

M2: Yeah

I1: It seems like when I’m talking with people it’s like everybody is everybody’s cousin.

(Laughing)

I2: What?

I1: It’s so true, like we are walking in a mall and my husband is like “yea that’s my cousin, I think that’s my cousin, I think that’s my cousin, I’m not quite sure”, you know

F1: That’s because they will sometimes not use cousins as exclusively for cousins, but also used for further cousins.

I1: Yeah

F1: Because I have like 15 cousins, but over a hundred third cousins, but I know most of them and I will call them my cousins as well.

I1: Umm. What about umm are there stereotypes for Faroese (...) Faroese men and Faroese women? Like?

(Little laughing)

F1: All Faroese men are fisher men.

F2: I just heard that, that Faroese women are pretty and the men are ugly. A lot of people say that, I don't think it's true. It's just... It seems that a lot of people say that.

M1: But I also, when I was younger, I always thought that Faroese men don't care what they look like, they don't care what they buy, they just put on something and then they go out. And they are very (...) I don't know how to say that in better way (...) I always said that, in my opinion when I was talking about men, I always say, I would say that, no go for Faroese men, because they don't give a shit what they look like (others laughing a bit), aren't thinking about themselves and because most of them I knew, when I was in my village and I wanted to go to the mountain and shoot ducks and find some sheeps or sheep... that was a very stereotypical notion of Faroese men and I saw them like that when I was younger, maybe now I have more broader look at them but still...

F1: But most of the people they grow up with they are like that

M1: Yeah we are from a small village so

F1: Yeah and they just, they just never moved on, like basically I think most of, a lot of Faroese people fall in to two categories. People who think the Faroe Islands are the best place to be, and they would never go anywhere else, and then people who just (...) want to do something else, it's like (uses the hands) ... Almost like an itching to get away, cause you want to do something different, you want to see something different, I mean try something different. And that's like the broad the two like types, the two categories that people fall into; the ones, who will never ever ever leave but then, then the other, or I don't know, or maybe a third will be super adventurous

I1: aha

F1: Because I have been in really weird places, and I have met Faroese people in the most weird circumstances. (Others start to laugh) Cause, cause those who are, those who are adventurous, they will go, they will not worry about anything, they will just go where they want to. (...) But you can always, you can find Faroese people everywhere, it's so weird.

(...)

I1: Umm. Should we just get into this or? (showing the paper to other moderators) Umm. I know you have been away from the Faroe Islands, you go back to the Faroe Islands often or? (referring to **F1**)

F1: Mmmm.

I1: You still have family there?

F1: If I don't go every Christmas, my grandmother will probably strangle me.

I1: Okay so you go every year

F1: Yeah mmm at least once a year, sometimes twice, it depends on if my mom wants to pay my ticket or not. (Others laugh a little) I mean, it's so expensive I can only afford to pay for one ticket myself every year.

I1: Yeah

F1: So

Growing up in the Faroe Islands as LGBT

I1: Umm I guess, I guess we can just get right into, you know, just maybe generally what it was like growing up on the Faroe Islands as an LGBT person and I know that's really, really broad, but mmm just what sort of things come up right away when you think about your childhood or even you know your teenage years or?

(...)

F2:I was so oblivious, I didn't know at all. But, but then afterwards when you find out, and then a lot of things make sense. You know what I mean. So I don't feel like having grown up as a... like LGBT person kind of, but when I found out then it was (...) no big deal

I1: Aha. So there was no, there was, you didn't feel like a conflict in coming out to people on Faroe Islands?

F2: Hmmph not my family, but my friends, yeah some of my friends.

I1: Hmm (nodding)

F2: But then I would rather have the conflict with my friends than my family...

I1: Right

F2: ...if that makes sense

(...)

M1: I... do you wanna start or? (asking **F1**)

F1: No, you go

M1: Hmmm I think for me it was really different, is it... I don't, I can't say that when I knew... I don't know if I blocked that, or I was depressed or something, cause honestly I don't remember when I "found out" (using hands) but hmmm I do remember that growing up, I knew, just how old I was, and I felt this hmm... sadness, cause at Faroe... well, when I was young, people didn't talk about being gay, if they did it was something bad. Something... no one talked about it, so I felt as though no one would love me ones they find out and I was very afraid and... I never rebelled against my family or when I was young cause I was very afraid that I don't wanna cause them any trouble, cause I want them to remember that when I do tell them, they're gonna remember okay I was always nice and sweet, of course sometimes I.. I yelled them or something, I was always tried to be very nice and if they told me to do something, I would do it cause I would want them to remember okay well maybe he's gay but he always did what I told him and he was always nice..

F1: He's a good boy

M1: He's a good boy yeah, that was kind of my mantra when I was growing up going to be a good boy cause I knew I had this thing inside of me that I thought was dirty and so once I found out I okay have to put that one aside and say okay well at least he's a good boy. But... hmm it was kind of a paradox because none of my family are really religious or they don't, they are okay people, it was just society in general, they didn't talk about it so the way I viewed it wa..wa..was that... well it was something bad and no one had to talk about it and in school, when I was in primary school or secondary school, gay was a bad word and people, mostly boys used it as a derogatory term, so if you did something they would call you gay, okay well, "oh uuuh you're such a queer or gay or fag" or something. And every time they said those words it was kinda like a confirmation that being gay is something bad, so for me it was something I had to hide (...) even from my friends for long time, even though I knew that cause... For example, well actually during... in paragraph §266b (saying it in Faroese), do you know what that is?

I1: What was that?

M1: §266b (in Faroese)

I1: Yeah

M1: That's a paragraph during that debate, that was when I came out, but that debate was very violent, even among my friends and my sister, she's the only one who was opposed, she was hmmm quite religious and she went to meetings and she was part of the leadership of the local church and she was the only one who was opposed to the law and the only thing she could say was well "God says it's wrong", so I was very nervous about telling her, and hence her, my family as well. Well, all my friends were very no of course it should be, but still I had this fear that society thinks it's wrong, so I can't tell them. Although when I did, I mean, they were all very supportive and what was strange was that after I told my sister (...) she, I think she turned a darn I mean. She almost never went to Sunday school anymore and after I told her, she was completely supportive and (...) and my family as well. It was just kind of burden I had from society, that I didn't, I couldn't tell anyone. Although none of them were negative, it was just something I heard everywhere else and therefore I couldn't even my... I worked at the local gas station, which had like a burger bar as well, and all the young kids used to come there just to hang out, cause there was nothing else to do, and we had to kind of be disciplinary and told... tell them off every time they did something wrong, I mean it was like a kindergarten, but we had to watch after them and every time they did something and I was called them for doing something, they called me gay or fag or something. So that would make hmm my issues worse. That was just until I came out and I found out that all my family and friends, they didn't, they would, they were very supportive and didn't mind. So I would say that it's more society, than friends in general. And now after §266b (says that in Faroese), I think the society is very much more liberal now and people talk about it and I was noticed that when I was growing up if you just defended someone being gay or you just defended something, like if you saw, you told someone off for you shouldn't tell or say that being gay is bad, they would say "oh please you're gay as well". But now it's perfectly legit to defend someone for being gay or stand if you defend of being gay it must mean you're gay as well.

F1: But that's also interesting though, cause I... I had this, we grow up in a same town (referring to **M1**) we were two, three years apart?

M1: Three

F1: Yeah and...

M1: No

F1: I'm from 86

M1: Okay true

F1: Alright three years apart. And a ... this reaction was slightly similar, but my reaction was fuck society, I will kick it in the fucking groin (laugh) I just got really angry. And be like... You know. I know this is how society works, you see, this slightly oppressive system in society, the way that nobody speaks about it because it's bad, like we have to not talk about it because it's so embarrassing to talk about and this just made me so mad, I wanted to like kick society in crotch and scream it from everywhere I could... and that was, and I moved to Copenhagen, that was around year 2000, yeah maybe like 2002, around, cause I was kind of new and I never really felt it was a big deal cause it wasn't like a big revelation it was sort of, it was there... (...)

M1: Yeah but when did you tell people? Cause I think I would remember that if... if people were talking about her, they would say "oh the lesbian" (others start to laugh)

F1: Yep

M1: ...and that was very, I mean, I felt very bad, because, well, I don't wanna be known as oh the gay. And the only person I knew who's gay at that time before I came out was Mike. (...) And I don't, well he's very fun boy of course, well I don't know, well he's a very fun boy, so maybe it's obvious that people know him and I was thinking, okay the entire Faroe Islands knows who's this person and only because he's gay and I was thinking okay I'm not gonna, I don't wanna come out and everyone is gonna know who I am and just because I'm gay.

F1: But the thing is, they're straight in numbers, because if a lot of people are gay then they can't be like, they cannot point fingers and be like that's the gay one, there and there, oh and there's one there and there, oh shit, you know. But the thing is, the debate has changed so much cause my baby sister is six years younger than I am, and I moved to Copenhagen in 2004 because hmm to quote "I was tired of being the only gay in the village" (...) I felt, I felt seriously like the only gay in the village, there was nothing there, there was no one, I didn't know any gay people at all, so if, I was like if I want to meet other gay people, I have, I can't be here

M1: Don't you think that's very typical for the Faroe Islands?

F1: It is, but the thing is, it is changed so much that my baby sister, who is six years younger than me, well apparently she just broke up with her girlfriend, I found out from him (referring to **M1**)...today. They have been living together in the same village we are from for years and nobody has a problem with it, like my sister works at the fish factory and her girlfriend, ex-girlfriend works at the cafeteria at the airport, you know, they share a car, they have pets, they rent a house, and that's completely normal. So I had to, I felt like, I had to leave to be able to be gay. The way I wanted to. My sister, now after the whole debate, after the change of tone, my sister has felt that she doesn't have to leave, she can be happy where she is. So that's an interesting change I think. It's just to say that things can happen, there is evolution, people talk about it now and it's okay.

I1: Yeah

M1: But I also think it's much easier for lesbians or to be lesbian on the Faroe Islands and to be gay in Faroe Islands

F1: Probably

I2: Why would that be?

M1: hmmm. I think it's because being butch or being manly or wearing pants, never was a problem to Faroe Islands, I mean it was seen as being good or she's like, little girls, they would just "oh it's good, she's manly or she's boyish" I mean. Okay maybe she could be more ladylike, but it was never seen as anything wrong with her, but if a boy who is a very feminine, oh it was terrible

I1: But the men were always gone

M1: What?

I1: Out at sea. If the men were always out at sea. ... if the women had to, you know, take care of everything.

F1: And amuse themselves.

(Laughing)

F2: To what?

F1: Oh I'm sorry I couldn't hide that

M1: I don't think it's because girls, they're very affectionate towards each other in Faroe Islands and it's perfectly normal. So if someone sees two girls holding hands and hugging or something, no one bats an eye but if guy does that ...

M2: I think yes it's definitely about gender roles I think

M1: Hmmm (nodding)

M2: hmm because the woman can be a lot of things and a woman can buy dress and buy jeans and a leather jacket or a suit or whatever. Umm so it's like the spectra of being a woman is way wider (...) than what it's like for men. That's one thing. I mean I (saying a word in Faroese)

F1: hm, branded

M2: ...like you're marked by a way of being a woman or being a lesbian. Mostly for men or women in general tend to be more accepting hmmm than men and it's somehow it's easier for men to except lesbians than it's for men to except other gay men, it seems, umm.

(...)

F1: Yeah because that stereotype is still that there's only one way of being a proper man and if you deviate from that stereotype then you're a faget. I mean, you can't even be, you can't even be like a regular straight male who deviates from that stereotype, it's kinda narrow, but it seems like it's been (...) loosened a bit.

F1: But I can see where you're coming from, I can see where you're coming from, there's a restriction.

M2: Yeah, but my experience growing up, was um... I never felt that I fit in, the way what was I supposed to be or not supposed to be umm and I couldn't relate with the whole things being, or how boys acted when I was a kid, or how male teenagers acted when I was a teenager and so on. Hmmm but the biggest struggle was definitely not external but internal because I was very religious, not because my family was religious at all, I was a part of very religious environment, so my battle was always with... with God and with myself and with a (...) this very metaphysical thing.

(...)

M2: ...Could be. No, no I don't think it was easy, it was very, very rough or very hard, tough. Umm but as **F1** also said, I think that um... in the beginning I always had this... this way of thinking that I would go out then, and be open as soon as I was eighteen or at the possibility I would just leave the country and stay away forever. Hmm I really changed, changed quite dramatically during the last years hmmm when I stayed at the Faroe Islands, I think... there's a movie called Bye Bye Bluebird, I'm not sure if you know it, but I think it's quite, it's good, it's settled up quite beautifully because in this movie the protagonist is... she has the same attitude, she never likes the Faroe Islands, she says that it only for birds they can fly away, so at the end of the movie she realizes that maybe the Faroe Islands are not just for birds that can fly away, maybe it's for humans as well, and I kinda felt I had the same experience, that people became more excepting especially after the, that anti-discrimination debate in 2006. Hmmm people became more aware of it and all of a sudden this tremendous change came around, hmm people were more excepting and more embracing and loving hmmm and understanding most of all. Hmm and I think that change is still going on. (...) Um, the point being when I was younger that was, was quite difficult, and I think that the image has changed now.

I1: Yeah. What do you, what do you attribute to the change, what do you think it's, what's causing the change?

F1: Someone stepped up and opened the debate. And ones people started talking, they started like inventing out things that had, they had never really realized they were able to talk about.

I1: Hmmm (...)

F1: Ones people started talking and debating, everyone sort of got mixed up, everyone started to have, have to, they were slightly forced to form an opinion and so they had to (...) evaluate with themselves, like, what would I do in this situation, what would I do if my son said he was gay, I mean how can I, it kinda slightly, I can sort of see where your sister is coming from, because, I'm just guessing, because I know a lot of people who has said that, from my perspective, how can I support institution that does not support my family, how can I support this institution when ... my twin brother will be shunned... how can I, how can I do that. Umm so that sort of opened up a lot ... and then people started talking more, and people actually got the courage to come out, and all of a sudden there wasn't just that one guy who was gay, there were lot of people who were gay and they were all across the age spectrum, they were young, they were old, they were, you know.

M1: Mostly young.

F1: Mostly young, yes. But, but then you know people were in their thirties and forties also came out.

I1: Yeah, I've heard of, I've heard of stories of men who were married with children

F1: Yeah

I1: and then came out in the last few years

M2: That's true

F1: And that happened and people were like you, like you said, they were strength in numbers, you just can't point that one finger because now you need all your fingers to point at all the gay people because they are everywhere. You didn't know they were there but all of a sudden they came out of nowhere, you were like "hey I'm gay" "oh so am I", "well me too", and then people were really, really surprised that these people that they had known... turned out to be gay and that's caused a lot of people to re-evaluate their opinions.

F2: Yeah what you said about the... (referring to **M1**) always being like the good boy, that's how I felt when I went to school, I felt that I had to be the best and nicest person to everyone, so... so maybe people would say okay she's gay and she's nice, wow, I don't know, I guess that makes sense. So maybe people would change their perspective on gay people.

I1: So, it's almost that you wanted to break the stereotypes, you know, or what do you think the stereotypes that Faroese people have towards gay people, or what was, I mean, you know, this they are bad or it's a sin or whether, are they more...

I3: You feel like labelled somehow?

F2: I would, maybe like sex crazy, I guess, like promiscuous.

I1: Yeah

F2: I guess, like non-monogamous

I1: Yeah

M1: I mean, I think in particular gay men...

F2: Yes, that's true

M1: ...were seen as dis... deviant and the only thing they could think about was sex.

F2: Aha (nodding)

M1: So every time a non-gay person would think of a gay man, they only think like they can think about was well... okay they are having sex in a bed and they're doing it, oh Jesus. While women received slightly less... I don't know... hmmm...

M1: But as I said, I mean people weren't really talking about being gay. I mean, me and my sister both grew up in this church. But after I started figuring out that I probably was gay, I didn't wanna be there anymore, I left and she stayed. And the only thing, I mean, you could hear if someone was talking about being gay, It was either okay, they are having sex in the ass, that was one or, well the Bible says it's wrong and they should be dead.

(...)

I1: Yeah

M2: But hmmm, I think did feel that about those moments like kind of the need to raise the stereotypes, hmm especially about, it seemed like it was expected that you would be feminine

or flamboyant as a gay man. So the beginning when you were told, when people told you that “oh but I wasn’t expecting you to be gay because you are not flamboyant” hmmm it felt kind of like a compliment, you were kind of happy at the beginning, oh okay that’s good you know, people don’t think I’m gay, but then I kind of suddenly realized that why is that a compliment hmm (...) why should I not be able to be feminine and flamboyant if I wanted to. Hmmm so at the beginning it was definitely about braking stereotypes and not fitting into the stereotypical gay man. Hmm (...) that I felt was kind of the image yeah currently on the Faroe Islands, but the role kinda shifted.

(...)

F2: It’s weird because before when I talked about like my experiences it seemed like there was nothing there, like everything was just smooth sailing, but then listening to their stories it brings back a lot of things, it’s really weird...

M1: Do you think that you suppressed many things?

F2: Probably, I think... or maybe it wasn’t that dramatic or... yeah the whole religious thing, I, yeah that was...

M2: I think in that environment it was very, it was quite, it was very over experienced, but violently, the whole thing when you were not supposed to be gay or not supposed to... or first of all because it was a sin, it couldn’t be... or it should always be changed.. And you could always pray away the gay and all that kind of stuff. And so I think hmmm it can become a brain washing thing, where young teenagers who were gay, including myself, were told that you’re burned or ... forever if you didn’t turn (starts laughing). And a... so I just spent nights and nights praying and hoping to be saved and cured and all that stuff. And I think I tried most of the things that the, the... church was offering. Prayers, and groups and with a pastor, and be baptized and all that stuff. Obviously it didn’t help. (Laughing) That was quite probably the most traumatizing thing ...the whole religion

F2: I also remember all of that, the whole, like gay people are gonna burn, but my mom was... pretty open minded, I remember I was gonna go out with them to the church and she said “no, sit down”, and she made me read this article about how gay is not wrong, and she said “you have to read this before you go out.” So then I was really conflicted, because on one side I felt like the whole villagers think but still I was like no, no it’s not wrong, but I still felt like it was wrong for me, like I was not against other people being gay, but I couldn’t... do it myself, kind of, I don’t know if it makes sense...

Religion on the Faroe Islands and Denmark

F1: My experience with religion is mostly, I mean, I didn’t go to a church per se, but a hmm you do you call it,

M1: It is church (saying a Faroese word)

F1: Yeah, well it’s not technically a church, it’s like a, it’s like a ...

M1: But you call it church anyway

Speech overlapping

F1: It's not, it's not like a church, church... (Speech overlapping) But it's a religious sort of community, and... You know, but the thing was when we were growing up, there was nothing to do, so if you wanted something to do in the winter, when you couldn't play soccer, you had, that the only thing...

F1: what was happening was prayer meetings in the youth house, so you would go there because that was the only social thing you could do. um...(laugh) and um, which is kinda sad...so I went there because all my friends were there, we got to sing songs and you know hang and out and play board games and stuff like that. And sometimes there as a pray meeting but you know, you went to sing songs and play games and that was kinda that. But, some of the people there were like, already when I was 14, they were really extreme. And I could see that from a very early age that they were quite not right in the head at all (laugh) when I went there it was the year 2000 and yo-yos were the big things, so everyone had a yo-yo and they were playing with the yo-yos. And some of the leaders in that, oh my god they wanted to burn all of the yo-yos. They had this intervention meeting where, one day when we were there and we were planning to just have a regular, sing songs, and the said, no no no, we have gathered here to, because yo-yos are from the devil and you all have to give me your yo-yo and then we had to actually give them our yo-yos and they actually pilled them all outside and lit them on fire. And I was just like, wow, what is wrong. And then the next month we were going to have to bring all out CD.s And we are going to check if they are approved, and when they started to yeah, I could see why they wanted to burn my CDs, because they weren't all Christian, but when they wanted to burn my yo-yo I was like you guys are fucking nuts. I mean if you want to burn yo-yos, what the fuck...I never felt I was wrong or anything...but then I think I was 14, and I thought, I can't trust these people. If they are so fucked up that they want to burns yo-yos because they think yo-yos are evil, what can they not do to me when they find out that I'm gay? I can't be here, I take this seriously, I need to get the fuck away from here.

I1: have you had any experience with religious people who are accepting?

F2: accepting?

I1: yeah, on the Faroe Islands

F2 & M2: (nod) yeah, yes

I1: do you think it's um, I guess there is a stereotype that Faroese, the Faroe Islands are very religious, and um, do you think that is still a valid stereotype or are things changing, is um religion becoming more accepting? Have you noticed anything at all?

F2: I feel like yes, religion is becoming accepting, at least where I am from. But then again, I think that people are just being polite, and being nice to me and asking me about stuff, because sometimes they get uncomfortable if me and my girlfriend are like kissing and stuff. So maybe it's not like, real acceptance. Does that make since? Like if they are going to stay over they are going to tell us like, "you're not going to do anything tonight, right?" (laugh) I'm like, no, no.

F1: It's not any of your business.

F2: right? So, I don't really know.

M1 (to F2): But that's because you know them right?

F2: yeah, yeah like my friends.

M1: yeah but I mean like generally. Also many religious people in my village, or my island, they kind of gathered once a month, different churches, so I knew all of them. And my mom knows many of them, so I feel like, they know who I am, they know who my mother is. So they are nice towards me, but there is a difference between being nice and being accepting. (Many agree with a “yeah”) and I wouldn't say they are accepting because I have never heard the word, “we accept that your gay.” or “good on you” but they are always nice and civil. So I have never seen it as they accepting me, it is more like they are being nice towards me because they know me, as I say Faroese people are not rude in general I mean they are friendly. I feel, I don't want them to be friendly towards my face while, thinking. “oh my god you are going to burn in hell” (All agree with a “yeah”) or, “you're a demon” or something like that. Then I would prefer to being shunned or, just go away. Because I don't want to be talking, or small talking while they are judging me. And the thing is that I cannot know if they are judging me or accepting me, because they don't say anything...

F2: But some religious people, like when they find out they get so excited, like they are throwing a mini pride. So I feel like that is accepting.

M1: When I moved to Denmark and I met some religious people and I told them I was gay and they were really accepting I was like, “wow” what is going on? No one on the Faroe Islands had said anything towards me so I was kinda confused because the image that I knew of religious people from the Faroe Islands were conservatives, strict, judging. And then I came here (DK) and they're drinking and going out partying and they're accepting who I am, and they want to know what I do, If I have boyfriends or, I don't know. I think, “wow, you really wanna know that?” Which is something I have never experienced from the Faroese religious people, because they are just being so nice, I mean, I'm not saying they are judging me, I'm saying that they have not even brought it up, they don't say anything about being gay.

F1: It is so weird, a lot of people, I know, know I'm gay because like you (**M1**) said, in the tiny village, it was like “oh, lesbian” (pointing), and that was me. So, I know most people know, but I almost no one will talk about it to my face, it's like, it's never brought up in conversation.

M1: And also if you are walking with someone, like if you walking with a girl (to **F1** and **F2**) and if I am walking with a guy, like I went to Mykines once, and we were hugging, well I was very sea sick, so, and people were looking, but they did not say anything. So you don't know if they are accepting or if they are just judging you.

F1: Shunning you because you are going to hell and they don't want to be contaminated with the gays.

I2: So you feel like being, labeled or categorized immediately?

M1: yeah. I think I have a scar from religious people and every time, (to **I1**) like when you said you went to bible school I immediately go to that stereotype, well, which is kind of a paradox because you are doing this study about us, but like 'she doesn't like gay people, very judgmental, or traditional or something like that' I always think that when I hear they are religious. Always, even though it's not true. It is just something I have from my past. So every time that I meet someone who is religious I always wonder, okay, are they going to judge me or are they open minded.

F1: A funny story though because, uh... by twists and turns I was at one point at the Fridaybar of the religious studies at Copenhagen University. I was there with (saying a name of a politician) a very famous Danish politician from Dansk Folkeparti (reaction is negative)

yeah yeah, so he is a priest, he is very religious, I was there with his god daughter, I think she is his niece, I think, like they are closely related, and she was studying religious studies to become a priest, but apparently one of your best childhood friends was gay and we were friends so we all went together to the Friday bar, (pause) of religion studies, all these young priests wannabes and they were drinking beer and partying, it was so confusing, and I'm here someone who's almost entire family is super known for being racists and homophobic. And at the Fridaybar, one girl who was, I mean, you just look at her and you just think oh wow, she is so gay. Just she was so gay and you could tell from across the (mile) and she was wearing a t-shirt that said, you know, the guitar hero logo? It said God is my hero. She was just. I was just so, "what is happening" I'm confused.

I1: that's interesting cause...it's like stereotypes conflicting there

F1: yeah

I1: stereotypes of a religious person...

F1: and then this lesbian who is like 20 years old and just wanted to be a priest apparently

M2: I think my experiences have been very different with religious people. I mean when I came out I lost a bunch of friends who were quite religious, but I also gained others. And um, some of them were very accepting, and some of them were just shoving it under the rug, and uh, others were, as long as you agree to disagree that was fine. And so I think my experiences were quite varied. But I think that defiantly I can relate to all the stuff that you (**M1**) were saying earlier, because I am also stereotyping them myself. When I talk to people today they have been to a bible school or they say they believe in God, or have some kind of religion I think, "oh, this is gonna suck". So I definitely fall into the same trap. Uh, a lot of the time. Stereotyping people who are religious.

F1: well, I do that as well, but I do it from an atheist perspective not from a gay perspective.

M2: hm, yeah that's true. So I think that it definitely does go both ways. Which is interesting.

M1: I think it's because, as you said (to **M2**) I grew up in the church so I tried to pray to god, to turn me, and it didn't work, and I prayed to god to die because I didn't want my mother to find out, I would rather be dead and then she would cry over my body rather than cry because I was gay, so I was really like demonizing Christianity or religion because I felt like shit because of it, and then afterwards when I got rid of all of that, that stayed in me, so I still today, I don't judge them, but I'm hesitant when I find out they're religious, cause I need to know if they are going to accept me or not, or if they're, I don't know...so I am very cautious about meeting people because I don't want that again...

M1:...I want to be sure, I don't want to waste my time getting to know you and then you are going to judge me afterwards. And, as you (**M2**) say, "agree to disagree." ah, that just yanks my chain because I do not want to be friends with a person who says, "okay well, we agree to disagree, well, I think you are going to burn in hell."

F2: I actually said that to my friend, "like if you don't believe in my rights then, no" then it's not just agree to disagree, it affects my life.

I1: I guess it is difficult then when it's family.

F2: I don't know if the religious part of my family knows. I don't know, I haven't told them. They will find out if they want to.

F1: luckily, my family is just not religious in any way. So, that was that.

F2: That's like my uncles and stuff.

F1: well my dad had an issue with it, all of a sudden he, like he has never really been like a Christian, like he has never really been interested in religion. Then when I came out he was it more or less caused my parents to divorce because all of a sudden my dad was claiming that oh it was bad, and he said the bible said I was going to burn in hell and “my daughter's not gay, I could not have fathered a gay child.” I can't do that, I can't handle that. And everyone around him was just like, “where the fuck did that come from? You have had nothing to do with the bible you have not gone to church. You have never shown any sign of being a practicing religious person, and your daughter comes out and, that's what you say?” I mean, everybody in my entire family was like, “you are such an asshole” I couldn't talk to him, I just could not, so we didn't talk for like over a year, but my entire family was just like telling it to his face, “that is a shitty attitude, you need to stop that,” so, we talk again, so it's fine, cause it turns out, I don't know, he was just really messed up in the head in a different way, but you know, we are good now.

I1: I guess parents go through a process sometimes...

M1: It was always for me like, I always thought it was wrong for a parent, they don't have to live with being gay, so they should just buckle up and deal with me being gay. Because I don't want to spend some time while you get used to the fact that I'm gay. I mean, I'm your child, so either you except me or not. And there were so many people say, “well, you have to give them time.” you have known that you were gay for so long. But then, of course I mean it's true, but still, I felt like, why do they need time to except me being, “I am gay” so why do they need time to accept me for being gay? My mother said that as well, when I told her she said, the first thing she said was “well, have you ever been with a girl?” and I said “no”, and then she said “well, maybe you don't know then.” and I said “yeah, I know.” then she said, “how can you be sure.” - “because I don't want to be with a girl.”

(chatter)

F1: yeah, when I told my mom, she said, “yeah, okay thank you for telling me sweetie, I've known for a while.”

F2: my mom said, “okay I'm gonna go and buy ice cream.” I was like, oh, that was it? I was almost disappointed. It was so, not dramatic. But then she, a couple of hours later she called me down and said she loved me and...like the right way.

I3: what were you expecting? Screaming or something? Disappointed or something?

F2: Just something, that she would acknowledged it, I guess. Like, “ok” not like, “I'm buying ice cream” I don't know.

F1: well, maybe it was a surprise for her she needed a little pause to think about it. You can't always control your reaction.

F2: no, that's true. She's great.

Faroe Islands being 'slow to change'

I1: this question might have an obvious answer but, why do you think, why are the Faroe Islands so far behind?

F1: it's isolated.

I1: do you think, well obviously it is very religious, like for example (to **F1**) you said your father was not very religious but as soon as he found out you were gay it was just “all of a sudden” so it is something in society as well.

F2: yeah, like someone wrote sometime why religious people are so, like against gay rights, maybe because that is one easy thing, maybe it is hard for them to not drink or, to not have sex, or but it is easy to just be, “oh, I hate you” you know, and it still gives them “Christian points” I guess.

F1: I guess a lot of people feel they can get the “Christian points” for say, “I don't like gays” “you should burn in hell” That solidifies their religious beliefs. In some way.

M1: But I think it is a question of change.

F1: yeah, they are scared of change.

M1: I was having a debate with my brother's wife about being married in church, I don't want to be married in the church because I'm not religious, but, we were debating and I was kind of saying, well if we have to pay taxes to the church...we pay taxes, and the government subsidizes the church, therefore we have to pay to the church no matter what, and I was saying to her, “if we have to pay to the church, how can they discriminate against us, and how can they baptize children from girls who have been screwing around, don't know who the father is. I mean, they accept everybody, they marry people who have been divorced, also in the bible, women priests, how can they be accepting all of that, but when it comes to gay people being married, the answer is no. and her reply was, “well it's about change. The church is an institution, and it has always been the way it is so if you want to change that people are going to get confused and people don't like change, “so, your definition of me not being able to get married is because you don't want people to change.” “yeah well the church is an ancient institution,” so she was like, people are not comfortable with change. And Faroese people especially don't like big change. So I think that has been holding us back for a long time.

F1: it is a general trend in society, it's not just regarding religion, it is the entire society is slow to change.

M1: yeah, but I just think that, she (his sister-in-law) is very accepting of me, I have never heard any negative words from her or anyone else, it is just the fact that she wants me to live my life and everything, but still she does not want me to get married in the church. (although I don't want to) but still. How can you accept me who for I am, but still don't want me to get married in a church.

F1: so her logic is flawed.

LGBT Føroyar Involvement

I1: So I noticed that some of you had participated in a media campaign (for LGBT)

M1: Cause just when we started out there was another campaign. You know who (name) is? You sent him a message didn't you? He is the captain of our ship. He wanted us to send pictures in just when we founded the company, or the LGBT Faroe Islands, so that the Faroese people could see that, oh, all these people are LGBT, that was one campaign with just faces. And before I could send my picture in he said, "okay we have enough pictures, thank you." And I think it was last year that there was another where we had to put a quote up as well.

I1: what we are interested in is what is your motivation for being involved in LGBT Føroyar, and how did you get involved, why do you think it is important to be involved, and especially since, well you are all living in Copenhagen and it is still important to have this connection with LGBT Føroyar, so if we could discuss that a little bit.

M1: well, I would do more, I don't do a lot cause the main work is done in the capital and I don't have a car, and besides, anytime I am on the Faroe Islands I work. So it is difficult to get the time off. But every time I can, I want to be a part of it if you are not willing to be able to be a part of change, why would someone else change the world for you? And maybe in the future I want to move back to the Faroe Islands, I want it to be better than it is now.

F1: I was tired of feeling like, I felt like I was the only gay in the village, and I felt like there was no one else in the entire country who could know what I was feeling, and that really, really sucked.

F1:...and if I can change, I am not really not as much involved as all you guys probably are, I am probably the one least involved in this group, but it still try to not hide, or you know, do what I can, because if I can show someone that they are not the only gay in the village, then I am doing something right. Even it is something as simple as coming out to my little cousins who are 10 years old, if they can then know, "well my older cousin is gay, and she is you know, she hangs out with me and she jumps on the trampoline and we listen to music together and she's nice," then maybe they can tell a friend and maybe spread it around, and maybe people will know that there are others out there, so you don't need to grow up in that stupid sucky isolation and feel like nobody knows who you are and what's happening with you. So that's why.

M1: and because LGBT Faroe Islands is part of setting the debate, I mean before they were, no one was talking about being gay.

F1: and that was a problem

M1: and now you can actually talk about being gay without being accused of, "oh you're gay?" so now it is safe to talk about being gay.

F2: it is actually cool now.

(laughter)

F1: yeah, it's trendy now

I1: it seems that every society have had to go through that stage, (for example in America)

M1: I think America has gone through a longer period, from where they started to where they are now, were as the Faroe Islands has catapulted from a short period of time (laughter) where it just bombarded everything into one period of time, before 2006 no one was talking about being gay and I think the first pride there was what? 20 people? And that was 2005 I think.

F2: my mom was at that pride.

(They argue about the first pride, and when it was and how many people were there)

F1: because you were so afraid to be out, to be stigmatized

M1: yeah and because if you supported them you were either gay, or you were wrong.

F2: yeah, I did fight the little battle, even before I knew I was gay, everyone in my middle school were against the §266b and I was like the one say, “why are you against it? Of course they can, THEY can. (laughter)

M2: I think the main motivation definitely was the same as you two (**M1** & **F1**) I just wanted equal rights, I wanted to be treated equally as everyone else. And I wanted the possibility at least to return to the Faroe Islands after the education, and so on. I think was definitely one of the main reasons, or the main reason I got involved in the first place. I think the one thing is arranging the whole, or being a part of, arranging campaigns, and interacting with the media and this organization stuff. And I think one of the important things, if not the most important roles is also as **F1** was talking about, the day to day battle where you actually meet people and you show your face and you put yourself out there. And I think that is what changes peoples’ attitudes.

F2: also it’s putting your face out there. Okay, I’m not that involved, I just do little things sometimes. Putting your face out there is a pretty good way to come out. Because I feel like I have to come out all the time, like almost every day. It is a little exhausting sometimes and I didn’t want to like go and call all of my family members, but when they saw that Facebook campaign thing my like aunts and stuff started writing messages. Calling me.

M2: when we founded the organization we also, we also just wanted a common ground to each other. Like the LGBT people on the Faroe Islands. We wanted a social stand point. Where you could meet other LGBTs of the Faroe Islands. So people who had experienced the same stuff that you had experienced and people could relate to the stuff you had been through. And I think that was quite important as well. But also because I soon as people could relate to each other you could see that you were not just fighting for yourself, you were fighting for quite a few people. And you became aware of the fact that you were not alone. So it created a kind of unity I guess. And all of a sudden you were not the 4 people who originally founded the organization, you were a lot of people. That they had gathered on this Facebook group. And every one could join in.

F2: how did you find the people on Facebook? (to **M2**) Because someone I didn’t know, just added me.

(Laughter)

M2: well, we founded the organization, and then we made the Facebook group. I think it just kind of spread, people were, we asked “do you want to be a part of this group” we didn’t just shove people in. “gay, gay, gay” (Laughter)

M1: In the beginning it was secret wasn't it?

M2: yeah, it was secret, it was a closed group.

M2: yeah because we had an issue with people who could not be out. And we had people who wanted to be out, and so we were kinda of at a stand point where you know do we stand up for all of this stuff and do we want all our members to show their faces. Or should people be able to join the community and yet not be out.

M2: I think they put out a message saying that people needed to be aware that people can now see if you are a member.

M1: because before there was a debate whether or not other people should be able to know, and the result was well, we are not going to hide anymore, so we have to show our faces and if people want to know who is gay then. The main thing was, “we are not going to hide anymore” because if it is secret than it applies that it is something shameful or wrong. So now we are going to change it to a closed group, but everyone can see who is a part of it. So no one can accuse us of hiding. So now everyone can see who is a member of it. It resulted, I mean we lost many members after that, it kept changing between 90 and 100 members all the time, so a few were added, some would leave, a few were added some would leave. And all of a sudden it skyrocketed to 150, 160, 170.

LGBT Membership

I1: So what are the qualifications for becoming a member?

F1: I don't even remember who added me, someone added me and I was just like oh!

M1: I don't know if you (**M2**) were a part of the group we had? We had one just for gay men first.

(everyone: oh)

M1: And then afterwards, when we founded the group they asked if we wanted to be transferred, or go and join this group.

I1: join forces

M1: and now the only qualification is that you are LGBT and not afraid to show it.

I2: so I could not join as a supporter?

(everyone: no, but you can like the page)

M2: we had quite a different, diverse structure because the Facebook group was originally intended to be a forum or a platform for Faroese LGBTs so everyone was Faroese, and identified themselves as LGBT or questioning, or whatever, could join the group. So you would just have to apply and you would get accepted, there would not be any condition.

F1: there wouldn't be a gay test (laugh)

M2: but then you had the Facebook group which was closed, but is not closed anymore and

then you have the Facebook page which everyone can like and support and follow and stuff, and then you have the actual organization where you can support it financially by, by becoming a member, so there is kinda three things.

F2: I should do that (support financially)

M1: the page has many members from around the world which I think is very strange, but at the same time good and nice. People who have liked it and are not even Faroese.

F1: But I do know that with a lot of that, with the debate, a couple years ago it kinda went around the world that there was this little island nation in the middle of the so called liberal Scandinavia who was still kinda closed off, and I kid you not they would more or less use the word, “backwards”. And that kind of went viral so I think that is why a lot of LGBT organizations around the world picked up on it.

I1: they took signatures worldwide...

F1: exactly, so I think it encouraged that worldwide interest. It encouraged people to go in and like the page to show support.

M2: definitely. And also at the prides we had reporters, American reporters, German reporters, Danish, Icelandic. Who were there and were making podcasts or radio stuff or TV, so it actually got quite the attention.

I2: I wanted to come back to that, you said (**F1**) about the “gay test” I mean how would you define an LGBT member?

F1: if they define themselves as LGBT then that's it.

M2: yeah

I1: how do you feel about the term LGBT. There are debates about LGBTQ, LGBTTA

F1: and you can add a lot of letters to that.

I1: would it be anyone who characterizes themselves as not heterosexual?

M1: if you are not heterosexual you are either gay or bi right? Or a-sexual.

F1: that depends you can be...

M2: I think there are more.

F2: you can still be like transgender and heterosexual.

F1: I know people who are only attracted to transgender people. And there are people who are only attracted to asexual people. I know people who are only attracted to androgynous people, ambiguous gender. The variations are so big and so hard to categorize, so I think if anyone wants to categorize themselves as anything they want, they can do that.

(laughter about having so many letters, LGBTQA...etc.)

M2: I think ideally it shouldn't matter, it shouldn't be necessary to have...

I1: just by doing that, it is already saying, “us and them” but it has been necessary for change.

M2: it has.

F1: I think a lot of the community still struggles with how to incorporate, all the letters. How do you define a common interest for a group that is so big and so varied? It is almost impossible. So, if the T is included, why is there not enough focus on the transgendered I am not particularly active in the whole thing I just sort of watch the discussions from the sidelines. I am going to call myself queer and go dance, whatever.

I1: it seems like queer is a, it is very broad. Queer could be anything that is not the norm.

F1: exactly, it is the easy way out.

M1: I think if you don't want to be alone you have to, because you can't fight to system alone, but at the same time I mean, the letter, B, A or G...is not going to be as active towards transgender rights, that's what a T person would be and at the same time, people join forces to fight the system, but at the same time they have interests of their own, but at the same time, they want to support others. So you can't include everything, because then it would be nothing. so first you have to join forces, and then you pick a fight. But at the same time, I think the Faroe Islands for example, there are not many transgender people so, mainly there is one called XX (says the name of the Transgender woman on the Faroe Islands) she is very active, and informs and posts things about being transgender so she is in charge of that. While others, a gay man or something, he is not as active and does not seek information about being transgender, so a lot of the times when you get information about being transgender. It is other transgender people who do the information for you and then use the common platform to inform people. But if you split them up and just have one T group you would not have as many supporters for that specific group as if you would if you combined them with gay people and bisexual people and lesbians. So, the effect is greater if you work with someone else.

F1: well of course, a long, a lot of the way these groups are fighting the same battle, more or less all battling to, as a friend of mine says, "end the straight world order". And so.

M1: we fight for acceptance for every...ideally, I would say include everyone, as long as you are not accepted, you should be included. I think we fight for acceptance. I mean, everyone should be able to be who they are. It does not matte which letter you identify with and that is the common goal, we fight for acceptance. But I do not know a lot about being a transgender person, so can't go out and educate people or tell them what's wrong, what's right, cause I'm not transgender, I don't know really what they feel.

F1: But you can educate yourself, you can get to know your transgender friends, you can get to know your local transgender.

M1: I do. (being a bit defensive)

F1: and you know, read, listen to what they say.

M1: I've had so many debates with... um this one person... (getting defensive)

F1: but the thing is, a long stretch of the way we are all fighting the same battle so it works best to combine forces, it's just that sometimes the combined forces can't agree on where to put their energy so it is always kinda of an internal squabble. But it makes since to combine forces, but it is not always the easiest.

M1: well then, that is why you do different things.

F1: but then it doesn't mean that if you are a gay man, than that is all you fight for.

M1: no

F1: I would say it is “your duty” to inform yourself of the struggles that your, shall we say, compatriots, are experiencing. Like in the queer environment that I am currently kind of dabbling in, the main issue is actually transgendered rights. So how, how do because in Copenhagen right now it sort of feels like gays, lesbians, the middle class gays and lesbians “have won” the whites, (normal) gendered (?) able bodied people have more or less won. So, the battles that are left are mostly for the immigrants, the LGBT immigration rights, like people of color. Immigrants who have a hard time combining their sexuality with their perhaps, different religious upbringing. And transgender rights, and that's mostly where I am coming from right now, so which is kind of what I am supposed to be doing tonight.

M1: that is in Copenhagen where the work has come so far, in the Faroe Islands it's still..

F1: exactly. That is to illustrate a difference. The two battles are so different.

M1: yeah but at the same time, first of all I'm not a transgender so, but second of all I don't have all the information, so every time, I mean, I do fight for them, cause I mean, they are, many times people are very rude or like make crude comments, and every time I hear something where I am I correct them, or I inform them by saying, well, like when people say, “well should I call him a he or a she?” and that is the main thing that always get, so I try to tell them what I can. But at the same time I am not going to post a video son of a transgender women applying makeup on their wall or something.

F1: no, but you don't have to, all you need to do is listen to what they have to say and try to understand the perspective they come from.

M1: I do.

F1: yes, and that is all you are expected to do. In that case.

I1: well, you know I would argue that you have the shared experience of being on the outside of what society says is normal so you have some of the same experiences.

M1: the only think I fight for is for everyone to be accepted. Before anything else. To be gay, because being gay is very different, it is not the same from one person to the next. So the only thing I think is, Fight for being accepted for who you are. If everyone was accepted for who they are we would not have any wars. (laughter) Violence would at least be so much less than it is today.

Gayness and Categorization

I1: I think it is interesting with LGBT, with this category, there are also different levels of gayness. This scale of gayness. Do you feel like that is something within the gay community, you kind of have to live up to standards?

F2: yeah, like bi women, if they have a boyfriend then, no. I don't feel that way, but. I mean, that is what happens a lot.

M2: yeah, there is definitely discrimination within the LGBT environment itself. The typical thing would be that gays and lesbians look down on bisexual people. “cause it's only a phase”

(laughter) but I mean, I think it is very different. At least in my experiences in Copenhagen it is very different. When I am in the environment where I work for example I do experience a lot of that. Where you sort of have to “qualify” with a certain degree of gayness. But I mean, when I am amongst other people in the same environment, just activists for example, the LGBT youth here and so on. They have completely different perspectives, so I think it varies a lot. And defiantly everyone should always remember that perspectives and thoughts and meaning vary just as much within the LGBT community as it does within the straight community.

M1: but don't you think, I mean I have experienced, many people having a problem with bisexuals because they see it as they have the easy way out. Because they have never been demonized, because well, they can always just pick the right gender and then they are safe, therefore they don't qualify for receiving support because they can just choose someone else. Or they don't, they really aren't bisexuals they are just saying they are bisexuals to be accepted, so it is easier for them to be bisexual then to be gay. So they just say they are bisexual, but they are really gay. I experienced a lot of people who think that and every time they hear or talk about bisexuals, they have an attitude towards them. Even Faroese people, Faroese gay people.

M2: yeah.

M1: therefore they say that bisexuals should not be included.

I1: really? They go that far?

M1: yeah, yes.

M2: some do.

F1: but it is not just in the Faroese it is in general.

M1: but I think it stems from, that they feel like they have been violated because they are pure gay, while the other ones are more safe, they haven't received the same torture as they have, so therefore they shouldn't be included.

F1: some people will also say that, well this is a verbatim quote from “pure lesbians” they say “ew, I do not want to touch a vagina that has touched a penis.” or some gay men will be like, “oh your penis touched a vagina? I ain't touching that.”

M1 and M2: that's true, (nods)

F2: some people get really bitter I think, like if you are in a relationship with a girl and then she leaves you for a man, then they get really bitter and say, “they are not dating bisexuals again.”

F1: my first girlfriend left me for her boss who was my Dad's age. Yeah, that was weird. He was like 43, it was so weird.

I1: would you say your ideal society would be where there is no longer these categorizations?

M2: I think is, is definitely a tricky question because I think it is always defiantly part of creating an identity and you know on a social science level, it is belonging and being a part of something and being included so I don't think, it is not necessarily the categorization that is the problem. Because it definitely does have good things within it as well the problem is that people don't accept each other within the categories or, with other categories. And so on. If

we would just be fine to be within whatever category you would categorize yourself within, there wouldn't be a problem. Because it does help, as I said, in creating identity and belonging somewhere in society

I1: I think it is interesting how, you hear people argue well, why are gay people, why do gay people have to “come out” you know, straight people don't have to come out, like if there is some day where it is just, nobody is coming out because, I don't know, it is interesting.

F2: I think it is a little...different in Denmark because it is like gender neutral, girlfriend, boyfriend. That is a little confusing

F1: I think it is fantastic I love it.

I1: so people don't ask, (to **F2**) “do you have a boyfriend?”

F1: no because the Danish word to describe it is gender neutral.

F1: so if you translate the Danish word (?) it is gender neutral, it says my lover or my darling, so you don't know. Which is both fantastic and terrifying.

Passing as Straight

F2: but then people, I kind of love when I talk about my darling and people go, “oh, what does HE do?” and I get to correct them, and they get a little flustered, I love it.

F1: I love the fact that that never happens for me. (laughter)

I1: yeah, there are the stereotypes at work, it is interesting, also we have had some classes on this idea of passing, you know you (**F2**) can pass as a straight women, or if you can't pass. For example with religion a women wearing a head scarf cannot pass as anything other than Muslim. So what is visible and what can you pass as, and what can't you pass as.

M1: I also think it's, sometimes when I am with a boy or a girl, for example if I am with a girl people will ask “oh, is she your girlfriend.?” and then there is this internal struggle, well should I say “no because I am gay” or just say “no”. Because first of all it is none of their business what I am, but second of all, if they assume that, and if they keep asking should I say something or shouldn't I say something?

F1: (to **M1**) what context would this be in? Would this be in Denmark or the Faroe Islands?

M1: in Denmark.

F1: really? ... well, then again the Faroe Islands is so small if they see you with a girl, they know who you are and they know you're gay. (laughter)

M1: but a lot of times, even classmates who I am sitting next to or something, I don't know why but apparently there are many old people in the school system in Denmark. All of them just assume that we are boyfriend and girlfriend. Yeah, and then I am like, “no” but then again, should I say why? Or just say “no” I am always confused if I should just say “no, cause I'm gay” or just “no”. I don't know if you get that.

M2: I defiantly do. I run into it all the time.

I1: well, as soon as you DO say you are gay, you are then categorized as gay. Instead of just, this is me.

M2: I think that has defiantly been my main approach just not, to make a big deal out of it. When I am talking about my boyfriend I just say he. And when you are talking in Danish you mostly can't tell, but then if that is the case then when I refer someone by gender I just say he and continue the conversation because I have found that if you don't make a point out of it yourself then people don't make a big deal out of it. When I started studying here this summer and that class I never said to anyone that I was gay, but apparently everyone knows. (laughter) also because it came around quite natural in conversations that you know, “my boyfriend did that and that” and it has never been a subject, it has just been there. Or it just is.

F2: I used to think like that. But I don't recently I have just had an urge to see the shock on peoples' faces. (laughter)

F1: yeah, because I had a point where I had really long hair and no piercings or anything I passed, like nobody even questioned it. And then it was just so amusing to get this reaction from people, you are talking to this regular standard does not fall out of any stereotype...

F1: I mean... stereotype... and then I get to say: ‘well, my girlfriend’ (makes an amused face, laughter). And people are like (makes a shocked, confused face) “oh, oh... OHHHH... well you don't look gay.”

F2: “That's such a waste” I hate that.

F1: Well, your face is a waste

(laughter)

I1: I have a question, actually I just thought about this (um): when you talk to a Danish friend and they find out that you are Faroese and gay...

F1: yeah

I1 ... what kind of reaction do you get?

F2: “Oh my God I feel so sorry for you!”

(laughter)

I2: really?!

M2: (laughter) yeah

F2: Like “did you”... “was it horrible growing up?”

Media Representation of Faroe Islands

F1: That's the thing. That's because the media in Denmark has this... it's not just about the gay Faroese, it's about the media representation of the Faroe Islands in Denmark... is shit

I1: It's very stereotypical

F1: It's so stereotypical. Like, it's only negative stories, it's only the most stereotypical, most negative, most, like, weird stories are the ones that get repeated and then you have to completely, to continually just dispel what the media says about you as a Faroese person. Not, not necessarily as a gay person but just as a Faroese person. And then (makes an annoyed face) "no, we can't drive there" ...

(laughter)

... "no, we don't live in caves", "yes, we have internet". You know?! "yes, there are shops" and "no.. no we don't have.. no, our sheep don't sleep in the cellar" It's just so... and it has.. yeah.

I1: I raised a lamb ...(no transcription)

I1: I think we should rap up with the question about whether or not you want to return to the Faroe Islands. If that is something ... some of you said "I don't know", you said (talking to F1) you said "no" ...

F1: (nodding)

Returning to the Faroe Islands

I1: ... um... what would be your reasons to return, what would be your reasons not to return? Do you have the feeling, like you should go back, you know, for example to make change or... what do you think?

(pause)

F1: I kinda feel like traitor if I'm not wanting to go back...

(amusement)

I1: yeah

F1: ... because I know that the only way to effect that change is to... be that change yourself, you know

I1: hm yeah

F1: just sort of...you can't expect things to happen for you. Sometimes you have to actually take responsibility and take action. But at the same time... I just... I don't know what I'd do. I don't know what... oh God, no... I'd go crazy, I'm sorry. It's kind of the same way I feel about having kids. Like, I really don't want them but it makes me feel like a traitor cause I'd probably, you know, be a great mom and stuff but (makes a discussed face) hmm icky.

I1: (laughter)

F1: It's kind of the same thing.

I1: So, it has nothing to do with your sexuality? You think it's just...

F1: It's mostly because I think...

I1: ...more personality

F1: ... yeah. I don't know what I would do. I don't know what I would work with. And I think also I would be really bored.

(laughter)

F1: socially. Socially speaking.

I1: ok.

F1: So, that's it.

F2: I don't know. I'm kind of ...boring. But I just want to be a teacher and have my wife and kids and you know all of that.

F1: and I do not want that.

F2: yeah

F1: And, and then I don't know what to do.

(laughter)

F2: So, like, if I could do that, then ... but I always thought that it shouldn't be in the Faroe Islands. That it should be like in Norway or Sweden. I don't know why. Um but the last couple of days in Denmark, or weeks... like everything gets stolen and I'm tired of it.

(laughter)

F2: half of my things. I'm serious. So now I'm starting to think that it is possible then maybe I'd go back

(pause) so people wouldn't steal my stuff (laughter)

I1: But would you wait until the laws change? Or would you go back...

F2: uhh

I1: ... laws without a change?

F2: I don't know. I'm kind of curious what would happen if I got married in Denmark and have children and then just brought them back..

(agreeing noise)

F1: You would all fall completely out of the system because the law does not recognize ANY of it.

F2: yeah

(pause)

M1: But they can't take them away

(laughter)

F1: no, but you would fall into this gray zone where, you know, they have no idea what to do, cause there is nothing. There's just a big, black, empty hole.

I2: Would that be a positive or a negative thing?

F2: negative

F1: I'd say negative.

M1: I think it's more about recognition. Because you don't want to be recognized as something who has something else...

(agreeing noise)

M1: ... you want to be recognized as the same. So... this is my husband. This is not just my boyfriend or 'my friend'.

F2: yeah, 'my friend' (amusement)

I1: yeah. 'My roommate'.

M2: great (laughter)

F2: That's what I am to my girlfriend's grandmother. 'A great friend'. She is so nice to me though. ...

(laughter)

F2: ... "You're such a good friend" (imitates the grandmother)

I1: Oh man

F2: I don't know if she doesn't know or if she just pretends. I'm not sure.

M1: Maybe both

F2: Probably.

F1: That's really interesting with the older generation.

F2: hm.

M1: What would be sad not coming back because almost your whole family is in the Faroe Islands and your friends.

M2: Most of the friends do go back.

M1: hm?

M2: I said most of your friends do go back, eventually.

I1: You think so? They just... did you see the documentation that they did recently?

M1: hm. Yeah.

(laughter)

I1: I heard a lot of debate over that. It was interesting. Just, you know, just in general if people go back or not I think is...

F1: Just statistically speaking: most of the women who leave do not go back.

I1: Yeah.

F1: Of all the men who leave some do come back and some don't but almost all the woman who go, don't go back.

M1: I think it depends on what in which angle you fall into. Cause I think if you have a normal child with no special needs and your family goes back ... (no transcription)

F1: I'm speaking completely outside of the documentary. I'm speaking about statistical, study made before the documentary even existed. The documentary was made because the study was there that showed in numbers and graphs and figures why Faroese women don't go back. I think it's like $\frac{3}{4}$ of the women who leave the Faroe Islands, they don't come back. Only $\frac{1}{4}$ of the women who leave actually do go back. And it has very little to do with... yes, for some people it's because they have a child with special children.. I, I answered that survey and I listed as reason: well, I am gay and I don't really know 1: how to get a normal life in the Faroe Islands and 2: I don't know what I'd do because... no, I'd be bored. But it's a society problem which all comes down to the fact that it's really prejudicial and it's afraid of change. No matter who you are. Not just for LGBT people but most of the women. You don't have to be a lesbian to not want to go back. A lot of perfectly "normal, straight regular women" actually they go to Copenhagen, they go to other counties. They see you can do... they see the society can function in a different way and they don't wanna go back. They see it as a step back in every way possible. And um that's kind of why I feel like a traitor because if you want it to change you should go back and fight for it but can I do that? Do I want to do that? Do I want to fight? Do I have that in me? Or do I just sit here comfortably in Copenhagen and live my life like I want it to be? (shrug)

F2: I don't know, I have a weird relationship with the Faroe Islands. Every time I hear people talking ... because like every... if I stay in the Faroe Islands for a year then I just... I have to get away. But then when I get away I just want to go back. All the time. I don't know what I want.

F1: I just think I've always been in that... to return slightly to something we started to talking about... I've always been in that 'wanting to go way category'. And I still am. Like, as soon as I could I went somewhere else.

M1: I think it is more about priorities. For instance you priorities your family or your friends in the Faroe Islands or the family and friends you have in Denmark. And where you have more family and friends. And what you want. Do you want cafés and shops and culture or do you want ... family (laughter) and again I relate to what you just said (pointing at F1)

M1: I think it'll be boring but that is because I live in a tiny village and because I work almost every time when I come to the Faroe Islands. So I either work or either being at home or being at the home of someone else's friend's house. And that's it. So if I would go back, I think I would rather go back to the capital Tórshavn cause it's bigger and there is more 'life' more of things to do.

I1: yeah

M1: Cause it'd be very boring in my little village. So if I would go back I don't think that I'd go back to my village.

I1: ok.

F2: the same

M1: But that would be because I would try to ... my family and my friends which I miss when I'm not in the Faroe Islands. And I've never had bad experience being gay with my friends or family. So that would not hold me back. The only thing that would hold me back would be ... yes if I couldn't be married in the Faroe Islands, if I had kids, if I ... if I couldn't have kids in the Faroe Islands and if I could get a job. And I would find an interesting one. I've always liked, I mean, I've lived in New York as well and I was, like, big cities so I like that life as well. But again it's about prioritizing cause in New York I don't have any friends, or few friends and no family at all whereas in the Faroe Islands I have tons of friends and family. So... what do I want?

M2: I think it's about priority as well. But it's still quite a paradox. Um, cause it's like when I'm in Denmark then, well, I'm just in Denmark. When I'm anywhere else, excluding the Faroe Islands, um I feel pure Faroese. I don't feel Danish, I don't feel anything else than Faroese. And I say I'm Faroese and all that. Yet, when I'm there, in the first week I'm, well, bored and want to get away (laughter). It's nice seeing family and friends but I don't feel... well at the moment I don't feel like living there. Perhaps later on if you establish family perhaps have kids or an husband or whatever... um I think I would chose my family in front of... or just chose my family fist. Um, And then again if you relate to that problem where kind of, if you want the change you have to be that change, which kind of, you know, I would say um, the thing is, you have no security when you go back. Um, for your kids and for your... partner. It's suddenly not just about you anymore. Um, It's about the family that you create. And I think if it came to that, I probably would choose my family and stay away.

I1: hm.

F2: Also It's about...

M1: Based on the current situation. You have to remember that.

M2: yeah, based on the current situation, but if things change... Things will change (smile)

M1: I would go back if it would not be the same as now

F1: As the situation is now, you can get married and you can have kids in Denmark but it will not be... it will be like a big black hole, legally speaking, in the Faroe Islands cause it's not recognized anywhere in the, the... and people, you know, want to do about it. So what do you want to do? Do you want the security of knowing that you rights are protected then you stay here or, you know, anywhere else where your rights are protected, or do you jump into that black hole in the Faroe Islands and... struggle to fix it.

I1: hmm.

F1: Even though, you know... I mean that's the problem: What do you do?

F2: well, there is this whole thing about being the change, but it's also a big responsibility. You know, I feel like you can't ask of people to sacrifice their happiness or their family's happiness...

F1: yeah

F2: ... to change something.

(pause)

I1: What about your ‘Faroese-ness’? If that is even a word. Um, even while you are here in Copenhagen. Is it... is it something you feel, you know, do you miss ræst kjøt (Faroese dish) ... you know... you wanna put on your Faroese clothes, do you want to, you know what is...

M2: I think I definitely do. I miss the food. I miss most of all, I miss the nature.

I1: ok.

M2: And in the summer I love being home during the national holiday and putting on my national clothes and you know, ‘be Faroese’.

F2: I miss the mentality. Like the, the... I feel like Faroese people are really relaxed. Go with the flow and “yeah, it will be fine” and I’m way too much like that. Sometimes I feel like not fitting into Danish society at all. (laughter). Cause here people want me to do things and that time and hmm

M2: schedule, schedule, schedule

F2: We just see what happens, you know

(laughter)

F1: I never feel anything but Faroese. It’s, yeah. And even after 10 years in Copenhagen, I’m still Faroese. That’s never gonna change, that’s never gonna get away. Kind of like, I’m still gay and that’s never gonna get away either. It’s just, you know, my eyes are still blue and that’s not gonna change either... but ha... in some ways I might have taken on a bit of a Danish mentality exc... especially the scheduling ...

F2: Planning? Ohh.

F1: ...and planning.

(laughter)

Yeah. Which is always unconfident for me when I tried... when, when my mother sometimes comes to Copenhagen and my mother will tell me, like, the day before. She’s like (imitating her mother texting) “Hi, I’m coming to Copenhagen tomorrow evening. Do you wanna hang out?” And I’m like (makes a surprised gesture)

(laughter)

“You need to ask me a month in advance! I have plans. I have booked things for tomorrow. We cannot do that!” And she starts actually... she started to learn that she has to sort of book my time at least two weeks in advance, otherwise she’s not gonna see me. (...training story - → not transcribed)

F2: It’s like you can’t function in Denmark or in Copenhagen being completely Faroese.

F1: No.

F2: Not really. And that's, that's my biggest complex. I have to (pause) be Danish. (laughter) Kind of. I have to make plans and I'm so bad at that. That's why I was late today.

(laughter)

F1: yeah, I was the first person to arrive. Does the make me the most Danish?

F2: yes

(laughter)

F1: I was only 5 minutes late

M1: I was thinking like, that you can't... if there is a deadline in school for instance you have to do something, there is no mercy. (claps) "Too bad for you"

(agreeing noise)

... which I find very annoying. Or if you do something wrong "oh, shame. Dumped. Next." You can't talk about things here.

F2: And, and the safety. You have to say it. You can have a bike and not lock it. In the Faroe it's just like, you can relax. I feel like, if I want to go out, like drink, I have to hold my wallet and then I don't have fun.

M1: And if it's crowded you have to have your hands here (put both hands on the pocket of his jeans)

F2: haha, ja.

M1: And if someone talks to you it's like: hmm (tries to protect his pockets)

F1: you really need to go to different places then.

(Talking about steeling in Denmark and "big crime wave" in the Faroe Islands where people stole meat → not transcribed 12 8:07 – 11:06)

Faroese Identity and Sexual Identity

I1: So you don't think it's, you think your Faroese identity um, your Faroese identity and your sexual identity are they... is there is balance there.. is there one that overpowers the other, you know for example...

I1: ...you're willing to leave your country or your family, speak a different language, live in a different culture, you know, so that you can express this other identity.

F2: yeah, I feel like right now I'm "the LESBIAN". Like, I don't know

(Laughter)

I don't know what's happening but it's ... I just really, I just feel the need to shout it

F1: Be super-gay

F2: yeah

I1: Do you feel like you have to be less Faroese?

F2: No, no, no

F1: Not really. It's just a matter of (puts up her hands and create a 'balance' → hands are on the same level) when I was on the Faroe Islands I was Faroese (rises her left hand up a little bit) also gay but say it was here (have the right hand a little lower). Then I moved to Copenhagen and all the sudden I could turn the volume up for the gay. It could be here (have the hands on the same level again), could be here if I want to (puts her right hand a lot higher) and it could be anywhere I want it to (moves her right hand up and down), whereas in the Faroe Islands the gay had to be took down. Now that I only sort of come and visit... it's taken a while but more less I found a place where I can be sort of 'in balance' (puts her hands again on the same level). So like, keep a good balance between my Faroese identity and my super-gay, super-queer identity and I could even be super-queer on the Faroe Islands and that would be no big deal. But it takes a while and you know hm, the gay-volume has been going up and down (moves her right hand up and down again) and I was trying to adjust, finding a level where it is comfortable. Where everything is, well yeah... where it's comfortable.

F2: Hmm

F1: Where about...

F2: Sorry.

F1: hm. (gesture F2 to continue)

F2: Yeah, like in the Faroe Islands just because there is no, like, big issue or people are... saying rood things or stuff or anything but it's still somehow awkward to talk about... gay-stuff. Like for me with my... it's not like... hm (claps)... och

F1: Bring it what is it in Faroese?

F2: bring it. (says something in Faroese)

F1: oh, like the extended family?

F2: extended family. Makes sense now. Thank you.

M2: I still think that the one is not necessarily compromises the other. I always felt like I don't... I'd rather felt like... um, since I came out I felt like I just don't really care what people think. And neither do I care when I'm on the Faroe Islands. (pause) And that's it.

(pause)

M1: Yeah, at the same time when you feel, or define yourself as gay, you, you kinda... let that... be... your identity and being gay is not who you are...

F2: no

M1: So therefore I don't feel I have a gay identity I feel like Faroese. It's an identity: it's a language, it's a culture. Being gay is not a language, not a culture just who you are.

F2: just a little of it

M1: So I, I don't... I wouldn't identify as being gay than that would be defining being gay. It's defining who I am. Being Faroese defines slightly who I am more, more than being gay. Therefore I would never say that my, my gay identity is...

F1: But you have an identity in being gay. It's a part of it.

M1: yeah. A small part of it

F1: hm.

M1: But I would never say being gay is here (imitates F1's hand gesture: putting his right hand very high) and being Faroese is here (putting his left hand very low). It's being gay is such a small part of who you are.

F1: yeah.

M1: An whether you like dancing or cutting your hair short or long or rollerblading or...

F1: It's 'roller-derby'

(laughter)

M1: ... or whatever it is...

F1: it's not on rollerblades

M1: yeah, yeah whatever ... it has no meaning...

F2: I was thinking about it

M1: it does not come from you being gay. It's because you like doing that. The only thing that's defines you being gay is that you like another woman, nothing else. So whatever else you do that like defines that stereotype as gay, it isn't. It's just stereotypes. It's whatever you like is because you are who you are.

F1: yeah

M1: So I would never say you have a gay identity. You have an identity. Being gay is part of it but to a very, very small percentage.

F1: I know what you are getting at, yeah. Because I feel like I've kind of just growing tired of trying to identify as whatever. I'm just going to be relaxed and being comfortable with being me with all that it entails. Yeah

F2: I'm sure that will happen to me eventually. And I know it's just something I have to.

F1: you have to pull the volume up to see (makes the hand-gesture again) where it's comfortable

F2: yeah. I feel like just like BOOM (pulls her hand as far up as possible). Yeah. And then...

F1: But I know what it feels like. Cause when I moved to Copenhagen the first thing I did was shave my hair. I had really, really long hair (shows the length at her shoulder). It was beautiful and the first thing I did was, you know, shave it into a Mohawk.

F2: wow.

F1: and now you can see all of my face (laughs)

F2: That's the thing. I just...

F1: I really wanted to do that but I just... I couldn't really happen on the Faroe Islands. But I needed to go and do that and try it out. And then I was like, oh it's too much of a hassle and I just gotta, you know, grow my hair long and do whatever. I reached a really nice point where I can just do whatever.

M1: But that has nothing to do with being gay

F1: no, exactly.

M2: then don't do it

F1: But people can experiment where are they comfortable with being. How do you... where is your balance. (puts her hands on the same level again)

F2: I think the...

M1: yeah but... if you play this game (moves his hands up and down) you say: "well I'm here" (positions his hand somewhere) therefore being gay defines, or says "well I cut my hair because I'm gay", "I kissed a girl because I'm gay", "I shouted or waved my arms because I'm gay"

(laughter)

F1: I know it doesn't define you. A lot of people when they first come out, they really need to express themselves... as gay as they can. A friend of mine who is 25, she just came out and she is... she just does all these really, really weird things and she's like, she can't talk about anything else but being gay cause it's such a new experience for her. It's, it's so new and so exciting that she kind of can't really contain anything else.

M1: But the way that you say that, it's still everything she does is stereotypes.

F1: But she is testing her identity. I mean it's like, it's like playing dress up. Put on a costume and see how it fits and put on another one and see well what do I like? What do I like best? Where am I comfortable? But you sort of have to try different things out to find where am I comfortable being. Where am I in a balance? It doesn't mean...

M1: Yes, but it's about what you like and not how gay you are.

F1: No, but she is trying to find out what she likes. It's a new thing. It's a new experience.

F2: (short laughter)

F1: What is the gayest thing you have ever done? (speaking directly to M1) What did you do when you came out? Anything like: go crazy?

(laughter)

M1: no

F1: You didn't start going to gay bars every time you could?

F2: you didn't have the whole baby-like period?

M1: what?

F2: You know where you hooked up with everyone?

(laughter)

F1: It was fantastic

F2: yeah

(laughter)

M1: when I came out it was more I felt like no one should be able... or could be able to say "wow that's gay" or "wow, he's gay". So I was actually very... I thought "well, I mustn't" (waving his arms) "I have to straighten my arms and can't do this" (puts one hand in his hips) ...

(laughter)

... in the beginning. Cause I was very into what other people might perceive as being gay stereotype. Whereas now I think well, being gay does not define me so I don't like well... I get frustrated when people talk about "oh he's so gay" or yes... what does that mean? Cause just because he does that doesn't mean.. cause there are tons of gays who doesn't do that or don't do that.

M1: So therefore when people talk about how gay they are it's like... please... it's who you are it's not about how gay you are.

I1: yeah. It's like you know, you just take it from the other side. Like, do straight people flant their sexual orientation?

M1: no

I1: It's like: you're so straight!

(laughter)

You know. But I guess maybe it's the idea that... because, sorry...

(laughter)

... because you had to do this coming out process and you are different from 'the norm', that you have to exaggerate it or it has to become... it has to be louder or something, maybe. That's interesting.

F2: I feel like, well, what you talked about the 'passing'.

I1: hm.

F2: Cause I don't feel the need to shave my head. I like my hair and I don't know. So, I guess you could say I'm 'passing' so that's why I feel the need to make sure, he (points with the finger at the girls)

M1: The only thing I could relate to that would be... well my mother accepted that I am gay and everything but she never talked about it or acknowledged it. So in the beginning I was

very... sometimes I, I, I painted my nails or wore something pink or red or something or... used her crèmes or something while she was looking. Every feminine thing I could think of while she was seeing it. Just to push it on her.

I1: hm.

M1: That was the only thing I did, I think.

I1: So do you feeling like being yourself there though?

M1: no.

I1: But you were trying to...

M1: No, I was just trying to push the stereotypes

I1: ... just present the stereotypes ... push the stereotypes

M1: yeah. On my mother, yeah

F1: But this is the same thing a lot of people are doing. They feel the need to push the stereotypes to the maximum to figure out... well what am I comfortable with? And you figured... you tried even that. And you found out: “It’s not me, comfortable for me, so I’m not gonna do that.”

M1: yeah, but it’s still I don’t like it being identified as well “I was this gay, or this gay” (moves his hand up and down)

F2: It’s also some people have the experience that (...) people that are “not gayish”, yeah (marks “ “ with her fingers in the air) that...

M1: No, no, no. I recognize that there is this stereotype and you can act gay but I just...

F2: yeah

M1: there is a difference between acting and identifying as “oh, I’m gay. I like musicals or...” (laughter)

F2: but they feel like they have to cut their hair and... just to fit in. So people would say: “Ok, she is, she is as gay as me.” That thing. I don’t know

F1: but, if that stereotype is all you know and if you first come out, you may feel the need to at least explore the stereotype and then you... cause a lot of people... if you come out and you don’t really know anything else except the gay stereotype, you feel like “well that’s how I should behave” and sort of have to, you feel like you should at least explore it. (short pause) I think it’s changing though. A lot of people who come out now are just, sort of, more free to... not make a big deal about it. But I mean, you go back 10 years... when I came out, than you really have to... the only thing I knew was the, the, that butch-lesbian stereotype. And I felt like: If I, if I want to be ...gay then I need to at least explore this and see what I think about it. ...

F1: ...Kind of like it. Still doing it. But for some people, you know, it doesn’t. My sister was free and open to not have to explore that stereotype cause she just continues with more or less being herself with her long hair and her, you know, daily make-up and her painted fingernails.

So... it's about creating that freedom to just be who the fuck you want to be. No matter what. But some people have to push extremes.

Categorization

I1: Do you feel like you have anything else, anything to share? Anything else that needs to be said or...

M2: Hm, I had a thought on the categories, actually.

I1: yeah

M2: That we mentioned, cause I think it's quite important to realized that categories are not necessarily made on a social level but on a legal level I guess ideally this is where we're working towards. A legal system that does not have categories or gender categorizes.

I1: yeah.

M2: But that is also gender neutral. So it is kind of intersection.

I1: so there would be the social level that, that... you, you also think it's individually, important for individuals to have this... have a... to categorize yourself and categorize others?

M2: definitely. I mean it's not that bad, it's not necessarily a bad thing. As long as you can accept the category you are in and others see you in than it's fine. Because I think as an individual you live in a society that does have a lot of specific categories, you always build your identity (makes gestures of building above/ or intertwine) ... you know... working and stuff. At work you are a doctor and you're a football fan as well

I2: yeah.

M2: and gay as well. All those different categories they don't have to clash, you know, they can complement each other and create yourself as an, as a person. And that is quite necessary for an individual do be able to do those things in order to belong and so on. But I mean, that is more the social level. I think legally, in order for people to move freely in society, and to be able to do what they want to do without the categories that they socially are within, the legal systems should be flexible enough to, to not gender discriminate.

Current Opinions of LGBT Rights and Faroese Politics

I1: Hm. Actually there is one thing that I forgot. There is, you know, they did a ... from America they did a study seeing what people actually, well individuals thought about allowing gays to marry on the Faroe Islands. And they came out with about 65 % for.

I1: I mean do you... would you agree with those results, with your experiences?

M1: yeah

M2: yeah

F1: I'd say it sounds possible.

M2: I think as soon, as quickly as you exclude the church. From marriage laws and so on. Um, so and make it a civil marriage. People are actually quite open and stuff.

I1: open, yeah.

F1: But I think if you'd ask the same question eh, in the eh... the members of parliament, you'd get different results

F2: ja.

F1: and that's the problem

I1: that's what's interesting, yeah.

F1: We have elected individuals who do not accurately represent their people.

I1: So maybe it's not a top-priority for most people. So maybe that's the problem? So they are not voting as their top-priority

F1: They're voting

F2: for fish

F1: for fish, yeah (laughter) But they also, some of them might vote because they think this is what people want. Some of them might not know, because they think it's what the people that elected them want because they don't really... like I said, people are afraid of changing.

M2: Oh yeah I forgot (begins to explain for moderators): We have a quite conservative government at the moment...

I1: yeah

M2: ...and they, there are political parties that they do... they normally... (says a word in Faroese) .. they put down a veto, veto? against the marriage bill

I1: ok.

F1: which is ridiculous because they represent 5-6 % of the population

I1: That's the really conservative Christian party?

M2: yeah

F1: exactly. How, how... why should 5-6 % of the people get to veto something that 95% of the people want to talk about?

M2: Cause they're the government

F2: what?

F1/ M2: because they're the government

M1: well, before they said, or they found, well they signed... (saying a word in Faroese) we call it, that “should any ethnical issues rise about, we won’t discuss it and we won’t vote for it.” Even before. It was scheduled before anything that should someone talk about anything we not even wanna discuss it. So it was vetoed from the get-go.

(agreeing noise)

Everything. Also abortion and everything.

F1: But this leads back to the debate about Faroese political structure and the way Faroese people vote, because they don’t really vote for political views, they vote for their friends

I1: because everybody knows someone who is running...

F1: My mom she voted for some guy because, well, “he is one of my friend’s husband. I’m gonna vote for him.” “Do you even know what he is doing?” She voted for (saying a politician’s name).

(laughter)

And I was like “you have no idea. If you knew what he was... you clearly do not know his politics. If you knew his politics, you wouldn’t vote for him.” And then I told her about it and she was like (makes a surprised face) “oh” (silent ‘fuck’)

F2: One girl said: “oh yeah, I’m voting for this guy because in church he usually sits in the front.

(laughter)

It’s a good person.

F1: So, um that question it really, really comes back to Faroese people not really having always good luck, a good hang of how democracy works. Voting for your political believes and not just for your friends or...

F2: Or like, nice-looking

(laughter)

F1: My mom voted for a guy who was one of the most controversial figures in the Faroese political scene mostly because: “He’s my friend’s husband. He’s so much fun at parties.” That’s all she knew.

M1: And ‘he’s from my own village’

F1: yeah.

M1: That’s the same with the (saying something in Faroese)

F1: A lot of people get voted into the parliament more or less because they know a lot of people and they know people and they are nice in church.

M1: I think I know who

F2: (saying a name) haha

M1: People had voted for him because he had promised (speech overlapping, mumble) an entire ... that he will get an undersea tunnel. As long as he promises them the undersea tunnel, they keep voting for him. So he keeps on getting elected every single time...

F1: He, I mean, he has no backing in what he is saying.

F2: no.

F1: He is never gonna do that. He's never gonna...

M1: yeah and I mean everything he said, I mean...

F1: Faroese politics. Give me, it gives me aneurism. This is one of the reasons why I just, I cannot... a lot of people they don't get basic democracy. It's so...

M1: It's what I'm saying the chance to ... it's so small. So if you were to be elected in parliament, you could have more effect there than you could have had in Denmark it's just bigger.

F1: That's true but if you were elected in Denmark properly be elected because you have political views that were, you know, interesting or people would agree with you politically. If you get elected in the Faroe Islands it rarely has a lot to do with your political beliefs. It has to do with where you're from and what you say...

I1: It's more like a high school election

F1: yeah. It really is

I1: Being popular

F1: It's a popularity contest. It's so ridiculous. It has nothing to do with democracy and it's pissing me the fuck off. Which is more less because I probably cannot live there... right now. Until that's fixed.

M1: But at the same time you get "real people" elected, whereas in Denmark you get people who have higher education also that have a sort of political education and, I mean, so few of them are actual "real" or, are housewives or teachers or something.

F1: Is that necessarily a bad thing?

M1: It could be a bad thing

I1: In America politicians are...

I2: Sarah Palin?

(laughter)

I1: well that's a whole other... Politicians are so disconnected in America from ordinary people, so

F1: Some Danish politicians are as well but the problem is that in the Faroe Islands politicians are really, really connected to people they just don't know how to do politics.

M1: Not all of them.

F1: Very few. Most of them are just not really capable. They are not... no offense, they are just not capable of being politicians. They are not handling their responsibilities the way they should. Which is kind of why we are seeing this... the public says, 65 % says yes to gay marriage but people in parliament have no clue what's going on because they talk about fish and they talk about... they have this popularity contest going instead of working on politics.

M1: and also they have this lighter Christian party and some other leaders of that party won't have them voting 'yes'. Because there are some... I mean, I know some of them who would vote 'yes' for gay marriage who are in the parliament now and the government

I1: yeah

M1: But um, the party-leader has required party discipline, meaning that no one has... everyone goes 'no'.

I1: hm.

M1: So either they go against the party and vote 'yes' or they follow the guidelines and vote 'no'. So what should you do?

I1: yeah

(pause)

I1: Do you've...but do you've, do you have any hope? I mean you feel hopeless when it comes to...

M2: no, it's gonna change soon

I1: ok, good, I mean

M1: But then again when I think about Faroese culture because I really think in general they're not very clever.

(laughter)

I mean the basis of democracy is educated people. If you don't have educated people you can't have a democracy. And just by looking at what people vote for, you can see that... why would you vote for them?

F1: Cause they are fun at parties?!

F2: Cause politicians come and give cake?

F1: But that's also, that also relate to the problem with people going the migration issue because if you want a higher education you have to leave. And a lot of people who leave they get a higher education but then they don't go back

(agreeing noise)

So you get a really, really intense brain-drain where everybody that stays behind has

M2: 'brain-drain' (amusement)

F1: It's a realistic term, it's a proper term.

M2: I know

F1: It's a scientific term for it

(laughter)

I'm not making this shit up. But so you get people that stay behind who are more, less the ones who are not getting as educated. And that's the basis for democracy that people are just not getting as educated. The educated ones... they are in Denmark, they're in London, they go to universities, they go traveling, they have international business positions in foreign countries. They don't wanna come back.

M1: Don't you think it's interesting that in that poll... I mean, they did some polls in Denmark and in London as well and Sweden of all the youth who were educated and the majority of them voted for the Liberal and none of them I think voted for the Christian party whereas in the Faroe Island itself the majority is for the Rights and the Liberal Religious Rights so I think it's...

F1: it correlates my old 'brain-drain'

M1: yeah

F1: because the higher educated people are not in the country... and the higher educated people are less likely to vote for the conservative right, Christian right wing. So what you have left is a bunch of people who vote because someone gives them free bread or a cake or because well, he was funny at a party or he had a nice prayer in church, you know

I1: yeah

(discussing the name of the politician)

M1: There is a guy called (saying a name) and he never goes to church, or rarely but every time by election time ...

F2: ah

M1: he makes sure to come to all the meetings at all the churches just to make sure that everyone can see him, so they vote for him. And therefore they think. "Oh he's a religious guy." So he... so he uses that to get votes.

F2: But he's been ridiculed for that

F1: I thought it was...

M1: ok, he didn't get elected this time but he had been

F2: It worked a couple of times

M1: hm.

F1: One of my friends she voted for him the first time she could vote. She voted for him because she liked his butterfly.

F2: He has a nice butterfly, but...

F1: that's how it works, I mean, I get so sad.

I1: butterfly?

F1: He wears a butterfly

I1: oh, bow tie.

F2: bow tie.

(laughter)

I1: I'm thinking (imitates a butterfly with her hands). He has a pet butterfly. I figured it must have been something else.

F1: yeah, she liked the bow tie. That's why she voted for him. That's just...

I1: So, I'm hoping that things are gonna... I mean it seems like things have happened quickly, you know, in the last few years. Because it's just, it's about bringing things out in the open. Like, you know, it more people see it, the more stereotype are broken down and "oh, he is normal", you know. I don't know, I hope it is.

M1: yeah, there is also another kind of depressing mentality about we have to wait until the old people kill of

(laughter)

And then, and then we'll have reunion. But we have to wait until they die.

F1: So we're just waiting for a whole generation to...

F2: Let's just stop with the driving old people to the elections.

(laughter)

F2: But it's also a little sad actually that we have to be normal and all want family and stuff to be accepted, no? Like now people are seeing gay people as boring but still some aren't.

I1: yeah.

F1: I'm not monogamous, and I will never be. So that's not gonna work for me in the Faroe Islands. Just... I don't wanna go there.

F2: That's a whole other debate.

I1: yeah. Well... we don't wanna take all of your whole night but this has been really interesting.

F2: yeah, really.

I2: yeah

I1: Thank you so much for coming.