

## Marriage Migrants to the Faroe Islands

*An Analysis of the Life-World of Non-Western Women Married to the Faroe Islands*

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# **MARRIAGE MIGRANTS TO THE FAROE ISLANDS**

AN ANALYSIS OF THE LIFE-WORLD OF NON-WESTERN WOMEN  
MARRIED TO THE FAROE ISLANDS

BY  
**RUNA PREETI ÍSFELD**

DISSERTATION SUBMITTED 2019



**AALBORG UNIVERSITY**  
DENMARK



# **Marriage Migrants to the Faroe Islands**

**An Analysis of the Life-World of Non-Western Women**

**Married to the Faroe Islands**

**By**

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**University of the Faroe Islands**

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## English Summary

*This PhD thesis is about the life experiences and perspectives of marriage migrants from the global South arriving and making new lives for themselves in the Faroe Islands, a small society in the global North. Women from “third” world countries often experience stereotyping and stigmatisation due to their country of origin. This is due to a history of colonial power as well as unbalanced economic power relations between the “first” world countries and “third” world countries. Women from “third” world countries are often stereotyped for their choice to marry western men, as their choice is considered to be for economical purposes only. Furthermore, they are sometimes referred to as “bought” women or “mail order brides”. There is, at the same time, a pre-construction and pre-perception of them as poor, uneducated and in need of a white male to save them from their misery back home. They are often homogenised as group and their character essentialised as “third” world women. This creates a loss in agency, as the women are not perceived for who they are but for whom they are married to. At the same time, some of these women experience de-skilling in wider society as their credentials are not recognised in the receiving country and furthermore, they are not acquainted with the Faroese and the Danish languages.*

*But who are these women married to the Faroe Islands and how has marriage migration changed their lives? The aim of this dissertation is to gain a knowledge of them as women and the consequences of their choice when choosing marriage migration.*

*This dissertation is based upon 21 semi-structured interviews, where four of them were couple interviews (21 women and four men). As this dissertation investigates diversity among migrant women, I have had to take into consideration how not to fall into the “analysis trap” of (re)producing knowledge of the “third” world women. In other words, avoiding the “analysis trap” is about not (re)producing knowledge about the “other” without taking some intersectional criteria in mind; such as age, background, education, culture, country of origin etc. Therefore, a reflective and hermeneutic approach is applied both when conducting the interviews and doing the analysis. Furthermore, an intersectional approach is applied as a tool to show different dynamics and similarities among the respondents.*

*I have made use of a transdisciplinary theoretical approach to answer my research question. A transdisciplinary approach is a combination of different theoretical thoughts. This approach opens up for different social dynamics which I would not have grasped by applying a single theory. The theoretical concepts I am making use of are, gender theory, post-colonial feminism and Bourdieu’s theory of practice and symbolic*



*violence. I am also drawing on Judith Butler theory of gender performances to analyses the women's expectation of gender and gender negotiations. Furthermore, applying post-colonial feminism helps me analyses how the women experience othering and stereotyping in the Faroe Islands. And Bourdieu's theory of practice is used in analysing change in habitus, how they experience change in the field and how they are subject to symbolic violence. These theoretical concepts will give us an insight into the consequences of marriage migration in the women's lives.*

*The analysis is divided into a three chapter analysis, where the first chapter of the analysis analyses and discussed the women's choice of marriage migration and their experiences with stereotyping. Furthermore, the respondents discuss their expectations before moving the Islands, their choice to marry a Faroese man as a means of resistance against "traditional" gender expectations of them as women in their home country, and lastly I discuss how they do not recognize themselves through the biased discourses of them as women.*

*The second chapter of the analysis focuses on their relationship and negotiations in the marriage and their social relations with their in-laws and the locals. I also make an analysis of the couple interviews,*

*which shows different dynamics among the couples in relation to their background, where they live in the Faroe Islands, religion, age etc.*

*Thirdly, the last chapter of the analysis focuses on how the women (re)position themselves in wider society and their coping strategies. Furthermore, their experiences with de-skilling and the structural hindrances are analysed and discussed. On the other hand, even though some of these women experience de-skilling in wider society, they are earning more money in an unqualified job in the receiving country than in a qualified job in their home country.*

**Keywords:** Marriage Migration, Faroe Islands, Gender, Post-Colonial Feminism, Stereotyping, Othering, De-Skilling.

## Dansk Resumé

*Denne PhD afhandling behandler livserfaringer og perspektiver hos ægteskabsmigranter fra det globale Syd, der ankommer til Færøerne, for at skabe sig en ny tilværelse i dette lille samfund i det globale Nord. Kvinder fra lande i den "tredje" verden oplever ofte stereotypisering og stigmatisering pga. deres geografiske baggrund. Dette beror på kolonihistoriens ulige magtforhold, samt på en fortsat ubalance i de økonomiske magtrelationer mellem "første" og "tredje"-verdenslande. Kvinder fra den "tredje" verden bliver ofte stereotypiseret for deres valg at gifte sig med en vestlig mand, idet deres valg betragtes som udelukkende baseret på ønsket om økonomiske fordele. Endvidere beskrives de undertiden som "købte" kvinder eller "postordrekoner". Samtidig er der en præ-konstruktion og en forudindtaget opfattelse af dem som fattige, uden uddannelse og med behov for en hvid mand, der kan redde dem fra elendigheden i deres hjemland. De bliver ofte homogeniseret som gruppe, og deres personlighed bliver essentialiceret som "tredje"-verdenskvinder. Dette medfører tab af agency, idet kvinderne ikke bliver betragtet som den de er, men i relation til, hvem de er gift med. Yderligere vil mange af disse kvinder opleve dequalificering (på engelsk: de-skilling) i det nye samfund, idet deres uddannelse hjemmefra ikke bliver anerkendt i det modtagende land, og herudover mangler de kendskab til færøsk og dansk sprog.*

*Hvem er disse kvinder så, som gifter sig til Færøerne, og hvordan har ægteskabsmigration forandret deres liv? Formålet med denne afhandling er at skabe viden om dem som kvinder, og konsekvenserne for dem ved at vælge ægteskabsmigration.*

*Afhandlingen er baseret på 21 semistrukturerede samtaler, hvoraf fire af samtalerne var med ægtepar. Da denne afhandling bl.a. undersøger forskellighed blandt indvandrerkvinderne, er jeg nødt til at være bevidst om ikke at falde i analysefælden, hvor man kun (re)producerer kundskab om "tredje"-verdenskvinder, uden at være bevidst om intersektionelle forudsætninger; som f.eks. alder, baggrund, uddannelse oprindelsesland etc. En reflektiv og hermeneutisk tilgang anvendes både i samtalerne gennemførelse og i analysen af dem. Desuden bruger jeg en intersektionel tilgang som et værktøj til at vise forskellige dynamikker og ligheder blandt respondenterne.*

*Jeg har benyttet en transdisciplinær teoretisk tilgang for at besvare problemformuleringen. En transdisciplinær tilgang er en kombination af forskellige teoretiske tankesæt. Denne tilgang åbner op for bevidsthed om forskellige sociale dynamikker, som jeg ikke ville kunne fange ind ved kun at anvende en enkelt teoretisk tilgang. De teoretiske begreber, jeg har benyttet er kønsteori, post-kolonial feminisme og Bourdieus praksisteori samt hans begreb om symbolsk vold. Jeg inddrager Judith Butlers køns-performances for at analysere*

*kvindernes forståelse og forventninger i forhold til kønsroller og kønsforhandling. Endvidere inddrager jeg post-kolonial feminisme for at analysere, hvordan kvinderne oplever othering og stereotypisering i Færøerne. Bourdieus praksisteori bruges til at analysere ændringer i habitus, hvordan kvinderne oplever forandring i felterne, og hvordan de udsættes for symbolsk vold. Disse teoretiske begreber giver os indsigt i konsekvenserne af ægteskabsmigration for kvindernes liv.*

*Analysen er opdelt i tre kapitler, hvor det første kapitel analyserer og diskuterer kvindernes valg af ægteskabsmigration og oplevelser af stereotypisering. Endvidere diskuteres her kvindernes forventninger forud for deres migration til Færøerne, samt deres valg at gifte sig med en færøsk mand som en måde at gøre op med "traditionelle" kønsforventninger i deres hjemland. Endelig diskuteres i dette kapitel, hvorledes kvinderne ikke genkender sig selv som kvinder i den stereotypisering de oplever i det omliggende samfund.*

*I analysens andet kapitel fokuseres der på kvindernes parforhold og forhandlinger i ægteskabet, samt de sociale relationer til svigerfamilien og andre i lokalsamfundet. Jeg har også analyseret parsamtalerne, hvor det fremgår at forskellige dynamikker forefindes i de forskellige parforhold mht. deres baggrund, hvor i Færøerne de bor, religion, alder etc.*

*Analysens tredje og sidste kapitel fokuserer på, hvordan kvinderne (re)positionerer sig i samfundet og deres stragier for at klare sig i dette nye samfund. Endvidere diskuteres deres erfaringer med de-skilling og strukturelle forhindringer. Jeg diskuterer det forhold, at selv om kvinderne oplever de-skilling, tilbyder deres nye hjemland højere lønninger for lavere stillinger, end de var vant til i deres oprindelseslande.*

**Stikkord:** Ægteskabsmigration, Færøerne, Køn, Post-Kolonial Feminisme, Stereotypisering, Othering, De-Skilling.

## Føroyskur Samandráttur

*Hendan PhD-ritgerðin viðger lívsroyndir og sjónarhorn hjá kvinnuligum hjúnarbandstilflytarum, ið eru fluttar úr syðra parti av heiminum, fyri at skapa sær eina tilveru í Føroyum, hesum lítla samfelagnum norðara parti heimsins. Kvinnur úr londum í “triðja” heiminum uppliva mangan stereotypisering og stigmatisering, grundað einfalt á teirra landafrøðiliga uppruna. Hetta er orsakað av ójøvnu valdsviðurskiftunum frá hjálandatíðini, og sum er ført víðari í eini framhaldandi ójavnvág í búskaparligu valdsviðurskiftunum millum londini í “fyrsta” og “triðja” heiminum. Kvinnur úr “triðja” heiminum verða ofta stereotypiseraðar fyri teirra val at gifta seg við einum vesturlendskum manni, við tað at teirra val verður sæð sum einans grundað á teirra ynski um fíggarligar fyrimunir. Eisini verða tær av og á skýrðar sum “keyptar” kvinnur ella “bílagdar á netinum”. Samstundis ráða millum fólk fordómar um hesar kvinnur, har ein prekonstruerað fatan av teimum er, at tær eru fátækar, uttan útbúgving, og hava tørv á einum hvítum manni, ið kann bjarga teimum úr vesældóminum í teirra heimlandi. Hóast teirra landafrøðiliga og mentanarliga bakgrund er sera ymisk og fjøltáttað, eins og tær sum einstaklingar eru sera ymissar, verða tær sæddar sum ein homogenur bólkur, og teirra persónsmenska verður essensialiserað sum “triðja”-heims kvinnur. Tær verða fataðar sum persónar uttan egið virkisføri (samfel.fr. agency, en.), tí ein slík kvinna verður ikki sædd, sum tann hon er, men í mun til,*

*hvønn hon er gift við. Eisini uppliva nógvar av hesum kvinnum eina førleikaniðurstigan (en. de-skilling) í nýggja samfelagnum, við tað at teirra útbúgving úr upprunalandinum ikki verður viðurkend í nýggja heimlandinum, og harumframt gerst teirra støða uppafur veikari, tá teimum manglar kunnleika til føroyskt og danskt mál.*

*Hvørjar eru so hesar kvinnur, ið gifta seg til Føroya, og hvussu hefur hjúnarbandstilflyting broytt teirra lív? Endamálið við hesi ritgerð er útvega kunnleika um tær sum kvinnur, og eisini um avleiðingarnar fyri tær við at velja at flyta til eitt nýtt land, Føroyar, fyri at fara í hjúnarband við ein mann her.*

*Ritgerðin er grundað á 21 hálvskipaðar samrøður, og av hesum eru fyra gjørdar við hjún. Við tað, at henda ritgerð m.a. kannar ymisleika millum hesar tilflytarakvinnur, noyðist eg at vera tilvitað um ikki at detta í greiningarfelluna, har ið ein bara ótilvitað (endur)framleiðir kunnleika um “triðja”-heims kvinnur, uttan at hava í huga interseksjonellar fyritleykir; sum t.d. aldur, bakgrund, útbúgving, upprunaheimland o.s.fr. Ein refleksivur og tulkandi arbeiðsháttur hefur verið nýttur bæði í sjálvum samrøðunum, og í greiningini av teimum. Harumframt brúki eg ein interseksjonellan arbeiðshátt sum amboð, fyri at vísa á ymsar dynamikkir millum svarpersónarnar, men samstundis eisini, hvussu teir eru líkir.*



*Eg havi nýtt ein transdisiplineran ástøðiligan arbeiðshátt, fyri at svara spurdóminum. Ein transdisiplinerur arbeiðsháttur er ein samanseting av ymsum ástøðiligum hugsunarhættum. Ein slíkur arbeiðsháttur letur upp fyri tilvitsku um ymsar sosialar dynamikkir, sum eg ikki hevði kunnað fangað inn við bara at nýtt ein einstakan ástøðiligan arbeiðshátt. Tey ástøðiligu hugtøkini, ið eg havi nýtt eru kynsástøði, post-kolonial feminisma, praksisástøðið hjá Bourdieu og eisini hansara hugtak um symbolskan harðskap. Eg taki uppí viðgerðina hugtakið um kyns-framførslur (gender performances) hjá Judith Butler, fyri at greina, hvussu kvinnurnar skilja, og hvat tær vænta av, kynsleiklutunum og kynssamráðingunum. Víðari nýti eg post-koloniala feminismu, tá ið eg greini, hvussu kvinnurnar uppliva hingerðing og stereotypisering í Føroyum. Praksisástøðið hjá Bourdieu verður nýtt, tá ið greini broytingar í habitus, hvussu kvinnurnar uppliva broyting í feltunum, og hvussu tær verða útsettar fyri symbolskan harðskap. Hesi ástøðiligu hugtøk geva innlit í avleiðingarnar av hjúnarbandstílflyting fyri lívið hjá hesum kvinnum.*

*Greiningin er deild upp í tríggjar kapitlar, har hin fyrsti greinar og umrøður valið hjá kvinnunum at flyta fyri at fara í hjúnarband og, hvussu tær uppliva stereotypisering. Víðari verður her umrøtt, hvørjar væntanir ið kvinnurnar hava, áðrenn tær flyta til Føroya. Eisini verður teirra avgerð at gifta seg við einum føroyskum manni umrøtt, sum ein háttur hjá teimum at gera upp við “siðbundnar” kynsvæntanir í teirra*

*heimlandi. Harumframt verður eisini í hesum kapitli umrøtt, hvussu kvinnurnar ikki kenna seg aftur sum kvinnur í teirri stereotypisering, sum tær uppliva í samfelagnum kring tær.*

*Í øðrum kapitli av greiningini verður sjóneykan sett á parløgini hjá kvinnunum og samráðingarnar innan hjúnarbandið, og eisini á viðurskiftini við verfamiljuna og onnur í nærsamfelagnum. Eg havi eisini greinað hjúnasamrøðurnar, har ið tað sýnist sum ymsir dynamikkir gera seg galdandi ymsu parløgunum viðvíkjandi teirra bakgrund, hvar í Føroyum tey búa, átrúnað, aldur o.a.*

*Í triðja og seinasta kapitli í greiningini verður hugt nærri at, hvussu kvinnurnar (endur)skapa sær eina støðu í nýggja samfelagnum og teirra strategiir fyri at fóta sær í hesum nýggja samfelagnum. Eisini verða teirra royndir av førleika-niðurstigan og skipanarligum forðingum viðgjørdar. Eg umrøði her ta støðu, at hóast kvinnurnar uppliva eina niðurstigan í teirra førleikum, so bjóðar nýggja heimlandið kortini hægri inntøku í slíkum “lægri” størvum, enn tær vóru vanar við frá teirra upprunalandi.*

**Stikkorð:** Hjúnarbandstilflyting, Føroyar, kyn, post-kolonial feminisma, stereotypisering, hinging, førleikaniðurstigan.

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Runa Preeti Ísfeld

April 2019

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

*Faroese people should be open and make foreigners feel more welcome here and be more warm – and understand that we are also normal and not different from them. They should not look down on us, because we are human as well. I do understand that having foreigners here is very new to Faroese people, but they need to get used to it and give us more respect and not stigmatise us as alien and – most importantly – not look down on us. (Anna, interview 2017)*

Even though there has been an increase in marriage migration to the Faroe Islands, these marriages are to some degree stereotyped because there are some conundrums revolving around intercultural marriages in the Faroe Islands. The discourses revolving around these couples are sometimes biased and stereotyped, with some of the women being referred to as “mail-order brides” or “bought on the internet”, with their main objective presented as wanting to attain a certain economic standard or “using” Faroese men economically. Their characters and their choice to marry a Faroese man are reduced to economic incentives, and their “motives” are sometimes questioned by their in-laws. Likewise, Faroese men involved in intercultural marriages find themselves stereotyped as “bachelors” (*gamal*

*drongur*),<sup>1</sup> where the narratives are meant to be a “joke” but end up causing stereotyping. These men are perceived as being in need of a foreign wife to replace the role of their mothers and take care of their needs. They are also perceived as not attractive to Faroese women, and due to this the discourses around Faroese men in intercultural marriages is quite biased.

My respondent Anna, quoted above, is a young woman from Africa who married into the Faroe Islands. We met up at my office for the interview, where she reflected upon her new life and how migrating to the Faroe Islands has changed and shaped her life as a woman. Like many other migrant women marrying into the Faroe Islands, she has also experienced being stigmatised for her choice as a non-European woman to marry a Faroese man. She sometimes feels victimised and commodified for her choice by some Faroese people. Marriage migrants are often stereotyped, as there are certain pre-constructions and pre-discourses among Faroese people about who these women are and what their characters are as women. They are often essentialised as being docile, traditional and good “caretakers” for their husbands, and in need of a man to save them from the misery in their home country.

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<sup>1</sup> The term “bachelor” in the Faroe Islands often refers to men who are quite odd and who live with their parents even though they are adults.

As already mentioned, during the last few years the Faroe Islands have experienced a shift in the global pattern of migration, in which women from East Asian countries, such as the Philippines and Thailand, are entering the country as new brides. However, in recent years, female migrants from African countries have added to this cross-border marriage trend (Table 2.2; Hagstova Føroya special retrieve 2016a). This new phenomenon is quite interesting within this remote geographical context, as the Faroe Islands are a small group of islands still known for being a monoculture and a homogeneous society. This new migration pattern is changing the demography of the Faroe Islands as marriage migration increases. This change in demography will also have an influence on the dynamics of gender performances and culture as the migrant women are entering the Islands with different cultures, norms and understandings.

According to gender theories, space and place construct gender performances, and this construction differs according to culture, religion and the structures of the place. Gender behaviour consists of repertoires that organise, regulate, define and reproduce the relationship between men and women. This behavioural system thus produces “gender”, expressed through masculinity and femininity (Alcoff 2006). Marriage migration involving spouses from different cultures will inevitably encounter cultural differences (Chaudhuri, Morash and Yingling 2014). From an everyday perspective, these

gender and cultural differences may manifest as a challenge to the marriage. However, in moving to the small, homogeneous and still mono-cultural society of the Faroe Islands, where family members still play a part in everyday life (Hayfield 2018; Knudsen 2010), migrants may to some extent recognise similarities to their own culture and gender performances. This is a question which requires further empirical research. At the same time, the Faroe Islands as a small-scale society does display distinct social and family relations within which relations and relationships with one another are quite tight (Gaini 2013). Citizens often relate to each other by family names because these are of significant importance in relation to status, kinship and social relationships. Women from outside marrying Faroese men often lose their agency because they are without a “history” and the locals cannot relate to them other than in terms of the person they have married. Their agency is invisible, because they are identified by whom and into which family they have married.

Accordingly, these women have a significant role in Faroese society; they become the wives of local men who would in many cases probably have otherwise remained single due to the demographic deficit of women in the Islands. Furthermore, as mothers, they are contributing to securing the intergenerational reproduction of the population; they are to an extent becoming “mothers of our nation” (Cheng 2013). However, they are often perceived as victims of

domestic violence or as marrying men who will dominate them. Their gender performances are reduced to the image of them as traditional and non-liberated women due to their countries of origin.

At the same time, some of the men are also stereotyped and regarded as bachelors who desire a subordinate woman who can take care of them and their household (Constable 2003), or sometimes as not attractive enough on the local “marriage market” for Faroese women. Negative discourses and pre-constructions of these women in couples with Faroese men may have a negative effect on them as they often feel looked down upon and not appreciated as women in society. Furthermore, these discourses commodify them as women and individuals because they are being perceived as “selling” themselves as a commodity in order to marry a western partner. Their characters and potential as women and individuals are not taken into consideration when they are essentialised due to their country of origin, which is often poorer than the Faroe Islands. They are sometimes met with scepticism from their in-laws’ side, with their husbands-to-be often advised to draw up a pre-nuptial agreement in case the (foreign) woman is marrying him only for economic reasons. In other words, their characters and motives are being questioned, while their gender performance and womanhood are essentialised and stereotyped by some family members and other locals. Additionally, their culture and way of living are also othered by some

of the in-laws and other locals, according to evidence collected during my interviews.

Another side-effect of migration is the downward or upward social mobility often experienced by marriage migrants in the Islands. They may experience upward mobility by leaving their home country to marry into the richer North but, at the same time, there are some consequences to their choices. Marriage migrants in the Faroe Islands often experience downward mobility, which means that their human capital is not recognised; this leads to de-skilling and marginalisation on the labour market, whereby migrants are obliged to take on unskilled work. Those who do have cultural capital (for example, through a university degree from their home country) experience de-skilling on the labour market (Niclasen 2015; Høgnesen 2009 and 2015) and find themselves at the lower end of the wage spectrum. Such downward social mobility is likely to affect the women's identity as they are othered and marginalised in the wider society. As women, they find coping strategies to make sense of their new situation in order to make things work in the private sphere.

Other than facing suspicions about their characters as women, marriage migrants are marginalised and othered on the labour market, among family members and locals, with their gender performances and womanhood being stereotyped. Their agency and rational choices

are often not taken into consideration because they are originally from poorer countries than the Faroe Islands. Their agency is diminished to that of victims of globalisation; thus, economic incentives and a better life are considered to be the main reasons why they “sold” themselves as women to marry a foreigner. The simplistic description and stereotyping of these women leads to the danger of marginalisation, leaving them without agency and in which a biased relationship of who they are as women is constructed. Until now, the discussion about married migrants in the Faroe Islands has been quite biased, with them being perceived as “victims” of the men they have married. The other aspect of stereotyping is the over-representation of migrant women married to Faroese men seeking help at the women’s shelter<sup>2</sup>. The women’s shelter in the Faroe Islands has been vocal about the problem of migrant women seeking help there due to being victims of Faroese men. The combination of not speaking the language, not knowing their rights as citizens and a lack of networking makes some of them vulnerable, and some men have taken advantage of the situation, says Elin Reinert Planck, leader of the Women’s Shelter House in the Faroe Islands.

Another aspect of stereotyping is the “gold-digger” discourse, in which some Faroese men married to migrant women are deceived after

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<sup>2</sup> <https://midlabreyt.wordpress.com/2012/10/30/yvirtoka-av-utlendingamali/>

marriage. These reasons are some of the controversies focused upon and talked about and this creates a biased image of who the migrant woman is. However, this does not give us a description of who migrant women engaged in marriage migration to the Faroe Islands actually are.

The behaviours of human beings concerning their interests and activities have to be analysed within a context of norms, interests and ethical concerns; in other words, individuals/agents and their desires cannot be defined within universal terms. My main interest in this thesis is to discover: why do these women choose to migrate to the Faroe Islands and what are their incentives for migration? Do they recognise themselves as “mail-order brides” or as ordered on the internet? And to what extent has marriage migration changed and shaped their lives?



## 1.1 Thesis Problem Formulation

This thesis focuses on migrant women from non-western countries married to Faroese men. Their experiences of being married in the Faroe Islands and how choosing a foreign partner has changed their lives will be discussed and analysed. Furthermore, I will explore what they were expecting and looking for in a partner and how they have experienced being stereotyped and othered in the receiving country for their choice to marry a Faroese man. Additionally, their experiences of being othered and marginalised in the wider society, i.e. on the labour market, will also be discussed. In other words, how do they position themselves as women, wives and citizens in the Faroe Islands? And how did this decision transform their lives?

Therefore, the research question guiding my PhD dissertation is:

***How has marriage migration influenced and shaped the lives of migrant women marrying into the Faroe Islands?***

Through this formulation of my research question, the thesis will examine and discuss these women's experiences and perceptions of themselves as women, and I will reflect upon their experiences with othering and stereotyping. Furthermore, I will analyse and discuss how marriage migration has changed their lives, at both the private and societal levels. I have chosen to answer the research question by

dividing my analysis into three chapters, and within each chapter I will analyse and discuss different themes.

- 1) In the first chapter of the analysis, I focus on the women's choice and agency and why they chose to marry a Faroese partner.
- 2) In the second chapter, I will discuss their family relationships and social relations in the Faroe Islands.
- 3) The third chapter is about their experiences in the wider society and how they have (re)positioned themselves as women in Faroese society.

My thesis is empirically based. I have conducted 21 semi-structured interviews, of which four are couple interviews, i.e. involving a joint interview with spouses, a Faroese husband and a non-western wife. All the interviews were conducted in English. I prepared different themes which I discussed with my respondents during the interview. This thesis is based upon gaining an understanding of migrant women without essentialising their desires or goals as individuals. Hence; their thoughts upon why they chose a western partner and the reasons why they chose marriage migration will be analysed and discussed in this thesis. The central theoretical concepts I have chosen for this thesis are: gender performances/roles, post-colonial feminism and othering; in addition, I also apply Bourdieu's theory of practice, whereby the migrants' habitus and interactions with the field will be discussed and

analysed. In other words, I will discuss their coping strategies in relation to how they (re)position themselves as agents in their new society.

### 1.2 Interest in This Particular Subject

I am a “love-migrant” myself and moved to the Faroe Islands in December 1999. This decision completely changed my life, as I had to learn two new languages (Faroese and Danish), a new culture and a new way of living. I had to learn how to position myself within the new field and make use of my human capital. At that time (the year 2000), there were very few foreigners in the Faroe Islands and services were offered in no other languages than Faroese, Danish or other Scandinavian languages.

After five years in Denmark, I moved back to the Islands in 2015 and noticed a demographic change. There were more immigrants visible on the streets, in shops and workplaces, and more mixed-race children with one parent not of Faroese descent were attending kindergarten. I was interested in knowing more about who these women were, and how they managed in the Islands because there are no integration policies directed towards helping them become included in society.

It is my personal experience that the migrant community has a visible/invisible status in the Faroe Islands<sup>3</sup>: they are visible within the community, i.e. within families, at school and kindergarten, but invisible in society, as they are not politically represented and the government is not meeting their needs as individuals or groups. At the same time, they are overrepresented and marginalised in unqualified jobs. With a lack of integration policy in the Faroe Islands, these women are left on their own to (re)position themselves as women, wives, mothers, workers and citizens. It is mainly their husbands, in-laws or ethnic friends who advise or help them with the inclusion and integration process. These observations are based upon the integration recommendations I made to the municipality of Tórshavn in 2015, when I interviewed migrants from different countries in order to learn about their daily challenges.

In summer 2019, part of the Alien Act concerning work and residence permits will transfer jurisdictionally from Denmark to the Faroe Islands. But still, there is an ongoing discussion about how to integrate and include migrants into society as there are no current integration policies at the “state level”. The municipalities, on the other hand, are

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<sup>3</sup> I conducted a case study about migrant women in the Islands in 2009 for my BA project and an Integration Recommendation project for the Municipality of Tórshavn in 2015.

trying to incorporate language lessons locally because it is not compulsory for migrants to learn the local language in order to obtain a permanent residence permit in the Faroe Islands. They are also organising social events to include migrants in the community.

International research within gender and migration has mostly focused upon economic incentives to explain why women from the South desire to migrate to the North. This limits insights into other incentives and constructs a biased understanding of these women's choices, without taking into consideration other incentives as to why they choose to marry into the North. I am particularly curious to learn about other incentives than economic reasons for why my respondents have chosen to migrate to the Faroe Islands. In other words, what were their incentives, desires and dreams as women? Furthermore, there is a need to perceive these women as a diversified group with different backgrounds, without essentialising them as a group.

Gender research in the Faroe Islands has mainly focused upon young Faroese leaving the Islands in pursuit of tertiary education and frequently not returning (Høvgaard 2015; Grunfelder et al. 2016; Á Rógvi and Reistrup 2012). The net out-migration of women from the Faroe Islands has led to a female deficit as of 2015 of approximately

2,100 women within the total population<sup>4</sup> aged under 70 years, and a deficit of approximately 1,000 women in the fertile age range of 20–39 years (Statistics Faroe Islands 2015)<sup>5</sup>. Much debate has focused upon how to make it more attractive for native Faroese women to choose the Faroe Islands as their permanent home.

As there is no particular research done about migrant women and the consequences of migration into the Faroe Islands, I expect that this research will contribute to gaining an understanding of and knowledge about the women's choice to marry Faroese men; in other words, who they are as agents without identifying them through whom they have married.

Furthermore, with the ongoing discussion of “third-world” women being essentialised and stereotyped, I expect my research to contribute to shedding light upon the differences among women without essentialising them as a group. The women's own perspectives and thoughts about their choice of marriage migration will be the focus; in other words, what were their hopes, dreams and desires when they made the decision to marry and migrate to the Faroe Islands? What kind of structures and gender performances are

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<sup>4</sup> Total population of 48,000 inhabitants.

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.hagstova.fo/fo/talt-og-hagreit/ibugvar/folkasamanseting-aldurs-og-kynsbyti>

they resisting by choosing marriage migration? Lastly, as gender equality and diversity are a matter for discussion within gender studies, feminism and post-colonial feminism, I expect my research to contribute to this ongoing discussion.

### 1.3 Victims or Agents?

Marriage migration has been the object of much research during the past few years and its gendered aspect has been much discussed, given that it mostly consists of women from the South marrying men from the North (Weiss, Yi and Zhang 2018). Marriage migration refers to marriages between two individuals from different countries who cross borders in order to get married. In 2010, marriage migration constituted more than 40 percent of newly registered marriages in countries such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Switzerland and Cyprus (Weiss, Yi and Zhang 2018), whereas in larger countries such as Spain, France and Germany, registered marriage migration was around 20 percent. Furthermore, in countries such as the United States, marriage migration tripled between the years 1960 and 1997 from 9 percent to 27 percent (Constable 2003).

East Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, Hong Kong, Thailand and Vietnam are seen as “new” in being both receiving and sending countries when it comes to cross-border marriages (Yang and Lu 2010). The feminisation of migration in both East Asia and developed

countries has mainly been analysed as a trend and result of globalisation (Hugo 2005), whereby these women are seen as cheap labour and/or as care workers or in domestic service. Thus, this framework of conceptualising female migration has created a gendered and racialised order, under which women involved in marriage migration were seen as commodified reproductive labour (Piper 2000; Hsia 2002). But women involved in marriage migration cannot be compared to labour migrants and/or trafficking in women, because their migration path and reasons for migration are different.

Following neoclassical economic approaches, Borjas (1989) and Todaro (1969) explain the mutual benefits of international migration, whereby rational individuals are the major cause of migration, and where economic incentives are the main reason why women from the poorer South marry men in developed countries. Different theoretical frameworks have been applied to analyse the push and pull factors affecting female migrants from the sending and receiving countries. Even if economic benefits are also an incentive for marriage migration among non-western women, this does not explain the other layers as to why women choose migration. Likewise, the gender issue and how this decision affects them personally and their process of positioning themselves in their new social fields is left out by reducing migration to only economic incentives. There is also a tendency to qualify gender migration and marriage migration as a homogeneous phenomenon, in



which there is no distinction made between different groups of marriage migrants or their social backgrounds. These are some of the research gaps I aim to address in this dissertation. A framework understanding other layers of gender and migrations, where the individual, gender, positioning and kinship perspectives are taken into consideration is lacking when analysing marriage migration (Constable 2004).

Since the 1990s, a more recent wave of scholarship has looked at cross-border marriages more as a social phenomenon, and at how marriage migration changes the lives of those involved and their kin at home (Constable 2004; Yang and Lu 2010; Williams 2010; Charsley 2012). Hypergamy and upward social mobility are the concepts discussed concerning marriage migration; the concept of hypergamy is defined as upward mobility through marriage when women from the poorer South marry men from the richer North (Constable 2003) in order to gain social status and position in society. However, the concept of hypergamy is quite complex because women from “third-world” countries often experience downward mobility in the receiving country as they are marginalised on the labour market. Importantly, migrant women are an important asset for the receiving society, both in the private sphere and within the labour market because they are both contributing to the demography by having children and taking jobs which locals do not want to undertake.

The universal way of understanding women and gender equality has been criticised by post-colonial feminism and contemporary feminism because there was/is an essentialisation and construction of “third-world” women as the other. Rather than viewing women as “powerless” and men as the ones dominating and having power over women, contemporary feminists have chosen to analyse the concepts of power and gender through an intersectional lens whereby power, ideology, representation and positionality are discussed (Constable 2003). Feminism’s main criticism and aim was to deconstruct women as subject and the other within social science, where there was an absence of empirical and theoretical representations of women (Mulinari 1995). However, the universal models and methods of western feminist work have led to a construction of “third-world” women as the other because there was a lack of understanding or methodological tools concerning race, culture and history of the “other” (Mulinari 1995).

Biased research within marriage migration has depicted migrant women as victims of the white male, with their agency being ripped away by some western feminist approaches; the notion of power was described as something men “have” and women do not because they are from poorer countries than those in the North. The feminist discourses of the 1970s took a universal perspective upon the institution of marriage as a form for patriarchy and repression of

women. This universal understanding characterised the institution of marriage and men as a set of power relations between men and women (Constable 2003). Women from “third-world” countries engaging in marriage migration were characterised as victims of the economics and patriarchy of western men. They are portrayed as women who would sell themselves for money and a better life no matter what the circumstances; they are often made passive in their choice of marriage migration due to the discourses surrounding them describing them as women without agency or choice (Constable 2003). Nicole Constable (2003) tried to uncover the phenomenon of “mail-order” brides in her work with ethnographic research involving Chinese women, Filipinas and US men upon the subject of internet dating and marriage migration to the USA. Constable’s aim was to depict the stereotyping and stigmatisation of cross-cultural couples by conducting interviews with both men and women involved in marriage migration or relationships. “Third-world” women were given a voice and agency in order to enable an understanding of the power relations within the couples, and furthermore to give the women considered to be “mail-order” brides a voice and agency (Constable 2003). Contemporary feminism and post-colonial feminism have focused on gender heterogeneity and the intersectional differences of class, gender, race, nationality and so on (Constable 1997), thus providing

more nuanced analyses of the phenomenon of cross-border marriage migration.

Sine Plambech's research (2005) also discusses the phenomenon of the "mail-order" bride within a Danish context, where women from Thailand married to Danish men are also perceived as victims. The transnational perspective and economic perspective of global care are discussed in her article. The complexities of migration and gender are overlooked and simplified when women from non-western countries are linked to human trafficking (Plambech 2005) because the complex realities and processes that influence the women's choices are overlooked by categorising them as "mail-order brides" or trafficked women.

Marriage migration is, among other things, a strategy used by men to form households within a disadvantageous marriage market (Yang and Lu 2010). Men who choose marriage migration or marry women from poorer countries than the North, are often stigmatised; they are described as men who desire to marry women they can dominate. This stigmatisation and stereotyping of men marrying foreign women exists in the Faroe Islands; such men are often depicted as bachelors (*gamlir*

*dreingir*), who need a woman to replace their mothers<sup>6</sup> (in gossip among the locals). Demographically, the Faroe Islands have a deficit of women; thus, men find themselves a disadvantaged group on the marriage market. The Faroe Islands is among the Nordic countries with the highest birth rate per individual (Nordic Statistic 2017)<sup>7</sup>, and migrant women contribute to these statistics when they come to dwell in the Islands and start families. Some of them also bring their children along from previous marriages or relationships (Table 2.5; Hagstova, special retrieve 2016b). Further research needs to be conducted in order to learn how this growth in the migrant population will change the still homogeneous demography of the Faroe Islands in terms of culture, gender performances and language.

#### 1.4 Thesis Structure

I would like to clarify that this thesis will not draw upon migration as a theoretical perspective, because I am focusing upon the *consequences* of migration; that is, how does migration change, challenge or affect migrants' life sphere? This PhD is trans-disciplinary, and takes into consideration women's lives and experiences and the consequences of migration within their personal lives, family/social life and society.

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<sup>6</sup>There has been no research done on this subject. But in a small-scale society where everybody knows each other, there are discourses and gossip about who is marrying a foreign woman and why.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.norden.org/en/news/nordic-statistics-2017-nordic-region-returns-surplus>

To gain an understanding of the migrant and her life sphere, I have applied gender theories/concepts, post-colonial feminism concepts and sociological theories. I argue that these concepts will give us a better understanding of these migrant women living in Faroese society, as well as the production or reproduction of gender from one society to the other. In order to understand these migrant women, it is important to understand their reality and their perceptions of themselves, their desires and their understandings of equality, marriage and gender roles.

Throughout this dissertation, I will discuss how migrant women perceive themselves as women, how they perceive and interpret the changes in their lives, how they experience their social life and family life and, lastly, how they navigate within their new society. The concept of “otherness” will be discussed concerning their womanhood, experiences on the labour market and in social life. To support the concept of “otherness”, theories on post-colonial feminism, gender theories and Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, field and capital and symbolic capital will be applied as reflective analytical tools. These theoretical approaches and key concepts will be introduced and further elaborated upon in Chapter 3.

First, however, I present a brief characterisation of Faroese society in Chapter 2, including the numbers of migrants living in the Islands and

their marital status. Chapter 3 is, as mentioned, dedicated to my theoretical and conceptual framework and, in Chapter 4, I present and elaborate upon my research design, methodological considerations and data set. Chapters 5, 6 and 7 cover the analysis, and here the empirical data is theoretically discussed. Furthermore, I include a discussion for each analytical part.

In Chapter 8, I summarise and re-visit the theoretical and methodological framework chosen and return to a discussion of the usefulness of my particular co-constellation of theories and concepts for understanding my case. Chapter 9 concludes the dissertation.

## Chapter 2: A Description of the Faroe Islands as a Society

The Faroe Islands is a small group of 18 islands situated in the North Atlantic Ocean, between Great Britain and Iceland, with a population of 51,000 inhabitants. The Islands are still formally under the rule of the Danish Kingdom, but they do have their own system of autonomy. Work, gender and wage relations among Faroese men and women are often defined as unequal. Almost 40 percent of the population lives in Tórshavn, the capital of the Faroe Islands, where the service centres, administration and political centre are located (Eythórssen, Fellmann and Hovgaard 2004).

As a remote island community, the Faroe Islands economy is highly dependent upon the fishing industry. But, at the same time, we have to take into consideration that only 14 percent of the population work within this industry, compared to the 1980s, when 25 percent of the population was employed in this way. Table 2.1 shows that the Faroe Islands is a society in change, in which from the 1980s until now the total population has grown by approximately 5,000, while at the same time the total number employed in the fishing industry has shrunk by approximately 2,500 (Hagstova Føroyar 2018).



**Table 2.1 Comparison between 1988 and 2018 in the employment of men and women in the main fishing sectors as a percentage of total workforce**

| Year |       | Employed in Fishing |      | Employed in Fish Farming + Landbased Fish Processing |      | Total Fishing Industry |      | Employed in All Sectors in Total |     |
|------|-------|---------------------|------|--|------|------------------------|------|----------------------------------|-----|
|      |       | Number              | %    | Number   | %    | Number                 | %    | Number                           | %   |
| 1988 | Total | 2,887               | 11.5 | 3,406  | 13.6 | 6,293                  | 25.1 | 25,058                           | 100 |
|      | Women | 272                 | 2.5  | 1,862  | 17.2 | 2,134                  | 19.7 | 10,841                           | 100 |
|      | Men   | 2,615               | 18.4 | 1,544  | 10.9 | 4,159                  | 29.3 | 14,217                           | 100 |
| 2018 | Total | 1,524               | 5.6  | 2,236  | 8.3  | 3,760                  | 13.9 | 27,066                           | 100 |
|      | Women | 53                  | 0.4  | 959  | 7.4  | 1,012                  | 7.8  | 13,002                           | 100 |
|      | Men   | 1,471               | 10.5 | 1,277  | 9.1  | 2,748                  | 19.5 | 14,064                           | 100 |

The Faroe Islands have an unequal gender balance whereby there is a deficit of women of fertile age. However, during the last three years, there has been a change in demography, with young Faroese settling back on the islands. Nevertheless, the statistics show that this increase is mostly within the male population rather than the female (Kvf News 14.03.2019)<sup>8</sup>. The migration of individuals from countries outside the Nordic region is also contributing to the growth in population.

<sup>8</sup> <https://kvf.fo/greinar/2019/03/14/fleiri-menn-flyta-til-foroya>

Compared to other Nordic countries, the Faroe Islands are described as more “traditional”. Women are younger when they become mothers for the first time in the Faroe Islands compared to Denmark (Kvf News 17.10.2015)<sup>9</sup> and the percentage of women taking part-time jobs is higher in the Faroe Islands than other Nordic countries or other European countries (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016). Recent research on gender and the labour market shows that Faroese women working in the public sector are more willing to work part time and make family life a priority than in other Nordic countries (Hayfield 2018). This is because family welfare and being “a good mother” is an important aspect of being a woman in the Islands. Recent research has also shown a high percentage of Faroese women involved in unpaid work; i.e., women are more willing to conform their lifestyle and work-life balance according to the needs of their family, such as bringing up children and housework (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016). With Faroese women gaining higher education, the fishing industry is not attractive to them. Due to this, it is mostly migrant women who work in the fish factories or cleaning jobs. At the same time, the Faroese labour market is highly gender segregated when it comes to occupation, with a hierarchy within both occupation and education (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016) where most women are within

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<sup>9</sup> <http://kvf.fo/greinar/2015/10/17/foroyskar-mammur-yngri-enn-i-grannalondunum>

occupations such as care, cleaning jobs, health and services. At the moment, the majority of migrants are on the lower strata of the wage pyramid, where they are doing jobs that are not attractive to locals, such as cleaning jobs and fish-factory work (Høghesen 2009, 2015; Niclasen 2015).

The Ministry of Social Affairs aims to have an equal society where both women and men have equal opportunities on the labour market, an equal chance at higher education, and equal pay; in other words, a society minimising the gender gap (Javnstøðupolitikk 2018 – Gender Equality Politics 2018). At the same time, migrants and equal rights are mentioned only once in relation to the labour market and language. Other issues, such as social issues, (re-)education, or migrant women in violent relationships, are forgotten or set aside.

In the following section, I will give a description of migrants from non-western countries living in the Faroe Islands, their civil status and where they live in the Islands.

## 2.1 Migrant Women in the Faroe Islands

During the last 13 years, there has been a change in demography in the Faroe Islands, with migrants entering the Islands as brides, husbands, workers and athletes. The majority of non-western migrants to the Faroe Islands are women from East Asian and African countries. Appendix 1 shows a diagram of an increase in migration

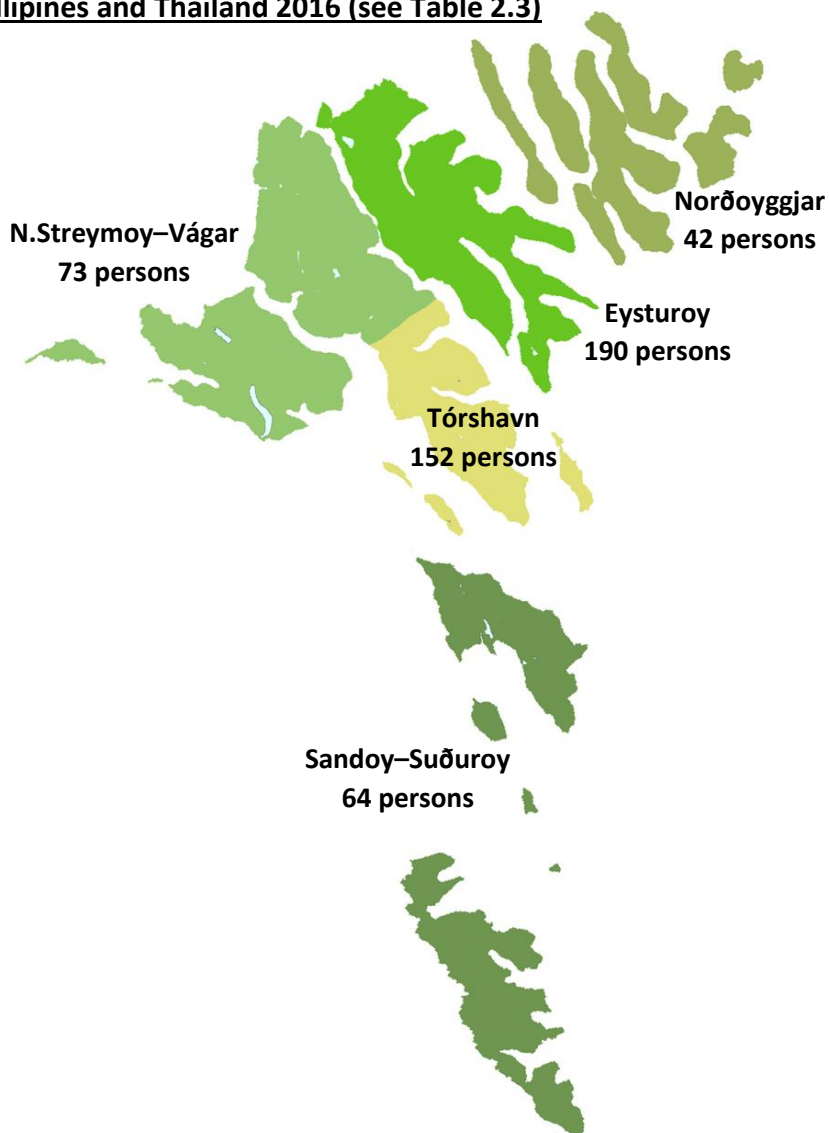
from Africa, the Philippines and Thailand from 2000 to July 2015. As shown in table 2.2 and Appendix 1, it is mostly women entering the Faroe Islands from these countries. With this pace of marriage migration, the Faroe Islands can expect changes on both a cultural and a language level.

Most of the migrants residing and working in the Faroe Islands are working in unqualified jobs that are not seen as attractive to the locals. Due to the language issue, whereby migrants have to learn both Faroese and Danish, and non-recognition of their credentials, migrants find themselves marginalised on the labour market. With no integration policy at the state level, learning the two languages is not compulsory. On the other hand, some of the municipalities do offer language courses to migrants interested in learning. This has caused a vicious circle for migrants as learning Faroese is not compulsory, migrant may choose not to learn the language in order to be active on the labour market. As the language school is during the day, it makes it difficult for migrant to attend class as the majority of them are working during the day. Due to this, most migrants living in the Islands find themselves on the lower strata of the labour market without having an opportunity to compete as equals with the locals.

In this chapter, I will present the statistics from 2000 to July 2016. I have chosen to focus on the numbers of migrant from non-western

countries living in the Faroe Islands. Even though in my dissertation I have conducted interviews with women from other places than Africa, the Philippines and Thailand, I have chosen these three places for the statistics because they are the biggest groups of migrant women from non-western countries married to Faroese men.

**Map 1: Distribution of Residence of Immigrants from Africa,  
Phillipines and Thailand 2016 (see Table 2.3)**



The table below shows the age distribution of men and women from African countries, Thailand and the Philippines. It also shows the age groups for men and women aged from zero to over 50 years of age.

**Table 2.2: Number, country of origin, gender and age distribution of immigrants to the Faroe Islands until 1 July 2016**

|              |              | Africa     | The Philippines | Thailand   | Total      |
|--------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> |              | <b>188</b> | <b>188</b>      | <b>145</b> | <b>521</b> |
| <b>Men</b>   | <b>Total</b> | <b>96</b>  | <b>40</b>       | <b>34</b>  | <b>170</b> |
|              | 0–19 years   | 50         | 30              | 29         | 94         |
|              | 20–49 years  | 38         | 8               | 5          | 66         |
|              | 50+ years    | 8          | 2               |            | 10         |
| <b>Women</b> | <b>Total</b> | <b>92</b>  | <b>148</b>      | <b>111</b> | <b>351</b> |
|              | 0–19 years   | 30         | 23              | 22         | 60         |
|              | 20–49 years  | 52         | 106             | 65         | 238        |
|              | 50+ years    | 10         | 19              | 24         | 53         |

Table 2.2 shows that the majority of women from Africa, the Philippines and Thailand living in the Faroe Islands are aged between 20 and 49 years. The Philippines community has the greatest number of women among these three groups, followed by the Thai community and then the African community. From the ages of 0–19 years, there are 30 boys and 23 girls from the Philippines community and 29 boys and 22 girls among the Thai community. One explanation for this quite

high number of young people in both communities is family reunification. In many cases, women from Thailand and the Philippines are divorcees with children, who then reunify with their children after having lived for a while in the Faroe Islands.

On the other hand, the African community is a mixture of both women married to Faroese men and men moving to the Faroe Islands to play football. Lately, there has also been an increase in African men married or in a relationship with Faroese women. Some of the men playing football in the Islands are young and single or married with families, some of them choosing to bring their families to the Islands. There are also cases of family reunification among the African community, with women bringing their children to the Faroe Islands after they marry a Faroese man. The number shows a high number of African men between the ages of 20 and 49 years, most of whom are either in the Islands as footballers or married to Faroese women.

Table 2.3, below, gives an overview of where migrants reside in the Faroe Islands. The region with the highest population of migrant women from the Philippines and African countries is the semi-central region (Eysturoy) where in 2016 there were 55 women from the Philippines, 46 from African countries and 25 from Thailand residing. On the other hand, the Thai community in the capital region is the largest, with 41 women from Thailand residing in Tórshavn. The



Streymoy-Vágar region is also represented by a high number of women from the Philippines, with 35 women residing there compared to 32 women from the Philippines residing in Tórshavn. These numbers show that most women from Africa and the Philippines reside mostly in other places than Tórshavn<sup>10</sup>. The region of Eysturoy (semi-central) is strongly represented by women from African countries and the Philippines. The semi-central region is also strongly represented by men from African countries and the Philippines. This reveals that most migrants from Africa and the Philippines are not clustered in the capital region but mostly around the semi-central region of the Faroe Islands.

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<sup>10</sup> We have to bear in mind that those numbers are from 2016 and the number has changed.

**Table 2.3: Residence of immigrants (men and women) from Africa, Philippines and Thailand until 1 July 2016**

|              |                            | Africa     | Philippines | Thailand   | Total      |
|--------------|----------------------------|------------|-------------|------------|------------|
| <b>Total</b> |                            | <b>188</b> | <b>188</b>  | <b>145</b> | <b>521</b> |
| <b>Men</b>   | <b>Total</b>               | <b>96</b>  | <b>40</b>   | <b>34</b>  | <b>170</b> |
|              | Norðoyggjar<br>(North)     | 9          | 2           | 1          | 12         |
|              | Eysturoy<br>(Semi-Central) | 34         | 22          | 8          | 64         |
|              | Tórshavn<br>(Capital Area) | 36         | 5           | 11         | 52         |
|              | Sandoy-<br>Suðuroy (South) | 9          | 3           | 10         | 22         |
|              | N.Streymoy-<br>Vágar (NW)  | 8          | 8           | 4          | 20         |
|              | <b>Total</b>               | <b>92</b>  | <b>148</b>  | <b>111</b> | <b>351</b> |
|              | Norðoyggjar<br>(North)     | 4          | 17          | 9          | 30         |
| <b>Women</b> | Eysturoy<br>(Semi-Central) | 46         | 55          | 25         | 126        |
|              | Tórshavn<br>(Capital Area) | 27         | 32          | 41         | 100        |
|              | Sandoy-<br>Suðuroy (South) | 10         | 9           | 23         | 42         |
|              | Streymoy-<br>Vágar (NW)    | 5          | 35          | 13         | 53         |

In Table 2.4 we see the marital status of migrant women upon entry to the Faroe Islands and the marital status of those residing in the Faroe Islands. The statistics show that very few women entered the Faroe Islands unmarried, whereas most of the women from Africa, Thailand and the Philippines who have residency in the Faroe Islands are married. On the other hand, the number of divorced women was six in total in July 2016 and the number of separated women was four in 2016.

**Table 2.4: Women aged 20+ years and civil status upon entry to the Faroe Islands until 1 July 2016**

|                                | Marital status |             | Origin of immigrants |             |           |            |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-----------|------------|
|                                | Upon entry     | 1 July 2016 | Africa               | Philippines | Thailand  | Total      |
| <b>Total</b>                   |                |             | <b>50</b>            | <b>111</b>  | <b>73</b> | <b>234</b> |
| <b>Residents in the Faroes</b> | Unmarried      | Unmarried   | 3                    | 6           | 9         | 18         |
|                                |                | Married     | 2                    | 8           | 10        | 20         |
|                                |                | Divorced    | 1                    |             | 1         | 2          |
|                                | Married        | Married     | 41                   | 90          | 48        | 179        |
|                                |                | Separated   |                      | 3           | 1         | 4          |
|                                |                | Divorced    | 2                    | 1           | 3         | 6          |
|                                |                | Widowed     | 1                    | 2           |           | 3          |
|                                | Divorced       | Divorced    |                      |             | 1         | 1          |
|                                | Unknown status |             |                      | 1           |           | 1          |

**Table 2.5: Children of female immigrants, both immigrant children and children born in the Faroes**

| Origin of Mother | Born   |               | Total |
|------------------|--------|---------------|-------|
|                  | Abroad | In the Faroes |       |
| Africa           | 41     | 69            | 110   |
| Philippines      | 41     | 107           | 148   |
| Thailand         | 34     | 67            | 101   |
| Total            | 116    | 243           | 359   |

Table 2.5 shows the statistics for children with migrant mothers born in the Faroe Islands or born in the country of origin of the mother. As mentioned before, some women married to Faroese men are divorced with children from a previous marriage and, due to this, family reunification is becoming increasingly common in the Faroe Islands. At the same time, the number of children born to mixed couples is also growing. Thus, with the growth in family reunification and children born in the Faroe Islands with a mother who has other origins than Faroese, the demography of the Faroe Islands is changing. “New” cultures and ways of thinking will sprout out of the mixture between Faroese and foreign cultures. Consequently, it is important to gain knowledge about migrants residing in the Faroe Islands.

### Chapter 3: Theoretical Positioning and Conceptual Framework

In this dissertation, I have chosen to draw knowledge from different theoretical perspectives and schools. I start this chapter by providing a synthesised overview and argument about my combination of theories and approaches, before delving deeper into unfolding each strand of thought in more detail. As I mentioned before, this dissertation is trans-disciplinary, which means that I am drawing knowledge and theoretical reflections from different disciplines that are relevant to my dissertation. The objective of a trans-disciplinary approach is to understand the present world and situation and its complexities by drawing knowledge from within different fields instead of focusing on only one part of the situation (Nicolescu 1997).

I have chosen to combine three theoretical strands of thinking within this dissertation, as each of these theoretical perspectives draws upon the interactions of individuals' relations to each other as well as the constitution of gender. These three strands are: gender theory, post-colonial theory and the theory of practice. Even though these theoretical traditions are different from each other, and may in some ways appear contradictory, they do examine the social world by elucidating different traditions of understanding gender and social interactions. Even if we discuss gender as phenomenology, we have to take into consideration the fact that institutions and social structures influence agents' intentions and actions.

Barbara J. Risman (2004) argues that, by conceptualising gender as social structure, we can better analyse how it is embedded within the individual, interactional and institutional levels in society. The aim of my research is to understand the choice of individuals, in this case women from non-European countries, to migrate and marry into the Faroe Islands, and how moving from one structure to another has changed their lives.

I intend to use these three theoretical modes of thinking to gain an understanding of the different kinds of social changes within the lives of migrants, and in relation to their decision to move. The understanding of the individual and their social world differs within each of the traditions chosen. Understanding women and their choices to migrate requires an approach in which gender, women and societal aspects are discussed. Structure, the constitution of gender and society are intertwined; as gender constructions and norms are constituted through specific structures and norms. To my mind, when conducting research about gender and society, there needs to be an understanding of the impact that societal structures have upon the individual, and one needs to inquire into how the individual performs his or her social role according to or in defiance of those structures and norms. As Archer (2004) mentions, structures do both enable and constrain agents' actions and make them reflect upon their needs, concerns and the things that might enable and constrain them. As I am

dealing with women from a different social and gender structure from that of the West, it is interesting to explore the gender structure from which they wanted to “escape” and why. In addition, the theoretical concepts chosen will enable a deeper knowledge of how migration influences the lives of migrants when entering a new structure<sup>11</sup> (or “field”, to use Bourdieu’s terminology) and how they navigate and (re)position themselves within this new field.

The theoretical reflection I have chosen to apply throughout this dissertation is the concept of gender as a performance developed by Judith Butler; in addition, I will also discuss and draw upon different theoretical understandings of gender roles and constructions as theoretical concepts. Furthermore, I am making use of post-colonial feminism and the concept of othering in order to discuss my respondents’ experiences of stereotyping; within this chapter, I will also draw upon Shultz and the phenomenology of being a stranger in the host country. I will not go into any depth with this theory but will make use of the phenomenology of the stranger as a background in order to understand how migration can destabilise the migrant’s life sphere. Lastly, I draw upon Bourdieu’s reflections on habitus, capital, field and symbolic violence. However, before delving into a more detailed presentation of each of my different theoretical sources of

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<sup>11</sup> The structural forms of the receiving country.



inspiration, let me briefly account for how and why I have put together this bricolage which jointly constitutes my theoretical framework.

In his theory of practice, Bourdieu tries to overcome the dualities of structure vs. agency by incorporating individuals as agents, while structures act as rules and determine the individual's thoughts and behaviour (Bourdieu 1977). In other words, the theory of practice is a reconciliation of structure and agency, in which habitus is the agent and the field is the structure. However, gender and its constitution is lacking in Bourdieu's theory of practice. Some will still categorise Bourdieu's work as being structural, with a relapse of the habitus as object (King 2000). However, Bourdieu's theory of practice explains the interplay between the habitus and the field, considering the agent and its practice through structures. This is interesting in the migration process, because the aim of this dissertation is to gain knowledge about how migration influences the life worlds of migrants and how they "interact" with the new field.

Drawing upon the concept of habitus, field and capital will give us an understanding of migrants' choice to relocate somewhere else than their home country, how this "affects" or transforms their lives<sup>12</sup> and how moving from one social structure to another has enabled and

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<sup>12</sup> I would like to point out that I will not be conceptualising structure in this dissertation.

constrained them as individuals. The other aspect of migration is the adjustment that takes place within the habitus and capital when moving into the new social field. What I find interesting is the (re)positioning of agents in the field when they migrate. How do they use their agency to (re)position themselves within the new structure and new practices?

My interest in this dissertation is to conceptualise and understand what takes place when individuals have to (re)organise their lives within a new structure and, furthermore, the transformation of habitus (lives). What happens when migrants' habitus joins the new field; and hence what mechanism comes into play when one seeks to position oneself in the new field? Investigating such questions will allow us to see the dispositions and attitudes of migrants and the display of the migrant in the host country. Furthermore, I will also discuss Bourdieu's notion of symbolic violence; in other words, how does mis-recognition contribute to constituting structural domination and marginalisation in the field?

Secondly, I am interested in discovering how migrant women perceive themselves as women in the receiving country and how they are represented. Most migrant women from non-European countries find themselves being stigmatised; there is this perception or pre-construction of who they are as women and of how they perform

gender. Post-colonial feminism and the concept of othering identifies the construction of the character of women from “third-world” countries (Mohanty 1991; Spivak 1988). Mohanty, Spivak and others have analysed the construction and production of the third-world woman as a singular monolithic subject without agency in some feminist texts (Mohanty 1991). My main interest is to discover how my respondents perceive themselves as women and individuals in society and learn about their experiences of stereotyping and stigmatisation in the receiving country.

Gender theory discusses the performative acts and constitution of gender. The strands of gender theory that are most relevant to the present dissertation are: theories of gender and place, gender as performative acts, and gender as social constructions. These theories look at gender as both a phenomenology and constructed within social structures. Gender as construction and the phenomenology of gender reveal to us how it becomes part of our daily lives and is a structure through which the body is culturally perceived. However, even when gender performances are discussed as phenomenology, they are constituted and performed through specific structures. Feminist scholars and geographers have argued that gender relations both reflect and affect the spaces and society within which they are constituted (Faber and Pristed Nielsen 2015). Gender/gendering are considered to be a societal and spatial process whereby femininity and

masculinity are constructed. As mentioned, I will combine the concept of othering and the phenomenology of being a stranger. This combination will give us an understanding of the migrant's life sphere because it explains society through the stranger's eyes rather than those of the host. However, the theory of the stranger is not my focus in this dissertation; rather, I am using this concept in my analysis and discussion of who the stranger is, how they experience the host society, and the "shock" experience in his/her life-world. Migrants as the "other" or the "stranger" in the host country have to adapt to new norms. The theory of the stranger draws upon different traditions and understandings of what a stranger, a foreigner and the "other" is. In this dissertation, I will draw upon knowledge both from the phenomenological understanding of Alfred Schultz, who discusses the "shock" that migrants experience in their life world when entering their host country (Schultz 1976b). The concept of the stranger entails a dislocation of the stranger's daily life and habitual system. However, Schultz' concept of the stranger does not consider gender; his concept is gender blind, and "the stranger is usually a male and enters a host society embedded in patriarchal relations" (Marotta 2017).

Judith Butler draws upon Simone de Beauvoir's understanding of the construction of gender and its intersubjective performances. She also mentions that this act can change, as gender is a performative accomplishment and a repetition of actions. Because gender is not

static, there are possibilities for it to transform if a different sort of repetition of the act takes place (Butler 1988). This theory is also interesting when analysing my respondents and trying to understand their choices; specifically, choosing someone from Western Europe as a partner. What were they expecting to gain from their marriage? As Butler mentions, if gender is a constructed identity and a performative accomplishment, then a gender repertoire can be transformative, if there is a different sort of repetition. After choosing migration, these women cannot reproduce all their gender acts from their home country; they have to adapt to the gender repertoire of the receiving country. However, to what extent can or do they do so? And, furthermore, what are the gender roles and performances they are resisting by choosing migration?

Overall, the theories that I have chosen to combine in this dissertation jointly appear each to have their strengths and weaknesses, or “blind spots”, but through their combination I hope to arrive at fruitful new insights and understandings about the position and experiences of migrant women marrying into a small society such as the Faroese. Hence, I contend that my theoretical bricolage provides the best possible starting point for tackling my research question: ***“How has marriage migration influenced and shaped the lives of migrant women marrying into the Faroe Islands?”***

Below, I further unfold and elaborate upon each strand of theoretical inspiration, starting with gender theory (section 3.1); then post-colonial feminism and the phenomenology of being a stranger (section 3.2); and, finally, Bourdieu's theory of practice (section 3.3).

### 3.1 Gender Theory

In this chapter, I discuss my approach to gender and my feminist inspirations. I do so through three subsections, one looking back at gender theory and feminism from a historical perspective, and one in which I explain Judith Butler's theory on gender as performance and phenomenology. Finally, I end with some reflections on doing gender in Faroese society, inspired partly by theories on gender and place, and partly by previous empirical studies on gender roles and relations in the Faroe Islands.

#### 3.1.1 Gender Theory and Feminism from a Historical Perspective

I start with a historical background description of how gender was understood by structuralism and within a sociological perspective, before the term gender was defined. During the 1970s, sociologists made a distinction between sex and gender. Simply put, sex refers to the biological differences between males and females, and gender is the socially produced difference between being feminine and being masculine. Before the concept of "gender" came into sociological usage, theorists up until the mid-20th century talked about "sex-role differences". On the other hand, functionalism, which was dominant

within sociology, focused upon such “sex-role differences”. The argument of functionalism is that sex-role differences are necessary for social stability (Holmes 2007). Gender positions and gender differences were seen as a normal pattern in society, whereby each “sex” had its position and role in society.

Before the concept of gender came into sociological theorising, classic sociological and social theory paid almost no attention to the social differences between men and women. Marx, Weber and Durkheim were classical sociologists, who interpreted women’s subordinated social role as “naturally given” (Sydie 1994). These sociologists had different perspectives on defining society and the “natural” role of women in society. Although these thinkers were analysing and stressing how social forces have an impact upon society, they viewed “sex roles” as naturally given (Sydie 1994).

According to John Locke (1632–1704) (Nyland 1990), all human beings are equal in the state of nature. He stated that both sexes have the right to autonomy and freedom, and that all human beings, whether male or female, have this fundamental right (Sydie 1994). However, he also mentions the “natural” dependency of women on men, due to women’s anatomy for reproduction. Locke argues that women’s inability to provide for their offspring by themselves made them dependent upon men. “Natural” dependency for women was

extended to embrace social and economic dependency, because women were not entitled to property rights once they were married (Sydie 1994).

Classic sociology and other sociological theories contain little about gender or inequality. Those “naturally given” roles were seen as reasons for the division of labour between the sexes. Durkheim saw the distinction between sex roles as functional because the sexes (men and women) are specialised for different roles, and this makes the division of labour more efficient and society stronger (Sydie 1994).

Weber also saw women’s dependent social position as fundamentally determined, and qualified women’s social dependency as “the normal superiority of the physical and intellectual energies of the male” (Sydie 1994: 59). The differences between men and women described by these theorists explained traditional power as patriarchal. In other words, a society where older males exercise traditional power and domination through the family.

On the other side, feminist thinkers and theorists have drawn ideas from different theoretical traditions. Feminists have re-theorised Marxist structuralism, which is based upon his understanding of capitalism, in order to explain the social role of women in society (Holmes 2007). Marxist structuralism explains the idea of capitalism and argues that structures affect or determine social relations and



gender relations (Holmes 2007). Marx argues that capitalist society and employers (the capitalists) exploit the workers by only paying them a wage instead of sharing the profits. However, this exploitation hardly explains the distinction between the genders.

Feminists re-theorised Marxist structuralism and the ideas of Marx and Engels to better explain women's position in society. They have argued that capitalism not only exploits the workers, but also uses or exploits women into specific gender roles, i.e. to be at home feeding and taking care of the paid workers and reproducing generations of new workers by having children. This "exploitation" of women therefore leads to an argument among feminists as to whether or not women should be considered a class.

The linguistic structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure is another strand of theory that feminism drew upon. The central idea behind linguistic structuralism is language and that societies are based around structures of meaning. In other words, language is a system into which individuals are born and to which they have to adapt. Saussure argues that the meanings of words exist not in the words themselves but in a system called language (Saussure 1983). This implies that language creates its own reality, and that, through language and words, meaning is constructed. And, according to feminism, through those discourses, gender and sex differences are also constructed.

Post-structuralist feminist thinkers, such as Judith Butler, draw upon the linguistic idea of gender construction. Butler draws on the work of Simone de Beauvoir and Foucault regarding the influence of linguistic structuralism as a performative mode of constructing gender. Butler argues that gender is a performance with no real basis (Butler 1988). Gender is defined and constructed through norms, rules and intersubjective relations.

### 3.1.2 Judith Butler: Gender as a Construction and Phenomenology

Judith Butler is one of the feminist theorists who derives her feminist inspirations from Simone de Beauvoir's and Michel Foucault's thoughts on gender and social constructions. Beauvoir sees gender as constructed and she states: "One is not born a woman but becomes one" (Beauvoir 1986). The gendered self is thus a constitution, where the individual "constructs" him/herself and where this construction is always under a cultural compulsion. Butler argues that gender is not a stable identity; rather, it is an identity created over time, and instituted through the repetition of acts (Butler 1988). But in what sense is gender an act? Gender performances and acts are different from society to society and gender is not static, as it is both culturally and politically influenced. The act that one performs is an act that has been going on before one arrived on the "scene", says Butler. Hence, Butler states that gender is an act that has been rehearsed and requires

individual actors in order to be actualised and reproduced as reality over again.

To be gendered or to perform gender is to compel the body to conform and persuade it to become a cultural sign. This cultural sign is performed by the individual through whom the act is sustained as a corporeal project (Butler 1988). As a result of migration, migrants often experience that they have to adjust to their new reality, because the new reality often consists of a (re)construction of identity, gender performances, and re-positioning the habitus/oneself within the new field. Judith Butler argues that gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end, and that the various acts of gender create the idea of gender, because without those acts there would be no gender at all. Structures and culture constitute gender acts, and societies conform to different unwritten gender contracts. With the destabilisation of their life sphere, migrants have to find ways to conform to the gendered host society.

In other words, gender is something an individual takes on, and the constructed status of gender is theorised as being independent from sex (Beauvoir 1986). Individuals might as well take on some other gender performances, whereby what is male and masculine might be signified in a feminine body and vice versa, because gender is not dependent upon sex (Butler 1999). Butler thus argues that gender and

its performativity do not create a stable identity, it is rather an identity constituted over time, i.e. an identity adopted by an individual through a stylised repetition of acts (Butler 1988).

Gender roles and performances are perceived as social constructions, where subjects are participants in inter-subjective relations and, within those relations, gender is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means (West and Zimmerman 1987). Through gender practice, individuals conform to the society in which they live. However, gender roles and practices differ from one society to another and, according to feminist geographers, place is an important aspect for understanding gender and its performativity (Faber and Pristed Nielsen 2015). Globalisation and the mobility of gender across the world have challenged gender and its performances; with mobility, new gender performances are constituted. Simultaneously, through migration, individuals have the opportunity to resist the gender performances of their home country. As Massey argues, space is neither fixed nor static but is rather fluid, and she also refers to how space and place are characterised by negotiations of gendered, classed and racialised positioning (Massey 1994; 2005).

The gender performances and acts that migrants have internalised may be challenged in the new field – or, in Massey’s terminology, in the new place – because migrants will have to adapt to new gender

repertoires and practices. “Gender ideology” as a practice is a behaviour repertoire that organises, defines and regulates the relationship between men and women, and which produces gender (Alcoff 1996).

Butler’s concept of gender and gender performances defines gender as a phenomenological act, and she defines gender identity as a performative accomplishment achieved over time. Gender and gender “reality” are constituted through time and, without an intersubjective performance, gender acts and performances lose their meaning (Butler 1988). Phenomenological theory seeks to explain how social agents constitute their acts and create their own reality by interacting with each other. Merleau-Ponty (1962) and other phenomenological theorists argue that social reality is constituted through language, gestures and symbolic signs. Those “signs” or gestures have historical and cultural meanings which individuals enact in order to create understanding and norms, which are considered valuable according to the place in which they find themselves.

Judith Butler’s theory of performative acts draws upon the phenomenological theory of acts in order to discuss gender identity as a performative accomplishment. Not performing one’s gender according to the unwritten rules of a particular place or culture may lead to social sanctions (Butler 2004). Individuals not performing the

unwritten gender contract, or breaking away from it, may find themselves in a disadvantageous position. In her book *Undoing Gender* (Butler 2004), Butler emphasises how gender is shaped by institutional structures and states that there are sanctions for those who do not practise their gender in the “right” way.

Furthermore, if gender is instituted through the stylisation of the body, where bodily gestures and movements are an achievement that constitute an illusion of the gendered self, then this assumption challenges the notion of gender as a substantial model of identity (Butler 1988). This means that gender is a performative act with a social audience, and that both the audience and the actors come to believe and perform according to this belief (Butler 1988). This belief becomes the agent’s reality; thus, the body conforms to cultural signs and materialises itself into obedience. Therefore, gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end: gender genesis (Butler 1988). Gender performances and acts are characterised by cultural distinctions and are done differently from place to place. This is because gender is not a fact, but a performance which creates gender itself, there is no “essence” to which gender can aspire, and without gender acts or performances, there would be no gender at all (Butler 1988). This also means that gender is not static and not a seamless identity, but is internally discontinuous and carries possibilities of gender transformation (Butler 1988).

### 3.1.3 Doing Gender in the Faroe Islands

In this section, I will focus upon gender roles and ideas about local gender contracts (Forsberg 2001), as well as ideas about the (re)construction of gender in relation to the migration experience. How do migrant women married to Faroese men re-construct and re-define their gender identity and role according to their background, ethnicity, level of education, and marriage partner? Answering such questions will give us an insight into how re-constructing and re-defining gender is different when it takes place within ethnic groups and between ethnic groups. As argued above, the social construction of gender is an achieved status, constructed through psychological, cultural and social means (West and Zimmerman 1987; Butler 1988).

According to Forsberg (2001), each country and society has an unwritten gender contract by which individuals live. It may be challenging for migrants moving from non-western countries to adapt to the western cultural and gender code. Women born and raised within a patriarchal family pattern may find it hard to adapt to the gender role in western countries or, in some cases, women from a patriarchal society may want to marry a western man in order to escape those relations.

French sociologist Marcel Mauss (1966) characterises the movement of migrants from one country to another as a “total” event, because it

requires the complete (re)construction of identity. When leaving their country of origin, migrants often lose their social status, family and social networks and, in the receiving country, they often find themselves without a history, and most of them find themselves stereotyped by society<sup>13</sup>. Migration often leads to the transformation of the entire life-sphere; these transformations are due to different cultural backgrounds, and different sorts of gender repetitions may be expected, or a change in social status may occur due to such transformations. As Butler points out, gender transformation is to be found in the frivolous relations of those acts, i.e. in a different sort of repetition, in the breaking of the repetition of those acts (Butler 1988). In this sense, migration may be an occasion for undertaking transformative gender acts.

Doing gender or performing a gender role in society is not static. According to Sydnie, society is an arrangement of social relationships that are more or less consciously designed by humans (Sydnie 1994). Through this arrangement, men and women each have their roles and performances. Through socialisation processes, an individual becomes accustomed or subjected to certain norms and gender expectations allocated by family and society (Iorga 2014). Newcomers will often

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<sup>13</sup> Migrant women experienced being stereotyped in the Faroe Islands, as they come from poorer countries. Their choice to migrate is often connected to economic survival.



have to find/claim their position within their new field. They will have to re-define, re-construct or re-negotiate their identity and gender performance according to the norms of the receiving country. It is largely uncontested in the migration and mobility literature that movement implies change and, given the accepted understanding in feminist geography that space and place are relational (Massey 2005), such geographic movement also implies possibilities for changing gender relations.

According to Merleau-Ponty, the body carries cultural and historical meanings; he maintains that the body is a set of possibilities to be continually realised (Merleau-Ponty 1962). Furthermore, he claims that an agent is not simply a body, but does the body; and each person does the body differently. Cultural aspects do have an influence on how individuals do their body, because gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end (Butler 1988). Womanhood, gender and gender performances are also bound to place. Space and place are concepts discussed by Walby (1990) and Forsberg, among others; they maintain that place and gender are interconnected, because the place becomes an actor that creates social order and specific gender relations (Forsberg 2001).

Seemingly, gender, culture and place have a tight connection, and when Simone de Beauvoir claims that women are in a “historical

situation”, she means that the body suffers under a certain cultural construction (Beauvoir 1986). How one enacts one’s body or performance is related to how the body is culturally perceived. In this sense, if gender carries cultural significance as sexed bodies, and if the various gender acts (practices) and cultural perceptions are codetermined, then it is difficult to make the distinction between sex and gender from a cultural perspective.

To be a woman, or to perform gender, is to compel the body to conform and persuade it to become a cultural sign, through which one performs the act of sustaining the corporeal project (Butler 1988). Consequently, migrants often experience changes in their life world due to which they have to adjust to their new reality. This new reality often consists of a (re)construction of identity and gender performances, and re-positioning the habitus/oneself in the new field. Gender is important in migration, as it is part of the social structures that organise daily life. Migrants in the receiving country will often experience restrictions, potential opportunities and life changes within their internalised social practices, compared to how they have performed daily life in their home country. How then do individuals transform the gender and habitus “system” when migration takes place? This is one of the key empirical questions to which I return in my analyses below.

In a small, homogeneous country like the Faroe Islands, individuals often know a lot about each other in terms of social background and to which family one belongs. Migrants have to find strategies in order to (re)construct their identity and gender performances. The question is whether there is a gender (re)construction taking place among migrant women and, if so, how do they adapt to that? If gender is a cultural interpretation of sex, or if it is culturally constructed, how does this construction or (re)construction take place among migrant women in the Faroe Islands, and what are the mechanisms or strategies for this (re)construction?

We must take into consideration the fact that the Faroe Islands is rather different from other Scandinavian countries when it comes to size, gender roles and institutions. What I mean by this is that the Faroe Islands are often described as a male-dominated society, concerning aspects such as work relations and the structures of everyday life (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016). Gender research in the Faroe Islands has also shown that women are in lower-paid jobs than men (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016) and are still more involved in unpaid work (Gender Equality Centre 2017).

Gender and behaviour repertoires organise, regulate, define and reproduce the relationships between men and women. This behavioural system thus produces “gender”, expressed through

masculinity and femininity (Alcoff 2006). Moreover, it is also through this repertoire that gender practice is constructed. What is supposed to be male and female in different places is a spatial process. Feminist geographers emphasise the fact that place is an important aspect when understanding gender and gender constructions. For example, Linda McDowell (1999) draws upon the idea of gender as a social construction, and argues that actors acquire their beliefs within a spatial context. Space and gender are thus intertwined, according to both Forsberg (2001) and McDowell (1999). Gender contracts are thus confirmed inter-subjectively in specific spatial contexts. This further entails that entering a new gender system can be quite challenging for cross-border couples. Both have to integrate into each other's lives in order to gain an understanding of gender roles and culture. Migrants will often find themselves in between gender systems, because they will have to adapt to the new culture and at the same time may find themselves still practising some of the gender repertoires from their home country.

Migrants moving into a new field may thus experience a (de-)construction of their gender role and identity. This (de-)construction is followed by transformation and formation, and often requires the (re)construction of identity. Identity and gender-role contracts are thus often (re)constructed simultaneously when moving to a new society. This is a point to which I shall return in my analyses below.

### 3.2 Gender in Post-Colonial Feminism

Post-colonial as a term is the resistance to colonial power and its discursive impact upon various cultures (Tyagi 2014). Edward Said's work on the post-colonial and Orientalism (Said 1978) criticises the construction that took place during colonial times when colonialism created a dichotomy between "we" and "they", "oriental" and "European"; and these discourses and characteristics were tools for establishing western imperial hegemony (Said 1978). On the other hand, post-colonial feminism started as a criticism of both post-colonial theories and western feminism. Post-colonial feminism points out that post-colonial theory is a male-centred field, in which women's needs and concerns are not taken into consideration, but are rather exploited by misrepresenting them in the national discourses. Secondly, post-colonial feminism argues that there was a non-recognition of women's role during the struggle for independence from former colonial rulers (Tyagi 2014).

Furthermore, post-colonial feminists such as Mohanty, Spivak and others have criticised western feminism and its homogenisation of women. According to post-colonial feminism, western feminism has had a tendency to group women together as a homogeneous group, without taking the importance of culture, background or ethnicity into consideration (Mohanty 1986), as women's rights and desires are being shaped and constructed within a western perspective and

standard by leaving other groups and cultures on the side-lines (Mohanty 1986). This criticism is built upon what Mohanty identifies as a one-dimensional representation of non-western women. Migrant women in the Faroe Islands are often represented and talked about on a one-dimensional level; they are often referred to as women who have been “ordered” from the internet; and their characters as women are perceived and described in terms of the partner they married. Their own character and womanhood are set aside and made invisible because they are from poorer countries than the Faroe Islands, which creates a biased relationship in which the stereotyped discourse creates a dichotomy between “us” and “them”.

The representation of women from other cultures in western feminist texts was criticised by feminist Hazel Carby (2000), who explores the representation of black and Asian women within the discourses of western feminism. The social practices and cultures of Asian and black women were presented as oriental and backward, and something from which they needed to be rescued. Carby’s criticism pointed to ways in which western feminists positioned themselves, causing an ethnocentric and biased relationship to the “other”, assuming that what is considered as oppression by western feminism is applicable to other cultures and races (Carby 2000). We have to take into consideration that gender, structure and culture are intertwined. And what may seem to be oppression, or is considered to be traditional in

one society, may have another definition or understanding in another society. The concept of patriarchy can also be discussed in terms of western feminists having fought patriarchy in order to claim a place in science and society; whereas women from the “third world” have to fight the combined oppression of gender, race, patriarchy<sup>14</sup> and ethnicity, which has been constructed through colonial times and history.

In her essay, “Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses”, Mohanty (1986) tries to uncover how ethnocentric universalism is produced in certain analyses in accordance with a cultural and political hegemonic context. Her work focuses upon the construction of the “Other” through written discourses, whereby there is a hegemonic construction of geographical and cultural dichotomies between first/third world, first-world women/third-world women, and western society/Orientalism. According to Mohanty, there is a pre-construction and a discursive construction of the migrant woman, of who she is, and what her assumed gender roles are. Mohanty thus criticises western radical and liberal feminist writing and its implicit production of the “third world” as a singular and monolithic subject. The representation of women is of great importance to post-colonial feminism; this concern is based upon how women in once-

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<sup>14</sup> Patriarchy both in their home country and in their representation in the western world.

colonised countries and in western locations are represented, both locally and abroad (Tyagi 2014). Women from “third-world” countries are often misrepresented and marginalised in western countries; their desires, cultures and ways of thinking are not taken into consideration. The diversity of womanhood is not taken into consideration either as they are often stereotyped due to their race.

In “Feminism without Borders”, Mohanty discusses the importance of decolonising feminism in order to categorise and theorise differences between women from different parts of the world (Mohanty 2003). Feminism without borders is not borderless feminist thought, it is rather a way to acknowledge the differences, conflicts and fears that borders represent (Mohanty 2003). By acknowledging these differences, a politics that promotes change and social justice for women according to race, class, sexuality and religion has to be constituted. According to Mohanty, there is a constitution of the “Other” due to three analytical presuppositions. The first assumption is the representation and essentialisation of the third-world woman as a coherent and homogeneous group, sharing the same interests, experiences and goals, without taking into consideration the socio-political and historical differences among “third-world” women. Secondly, she criticises the model of power that sees men as the oppressors and women as oppressed. This model implicates universal patriarchy and emphasises the binary relations of “men” versus



“women”. By not taking into consideration the diversity of various socio-political contexts, women are not given a voice but are being stereotyped and robbed of their historical and political agency (Mohanty 1995). Mohanty suggests a Foucauldian model of power to deconstruct the idea of “first world women as subject” versus “third world women as object” (Mohanty 1995). Such a model will eventually open up space for a more diversified theoretical space to talk about differences among “third-world” women and women in general (Mohanty 1995). Thirdly, she criticises the methodological tools that are oversimplified and essentialise women as powerless victims. She argues that the socio-political and historical backgrounds of women from the “third world” should be taken into consideration in order to empower them, where the politics of location and “situated knowledge” are of great importance (Mohanty 1995).

Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (1986) employ the term double colonisation for women from once-colonised or “third-world” countries because such women experience the oppression of colonisation and being a woman simultaneously. In other words, women from the colonised world have to resist colonised power both as a subject and as women (Tyagi 2014). “Third-world” women are made subject by being oppressed by their colonised brothers and by being misrepresented in stereotypical national discourses (Tyagi

2014); they are made silent by western feminism and made subjects/victims of certain stereotypes.

As I shall discuss further in my analyses below, migrant women in the Faroe Islands are often confronted with prejudices and pre-constructed discourses of them as women and of their gender performances. Most of them have experienced deskilling on the labour market and are represented in the lowest strata of society. The experience of being a woman and an individual differs from woman to woman, but the majority of my respondents find it hard to adapt to Faroese society because their cultural backgrounds are often misunderstood. They find it hard to navigate on their own as individuals, to gain recognition on the labour market or to socialise with Faroese people other than their own in-laws<sup>15</sup>. Sometimes they do not feel appreciated by society as individuals due to their race and background<sup>16</sup>. These are strands from my interviews that I aim to unfold with inspiration from post-colonial feminism.

### 3.2.1 The “Other” Women

Women from non-western countries marrying Faroese men are often seen as subordinate and as having the aim of attaining a higher social and economic position in life through “marrying up”. This is referred

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<sup>15</sup> Interviews I conducted for my PhD in 2017.

<sup>16</sup> From the Interviews I conducted for my PhD in 2017.

to as “hypergamy”, and such couples are often stigmatised by society. Nicole Constable’s research is a reaction to biased representations of marriage migration, which portrayed “third-world” women in cross-border marriages as commodities who have no choice other than to “sell” themselves to western men (Constable 2003). Her research shows that these women do make decisions and do have choices; they are not commodities without a voice. Furthermore, the idea that all these women may seem to be moving up the ladder both socially and economically is not always correct (Constable 2003). Some of them possess a higher degree (in educational terms) than their husbands, but they still end up in the lowest strata when it comes to the job market in the receiving countries<sup>17</sup>. This is also a pattern seen in the Faroe Islands, where women from “third-world” countries are often highly educated women marrying men with lower education than themselves<sup>18</sup>.

These constructions and perceptions of non-western women are often the effect of orientalising gender and gender roles, whereby non-western women are often perceived as more subordinate than western women. Homogenising women from non-western societies and essentialising them without knowing about the cultural

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<sup>17</sup> Due to the laws and structures of the receiving country.

<sup>18</sup> Interviews I conducted in 2015 for the Integration Recommendation and in 2017 for my PhD.

differences and historical specificities has been a critique among post-colonial feminists (Mahmudul 2003). The categorisation of non-western women by colonialist feminism has often resulted in representing the non-western woman as “ignorant, poor, uneducated, traditional bound, domestic, family oriented, victimized” (Mahmudul 2003: 29). In contrast, western women are represented as “educated, modern, having control over their bodies and sexualities and the freedom to make their own decisions” (Mahmudul 2003: 29). Such representations set western feminism apart from post-colonial feminism, and entail that women from developing countries cannot be anything other than a victim. These discourses also contribute to othering via the dichotomy of “us” and “them”, where “third-world” women are being subjected and victimised.

This is also a discourse, a set of prejudices, and gender constructions around non-western migrant women, which is quite common in Faroese society. Non-western women married to Faroese men are categorised as different from Faroese women; they are defined as poor, helpless and in need of a man to save them (the migrant women), and the men are often categorised as non-attractive to Faroese women and in need of a docile and traditional woman to take care of them. These particular issues and concepts will be further discussed in the analysis.

### 3.2.2 Otherness

Simone de Beauvoir (1986) explains in *The Second Sex* how men were perceived as the norm and women as the other. Beauvoir furthermore argues that the othering of women creates subjectivity – and women related to themselves in the way in which they were “constructed” by men (Beauvoir 1986). The women Beauvoir is referring to are not women from colonised countries, but women in general. Otherness is a concept that means not being alike; being distinct or different from that which is otherwise experienced as known (Mengstie 2015). In other words, those who are alike construct the other through continuous human interactions; these social interactions are the result of identity constructions or reconstructions. The western self-construction of racial hierarchies has constituted a biased relationship with the other, with “primitive” women, and with the non-European.

Edward Said discussed the concept of otherness in his book on orientalism (1978). He explained the effect of colonisation and the construction of orientalism and its consequences. Said defined orientalism “as a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Orient and the Occident” (Said 1978: 2–3). The orient/occident dichotomy has constructed an image of the “other” as exotic and backward and the west as democratic, liberated and enlightened. This construction of the “other” is performed both by the East and the West. Migrant

women are often confronted as being the other, because they have a different cultural background and there is a lack of knowledge about who they are as individuals.

On the other hand, Danish documentaries such as “Lykken med en asiatisk kone” and other articles portraying or describing Western men’s lack of desire to marry Western women<sup>19</sup> may reinforce Western feminist perceptions of why western men desire to marry non-western women. These men’s discourse about western versus Asian or non-western women constructs a dichotomy between the “other”, portraying or describing Asian women as bound by tradition, willing to “take care” of their husband and home, versus Danish (or western) women, who are portrayed as liberal, feminist and not willing to meet their husbands’ desires. Those descriptions of foreign women by western men are an essentialisation and homogenisation of “third-world” women’s character. But what do those women think about themselves and the gender performances expected of them as women and wives? Is there a homogenising of gender performance among migrant women? Moreover, why choose a western partner when the men in question are searching for a tradition-bound spouse who will “take care” of them (Column *Berlingske* 28 July 2017)?

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<sup>19</sup> Column in *Berlingske* on the 27 July 2017 <https://www.b.dk/kommentarer/rene-fredensborg-vi-er-nogle-der-drager-mod-oest-fordi-danske-kvinder-er>

Sune Qvotrup Jensen (2011: 65) defines othering as a:

*discursive process by which powerful groups, who may or may not make a numerical majority, define subordinate groups into existence in a reductionist way which ascribe problematic and/or inferior characteristics to these subordinate groups. Such discursive processes affirm the legitimacy and superiority of the powerful and condition identity formation among the subordinate.*

Jensen furthermore discusses how othering may have an impact on the identity formation of the subordinate. The subordinates are marginalised by certain discourses that construct otherness, where the qualities of the other are constructed as inferior to oneself (Mulinari 1995).

At the same time, post-colonial theory and the concept of othering have been criticised for making/constructing the “other” as non-active agents and victims (Bhatt 2006). Bhatt argues that post-colonial theory makes the subaltern voiceless, ripping the agent away from his/her agency; as Diana Mulinari says: “Deconstruction projects share the risk of (re) constructing ideologies of domination as homogeneous and static” (Mulinari 1995: 34).

The concept of othering will be used in this dissertation to empirically analyse how othering is experienced by my respondents. In other words: how do they perceive themselves as women? What are their experiences with stereotyping and otherness? I will also reflect upon how they think the locals perceive them.

### 3.2.3 Being a Stranger

Being a stranger in a new field can be explained through a phenomenological understanding within which the stranger's life-world is set into perspective. Being a stranger does not only apply to migrants, but to anyone who is changing to a new field or status to which they are not accustomed. In his essay on the stranger, Alfred Schultz (1944) took his point of departure in the stranger's experiences and not those of the host. He analyses the stranger's experiences in the new field and the changes in the stranger's life-world. By dealing with the stranger at a phenomenological level, their underlying structures and experiences are unravelled; in other words, how does the stranger reflect upon his/her new situation and position themselves within the new field and how does the stranger's decision to migrate "affect" his/her life-world (Marotta Vince 2017)?

Migration creates a total change in the life-world of the migrant. As a stranger, the migrant will have to adapt to the receiving society by internalising new norms and ways of living. The life-world is described



as an internalised world that exists prior one's entry into the realm; this means that the life-world has its genesis among individuals, where it is interpreted and experienced intersubjectively (Schutz 1945). With the de-stabilisation of his/her life-world, the stranger as a foreigner has to find new ways to re-socialise and to position him/herself within the new life-world. In other words, the stranger will have to find new ways to approach the "world" psychologically, culturally and socially because he/she lacks knowledge about how to approach the host's life-world (Marotta 2007).

The understanding of each other as subjects is achieved through shared meanings, by which agents can relate to one another through cultural signs and languages. Those cultural signs create a shared identity enabling individuals to relate to one another by positioning themselves and interpreting their experiences with other subjects who share a common life-world (Marotta 2017). My respondents as strangers cannot share their life-world or experiences with the local Faroese because they lack the internalisation of the cultural signs. The local Faroese (and vice versa) cannot identify themselves with my respondents' life-world because their culture, language and use of common signs are not embedded in a shared system. In a small-scale society like the Faroe Islands, where individuals can relate and have "close" relations with one another, migrants may find it difficult to become included into the life-sphere of the locals. The migrant's

interpretation of the cultural signs may not coincide with how the hosts interpret their culture. This may cause misunderstandings.

When migrating, the stranger experiences “shock” and destabilisation in their life-world (Schutz 1944). This “shock” is connected to changes when they arrive in the host society and have to adapt to new ways that are new to them. Those experiences create an otherness because neither the host nor the stranger can relate to one another. Migrants face changes when entering the host country, and they will experience a “personal crisis” where there is a total change. The migrant/stranger will have to learn new norms and cultural codes and is interested in being accepted (Marotta 2017). Furthermore, the stranger’s existential world is challenged when what seems obvious and taken for granted to the locals is a challenge for the stranger. The stranger has to “identify” or act according to the “natural attitude” of the host members of the new society (Marotta 2017) to be able to position himself/herself on the field. Host members do not reflect upon or question their life-world or everyday life until a “shock” or crisis occurs and destabilises their life-world. Strangers do destabilise the life-world of the host by questioning the norms, society and cultural and social beliefs that are taken for granted (Marotta 2017).

This concept of the stranger or the phenomenology of being a stranger will support the concept of otherness in my analysis in order to

understand the shock experienced by my respondents when moving to the Faroe Islands.

### 3.3 Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's the main goal in his sociological research is to uncover the most deeply buried structures that constitute the social world and social behaviour (Bourdieu 1996). He further analyses and discusses the mechanisms that transform or ensure the reproduction of the social world and its structures. The three main elements of Bourdieu's theory of practice consist of: habitus, field and capital. Using these concepts, Bourdieu tries to explain the strategies of the individual by combining structure and agency. The reconciliation of structure and agency elucidate the practices of the agent and the complex interplay between habitus, field and capital within the social field.

Social agents, structures and interactions determine social and daily life and, in order to gain an understanding of these interactions, it is important to understand where, how and under which conditions these interactions are produced. In other words, Bourdieu emphasises the different social fields within which both the agent and institutions have to integrate in order to interact with each other in accordance with the field-specific rules (Bourdieu 1997). According to Bourdieu, it is through the working of habitus that practice (agency) is connected

with capital and field, i.e. the structure (Reay 2004). Below, I present each of the three elements of Bourdieu's theory in more detail.

### 3.3.1 Habitus and Agency

The habitus is quite central to Bourdieu's theory of practice; he defines it as "self-reflexive" as it brings to life practices which have been internalised. Bourdieu explains that the habitus is constituted through primary and secondary socialisation, where primary socialisation occurs during childhood when the parents' social status in society is transferred to their children (Bourdieu 1977). The primary habitus is about "internalizing the external", which means that children will adopt their parents' way of thinking, feeling and behaving in social space (Bourdieu 1977; Reay 2004). Secondary habitus consists of achievements gained through education and life experiences but, at the same time, the secondary habitus is influenced by the primary habitus (Bourdieu 1977).

In Bourdieu's social theory, habitus stands for a system of dispositions, consisting of perception, thinking, feeling, evaluating, speaking and acting, which structures all expressions (Krais 1993). In other words, the habitus is something that primarily mediates between the subjective and objective worlds, between the agent and the structure (Høghesen 2009). According to Bourdieu, these dispositions are a product of history, which are acquired through socialisation and

intersubjective relations among agents (Bourdieu 1984). Bourdieu further claims that the habitus is a system of long-lasting rather than permanent structures of perception, conception and action, as it is a dynamic system of interacting dispositions. In other words, the habitus is durable but also evolving as it is continually adjusting itself to the current situation, and is reinforced by further experiences (Mayrhofer, Meyer and Streyer 2007).

Bringing these ideas into a migration context, this entails that migrants moving from one place to another have to adjust themselves to new cultures and norms. These cultures and norms are internalised among the locals through primary and secondary habitus; thus, migrants will often find themselves in a weaker position relative to the locals in the new field. They will have to (re)socialise and (re)internalise new norms, as the habitus is said to guide our strategies as agents. A migrant or individual can identify him/herself with individuals who share the same conditions of living. Through migration, migrants can relate to one another as they have chosen the same path of destiny. Moreover, due to being a stranger in the new receiving country, they have to adapt their habitus to different norms and cultures than those they were used to in their home country.

Chudzikowski and Mayrhofer (2011) suggest that primary and secondary habitus can be summarised into one single habitus, which

is constantly reinforced and modified by life experiences, giving the habitus a dynamic quality. Like all individuals, migrants have a primary and a secondary socialisation from their home country. They are the product of their past and present experiences, and as the habitus is said to be a never-ending restructuring of internal structure (Bonnewitz 2005), migrants as agents will (re)define their identity in order to be included in society.

However, Bourdieu believes that the habitus is not very easy to change, and is rather characterised by inertia. “This does not mean that the habitus is fixed, but it is rather durable, yet not eternal” (Bourdieu and Wacqaunt 1992: 133). This may sometimes lead to a situation in which the habitus may become resistant to the new field conditions, which Bourdieu calls the hysteresis effect (Bourdieu 1977). Strand and Lizardo discuss this hysteresis effect: “hysteresis appears when environmental contexts change in a way that leaves actors without an ontologically complicit relationship to institutions as scaffolds of action” (Lizardo and Strand 2016: 1).

When migration takes place, there is a change in life trajectories and some people may experience social change. As agents, migrants may have to navigate new social positions that are potentially very different from their previous experiences or expectations (cultural differences, food, weather and so on), and where their habitus does

not fit or adapt to the changes in their new class trajectories (Bourdieu 1993). Some migrants may find it hard to (re)adjust their habitus to the new field, because they are not able to make use of their human capital and, at the same time, they may be experiencing social transformation to their habitus, to which they have not accommodated. Being in a disadvantageous position in the field may not be an incentive for change, or it may even contribute to increasing the hysteresis effect.

Bourdieu discusses the structure and agent dialectical relationship of the habitus, whereby the habitus is a dynamic mixture of structure and action, which constitute the relationship of the individual at both a societal and an individual level (Bourdieu 1985). On the other hand, the habitus also structures practices and reproduces the social field (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2000). As migrants are not in a dialectic relationship with the field in the receiving country, they will have to put aside their capital (education and social status) in order to learn the structural rules of the new field. At the same time, they will have to internalise the (new) rules of the game in order to position themselves in the field. Bourdieu perceives the habitus as “the strategy generating principle enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations” (Bourdieu 1977: 72).

### 3.3.2 Capital

Capital is an important aspect of Bourdieu's theory of practice, as each field values particular kinds of resources, and certain rules apply for agents to gain access to the social field. Agents need certain quantities and structures of resources in order to gain access to the social field. This is what Bourdieu terms the "droit d'entrée", or entrance fee, to the field (Bourdieu 1986). He distinguishes between four types of capital; namely, the economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital that agents use for their own benefit in order to move within the social fields (Bourdieu 1986). Even though these fields may seem different from each other, Bourdieu argues that each of these forms of capital are closely linked and can be convertible. The last three forms of capital also qualify as human capital (Bourdieu 1986), while economic capital is the person's fortune and revenues, which can be easily converted into money and property rights.

Family and education transfer cultural capital, and this may be institutionalised as forms of educational qualifications. This institutionalised capital takes the form of certificates, i.e. formalised academic qualifications. The experiences of migrants moving from one place to another often include the non-recognition of their institutionalised forms of capital. Their human capital is often non-transferable into the new field; thus, they are often in a disadvantageous position and have to start over by adapting and re-



socialising their habitus and finding new forms of practice. An agent's cultural capital is the primary basis for status and positioning within the field. In his article "Social space and symbolic power", Bourdieu (1989) uses the example of how the representation of agents varies with their position in the field. The habitus is both a system of production of practices and a system of perception and appreciation of practices (Bourdieu 1989). Capital is a means to control one owns future; that is, capital is the mediation between the agent and society. Moreover, individuals strive to attain a certain capital in order to change or define their social trajectories (Bourdieu 1986).

Symbolic capital is related to recognition. Bourdieu (1977) mentions that, within a social field, economic, social and cultural capital are converted into symbolic capital. The recognition of symbolic capital depends upon the rules of the field and the system's assumptions about the usefulness of this capital (Bourdieu 1977). The capital structure determines the right to enter the social field, as well as the agent's position within the social space. In other words, symbolic capital is a reflection of both external and internal recognition, i.e. the value consented to by the system and its actors (Doherty and Dickmann 2009).

Symbolic violence is the understanding of how social inequalities are reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Symbolic capital

legitimises social class relations and hierarchy through mis-recognition; this non-recognition of the agent's human capital creates symbolic violence. Agents adjust their expectations according to the capital they carry and will find themselves limited in attaining a certain field if they do not possess the relevant capital, such as educational background, social connections or class position required to enter the field.

Bourdieu uses the term "symbolic violence" when those who are dominated perceive and accept the norms and values of the dominating as better and desirable. My respondents think of themselves as marginalised even though they do possess the educational background required within the field (receiving country, labour market) but, at the same time, they find themselves in a disadvantageous position because they do not possess the language skills required to attain a recognised position in the field. Bourdieu furthermore mentions that misrecognition as symbolic violence perpetuates the marginalisation of an agent; but, at the same time, symbolic violence is exercised upon the social agent with his or her complicity (Bourdieu 1991). In other words, agents are treated differently in that they are denied access to certain privileges, which limits their social mobility. However, some agents do not perceive limitations to social mobility as symbolic violence, they rather perceive it as the "natural order of things" (Webb, Schirato and Danaher 2002).

“The system of classifications and perception matrixes is a product of history, but nevertheless we tend to (re) produce the social structures as natural phenomenon and thus also the structures of power and domination, be it in the terms of class, ethnicity or gender” (Høgnesen 2009: 10).

In terms of marginalisation on the labour market, migrants find themselves “accepting” the structures that limit them in the new field, where their “droit d’entrée” to the field is limited to unqualified jobs. Race and gender are other aspects that can be discussed in this particular context, whereby women from “third-world” countries are reinforcing structural domination by accepting symbolic violence when they are complicit in (re-)producing the performances expected from them (as an unqualified labour force). The concept of symbolic violence will be further discussed in the analysis chapters.

### 3.3.3 Field

The field represents the structural part of Bourdieu’s theory of practice and it is central to this theory. Bourdieu defines the field as a “playground” where rules are formalised and where agents and institutions integrate and interact with each other according to field-specific rules (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). The field is the structural part of Bourdieu’s theory; it is where agents and specific norms interact to constitute rules.

Agents have to internalise specific practices and strategies in order to be part of the field; and, as Wacquant mentions, these are not formalised but are rather tacit in nature (Wacquant 2011), and these rules have to be integrated into the agent's life-world. Migration changes the life-world of the social agent as they have to internalise the rules of the game within their new field. Their habitus has to shift away from the taste, language and culture they are used to, in order to obtain recognition. As the locals possess an internalisation of the specific rules of the field, migrants or newcomers will find themselves in a disadvantageous position. With the field being autonomous, where no universal rules are applied, agents will experience different rules within different fields.

Fields have different rules and structures from place to place, and the strategies for how to navigate and be an integrated agent have to be learned. Being new to the field, an agent may find him/herself vulnerable, as the internalisation of the specific rules of the field allow agents to make strategic choices, thus leaving the natives in an advantageous situation. This means that native agents have the dominant position on the field, as they are embedded within the rules of the field. This kind of domination and structure determines what agents can and cannot do, and determines as well what kind of practices are possible. In other words, the field consists of a set of rules within which there is a set of strategies, which can act to the agent's

advantage or disadvantage. Human capital is dependent upon the rules of the game of the existing field. Without the rules or knowledge of the game in the field, capital is invaluable (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992).

Bourdieu (1975) described the social field as an arrangement of struggles representing a network of positions. In this sense, the field is seen as a battlefield where strategies and social, cultural and economic capital (symbolic capital) are important assets. These assets are “weapons” that agents can use to gain position on the field. “Battles” between agents are about finding relative positions on the field (Iellatchitch, Mayrhofer and Meyer 2003). Agents have the desire to maximise their capital upon the field, and therefore individual strategies are a necessity, within which agents must conform with the rules of the game.

Bourdieu’s theory of practice thus looks at the habitus, human/social capital and the field and at how agents interact according to the capital obtained. But what happens when migration occurs, and how do agents adjust to changes in their social world and life trajectories? In cases where migrants experience de-skilling, are marginalised and experience non-recognition within the field, the theory of practice allows us to address the transformation of migrant dispositions within

complex systems of power relations. These questions will be analysed and answered in the analysis chapters.

## Chapter 4: Methodology and Data Collection

In this chapter, I will present my methodological considerations and approach to data collection, as well as my approach to data analysis. In subchapter 4.1, I discuss my methodological considerations concerning researching migrants from non-western countries and different ways of reflecting upon the methodology. This dissertation is based upon 21 interviews, of which four are couple interviews. In subchapter 4.2, I outline my conditions for data collection and how I have worked with this data. My respondents are individuals from different backgrounds and countries, and they live in different parts of the Faroe Islands. These facts impact upon the data content, and are therefore important to take into consideration when devising analytical strategies, as discussed in subchapter 4.3.

### 4.1 Methodological Considerations

The aim of this PhD is to develop an understanding of the predicament of migrant women in the Faroe Islands and their choice to migrate. The main criticism that post-colonial feminism makes is of the methodology of Western feminism, which lacks an intersectional analysis regarding different social, historical and economic backgrounds. Recognising that there are social, historical, cultural and political differences to all individual migration choices will allow me to construct a more dynamic picture of women from other parts of the world, according to post-colonial feminist theory.

The construction of scientific literature is based upon knowledge and interpretation; for this reason, it is of great importance to reflect upon the methodology used during the construction of new knowledge. Foucault discusses and emphasises how the formation of knowledge has become truth and the basis of political activity (Foucault 1991). The question is: how do we as researchers construct knowledge to enable a better understanding of the other (in this case, migrant women)? The choice of migrant women to move to a remote place like the Faroe Islands may be hard to understand. There is a lack of knowledge about who they are as women, their desires, their background, their choice to marry a foreigner and how they perceive themselves as women. Economic incentives and the economic power relations between the North and the South have mainly been presented as reasons why women from poorer countries marry westerners. As mentioned in the last chapter, migrant women are often deprived of their agency when they are objectified as individuals without a rational choice (Constable 2005).

The questions I ask, however, are deliberately intended to document and understand their choices as agents in their own lives.

#### 4.1.1 Moving away from the Analysis Trap

Chandra Mohanty criticises and discusses what she refers to as “the analysis trap”, which constructs and produces “third-world” women as



a monolithic group. What Mohanty is trying to uncover is how ethnocentric universalism in certain analyses “creates” the “other” women, which leads to uncritical analysis and the construction of the hegemonic first-world/third-world women (Mohanty 1995). This leads to what she identifies as “the analysis trap”. Methodologically, Mohanty argues that we must look away from “women” as a single category of analysis characterised as a singular group based on similar oppression (Mohanty 1995). These women (third-world women) are discursively constructed without taking into consideration the historical background or the “reality” of being a woman in different societies. This leads to the assumption that women are an already-constituted group where “third-world” women are labelled as “powerless”, “exploited”, “sexually harassed” etc. (Mohanty 1995). Even though Mohanty does recognise the informative work of western feminism on women from the “third world”, she criticises those who have fallen into the analysis trap of (re-)producing “third-world” women; the construction of women as subjects and the representation of them as women are (re-)produced by hegemonic discourses which appear to be uncritically constructed. She mentions the importance of giving women from these countries a voice in order to shed light on their experiences by taking their backgrounds and historical perspectives into consideration and establishing

international links between women's political struggles (Mohanty 2003).

It is through the production of "third-world difference" that the intersectional aspects of different classes, religions, races, and castes in these countries are set aside. No historical perspective is taken into consideration and the notion of all women being oppressed in these countries persists (Mohanty 2003). I take these considerations with me into my approach to both data collection and my analysis. In the first instance, I do so through my subscription to Donna Haraway's notion of situated knowledge (described in section 4.1.2 below), as well as through actively reflecting upon my own positionality in relation to my research topic and relationship with my interviewees, discussed in section 4.1.3 below.

#### [4.1.2 Construction of Knowledge According to Situatedness](#)

Considering where and how scientific knowledge is constructed is of great importance in order to move away from the analysis trap that Mohanty discusses. It is through situatedness that knowledge and understanding about the other are constructed and (re-)produced. Donna Haraway (1988) discusses the importance of situated knowledge and scientific construction and the danger of not being critical about how the imagined "they" and the imagined "we" are constituted. The aim of situated knowledge and feminist work is the

ability to translate knowledge between different communities. She furthermore discusses how science can be reductionist in its representation when only one method and language are used as a universal approach to the interpretation of knowledge and conversations (Haraway 1988).

In order get away from the universalist approach to science, Haraway proposes situated knowledge as a tool in research, which should be of interest to feminist researchers. The point of departure when conducting research is to move away from implicit power relations where knowledge-making may lead to a hierarchical and positivist direction in what counts as knowledge (Haraway 1988). The question is: how can we as researchers “construct” knowledge of the “other” and at the same time avoid being biased? Haraway’s answer to this is to acknowledge that all knowledge production is “situated” where there is a construction and a deconstruction (Haraway 1988). This methodological tool may help in the transformation of systems of knowledge and ways of seeing things. Haraway argues for:

*politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people’s lives. I am arguing for the view from a body always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured*

*body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity.* (Haraway 1988: 589)

In other words, situated knowledge is an awareness about the production of knowledge and the location of its production and construction. I am aware that I am not producing knowledge about the migrant women within their own field (home country), but as a researcher I will try to understand their reality by asking them about their life trajectories, backgrounds and cultural understandings of gender, marriage and why as women they chose migration. The situated knowledge in my research is to understand the life-worlds of these migrants through their own life-stories and their choice to migrate. This knowledge will give us an understanding of the complexities of being a woman and an individual moving from one place to another. I have to take into consideration and reflect upon where I am constructing knowledge; I am aware of the fact that my research would have been different if it had been conducted in the respondents' home countries.

The importance of conducting research based on "situated knowledge" is the recognition of the ways in which gender, sex, class, race and historical background intersect. Those intersections create diversity in research and in the understanding of others. In other words, research on women must move away from the assumption of

women as an already-constituted, coherent group with the same interests regardless of the intersection of class, ethnicity, race and gender. In this way, Haraway's position aligns with my theoretical approach of incorporating post-colonial feminism as an entry-point to my study.

#### 4.1.3 Reflexivity when Conducting Research

Reflexivity is the awareness of the researcher's role in practising research and the awareness of how she/he and the object studied mutually influence both each other and the research (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2005). Therefore, when conducting qualitative research and interviews, it is important to approach both the object being researched and the field reflexively. Such an approach will make us take into consideration the fact that we as researchers have to be aware of the respondents' position as reflective individuals; they are reflecting upon the situation because they are the objects of the research.

The construction of knowledge is an interplay with the social field where interpretation and reflection are important elements of the procedure of knowledge development (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2005). This means that we as researchers have to set aside our pre-understandings and biases when interpreting texts/data, as they may affect the nature or outcome of the knowledge produced. Being

reflective, on the other hand, is defined as the interpretation of interpretation, whereby the researcher has to turn his/her attention “inwards” towards him/herself, the research community, society, language and narratives among other things (Alvesson and Skoldberg 2010). This process will improve the scientific interpretation of the object studied.

Reflexivity during data collection and interpretation is important, because it is through reflection that the researcher may become aware of what he/she is seeing as well as what inhibits their seeing (Russell and Kelly 2002). This means that how I present myself in the field and how I reflect upon my position are crucial for my data collection. Bourdieu states that, through interviews, the researcher will gain an understanding of the life conditions and social mechanisms that have an effect upon and influence individuals, according to the social categories to which they belong (Bourdieu 2004).

“One has to take into consideration that the actors interviewed are reflective individuals as well. During interviews and interview situations, the ‘other’ is not only the other person, but another perspective, another way in which the world is seen, judged or appreciated” (Natanson 1956: 64). My point of departure in this thesis is to understand how marriage migration has influenced and shaped the lives of migrant women in the Faroe Islands; as a researcher, I am

(re-)constructing their social reality when I actively interpret their experiences, social realities, situations and relations. I have to bear in mind that the “real world” is constituted through dialectical interactions through which the self is reflexively re-created (Tsekeris 2010); meaning that the actors interviewed are not just actors, but reflective actors who are also living and constructing their own reality.

As a researcher, I have to take into consideration the different positions or social backgrounds of those interviewed. During the interviews, I have to bear in mind and think about my respondents’ social background and capital (social and cultural), I will have to “speak” a language that is understandable to them, which includes not using academic words and allowing for their social status during the interview situation. The locality where the interview is conducted also has an effect upon data collection. Bourdieu (2004) mentions that the field is an important factor during interviews, because it will have an effect upon the interviewer–interviewee interaction. Conducting qualitative interviews constitutes a form of engagement in which the researcher has to customise himself/herself according to the influence the social structure has upon the interviewee. I will elaborate upon this in subchapter 4.2, section 4.2.1.

#### 4.1.4 Reflections on My Approach and Data Collection Experiences

This is not the first time I have conducted interviews among migrant women in the Faroe Islands. The first time was in 2009 for my BA paper<sup>20</sup>, and the second was in 2015, when I was employed by the Municipality of Tórshavn to work on an Integration Recommendation. Furthermore, I have also organised political meetings for migrants during elections. During my time at the Municipality of Tórshavn, my work was to find out from migrants what kind of services were lacking concerning their situation and how to include them as equals in the municipality. The Faroe Islands is a small place, where almost everybody knows each other and people are quite reserved in terms of whom they speak to, or what they allow themselves to speak about. Due to this small-scale issue, I needed to reflect as a researcher upon my position in the field and upon how to build up a trusting relationship with the individuals and couples I was going to interview. It is said that once a researcher starts upon the path of subjective intervention, they need to consider their role not only methodologically but also epistemologically (Cole, Chase, Couch and Clark 2011).

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<sup>20</sup> It was a case study, and my aim was to find out how these women were coping in the Faroe Islands. I chose different respondents from different countries with different backgrounds.



As a researcher, a woman and a foreigner in a cross-border relationship myself, I have to reflect upon my position in the field. “Good research questions spring from a researcher’s value, passion and preoccupation” (Russell and Kelly 2002: 5), but at the same time, I must not let my own experiences control the fieldwork or my relationships with the interviewees. This is called being an insider in the field. The insider researcher has to gather data in the field with his or her “eyes open”, but at the same time as though he or she knows nothing about the field or phenomenon being studied (Dwyer 2009). In other words, as a researcher, I have to think about my position and role among the respondents, and not let my own experiences control the interview. I have to think about what kind of information I want to obtain (even if I have prepared themes that I want to talk about) and how to help my respondents gain trust in me. Reflexivity involves an internal conversation that describes the theoretical and continuous self-confrontation of the individual (Acher 2003) with their social environment. It is therefore considered to be the regular way of thinking, when the researcher and the object of study affect each other mutually and continually during the research process (Alvesson and Sköldbberg 2000).

There is also the issue of how much information my respondents are willing to share. There is an awareness that the respondents are also reflective individuals and are also reflecting upon the interview

situation. Being an insider, i.e. a foreign woman in a cross-border relationship, may play out as an advantage for me. This may lead to an acceptance within the group studied, possibly making the respondents more willing to share their experiences because of the understanding and assumption of shared distinctiveness (Dwyer 2009). Being an insider does not make me a better researcher than an outsider, but it may give me some advantages among my respondents, as there may be a mutual understanding. However, being an insider is not an unalloyed advantage in the Faroe Islands; due to the small-scale society where everybody knows each other, it may also impede the process of data collection. I will elaborate further upon the insider and outsider perspectives in section 4.2.2.

#### 4.2 Data Collection and Data Treatment

In this subchapter, I will explain my procedure for data collection, as well as my relations to the respondents and to the field when conducting interviews. I will also present my data set and how I have worked with it, including my mode of transcription, along with ethical concerns regarding data treatment.

#### 4.2.1 Collection of Data and the Field

Conducting interviews has been my main strategy for obtaining empirical data<sup>21</sup>. Interviews as a social research method are used to explore individuals' understanding of their lives and their experiences (Edwards and Holland 2013). According to Karin Widerberg (2001), qualitative research can be described as a conversation between the researcher and the respondents, where the respondents have the opportunity to raise new themes and perspectives during the interview. My aim with my interviews was to understand the life-worlds of the respondents and be able (as a researcher) to interpret the information I received. The actors' own narratives, perceptions and experiences will give me an insight into their daily lives. This thesis is based upon semi-structured interviews in which I categorised some questions as themes to discuss. By choosing semi-structured interviews, I expected to gain the information I needed to make comparisons between the interviewees and, at the same time, this method gives the respondents the opportunity to talk freely. In other words, bringing up other issues that I had not thought about.

I divided the questions into three categories, with each category having a theme. However, the respondents did reflect upon other

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<sup>21</sup> At the outset, however, I procured a quantitative dataset from Statistics Faroe Islands in order to gain an overview of my field. These statistics were presented in Chapter 2.

issues during the interviews. The first category was their background and life story in the Faroe Islands, the second part was about negotiations within the couple, family and social relations, and the third category was about how they (re-)positioned themselves in the wider society. A copy of my interview guide can be found in Appendix 3.

I recruited many of my respondents through Facebook and most of them did not respond the first time. I had to contact (write to) them several times before they responded. They were sceptical and did not understand what my motivations were. Building trust was my main interest before conducting the interviews. I had to get through the gatekeepers of the Filipino and Thai communities. Before I conducted the official interviews, I invited some of them for coffee at the local coffee shops so that we could build trust. I also opened up about my own experiences when I first moved to the Islands to show them that I, too, had a history in the Islands. At the same time, I had to take into consideration the researcher–respondent relationship. After building trust, the respondents felt confident enough to talk to me as a researcher. The place where interviews are conducted is also important. The respondents need to feel safe where no one else can listen to our conversation. Therefore, most of the interviews were

conducted privately either at the respondent's house, my place<sup>22</sup> or at my office. I conducted the first interview in March 2016 and the last in August 2017.

I explained to the respondents about my role as a researcher and assured them of anonymity during the whole process. I did not use written consent with my respondents because most of them come from countries where they do not trust the authorities; furthermore, they did not trust me or my "agenda" with the PhD, and it was difficult recruiting respondents for the dissertation. I had to gain their trust through gatekeepers. Both the Filipino and Thai communities have a gatekeeper; that is, a person "protecting" them, advising them or letting them know whether they can trust a researcher or not. Furthermore, they did not trust my character as a woman and a researcher because there were rumours that I was working for the authorities in order to expel them from the country. Due to this, I did not find it to my advantage to present a written contract before the interview; it would have created more distrust between me and the respondents. I did discuss this issue with both of my supervisors, and we agreed that a written contract would not be to my advantage.

However, I did explain to my respondents the procedure of the interview, the purpose of the dissertation and assured them that only

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<sup>22</sup> Home office.

I, my supervisors and perhaps the PhD committee<sup>23</sup> would have access to the interviews. I also informed them about how I would maintain confidentiality through the analysis process by using pseudonyms. Likewise, I do not mention where they live or work in the Faroe Islands other than the town or village. These processes will maintain my respondents' anonymity and ensure that they will not be recognised. When doing research in a small-scale society, confidentiality and maintaining the interviewees' anonymity is of great importance in order for them not be recognised.

During the PhD process, I have been active among the public and in various forums where I have presented my research subject and preliminary findings. I was also able to make use of the integration report that I produced for the municipality of Tórshavn in 2015 while doing my PhD. Furthermore, I was invited to debates about the issue of stereotyping of migrants in the Faroe Islands and issues around the labour-market integration of migrants on radio and in local debates. In the next section, I will explain my relations to the field and my insider/outsider relationship with the respondents.

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<sup>23</sup> I have chosen not to hand in my interview transcripts together with my dissertation to the assessment committee. However, they are available upon request.

#### 4.2.2 The Insider/Outsider Relationship

As I mentioned before, being an insider in a field may sometimes be an advantage. In my case, however, this was not so, because I had both an insider *and* an outsider relationship within the field; due to this, it was quite difficult to recruit respondents. I believe that they perceived me as being assimilated, because I speak fluent Faroese and Danish and my network is mostly Faroese people. The Faroe Islands is a small society and many of the foreigners have heard of me and my achievements in the Islands. But, at the same time, they were sceptical about speaking to me because they did not know if I would be loyal to them or to Faroese people. They could not trust me as being one of “them”.

Some researchers have argued that being an insider and sharing the same insider identity is an advantage for the researcher, allowing them to gain information that respondents might not share with someone not belonging to the same group (Moore 2015). At the same time, some other researchers have argued that being an insider may affect the objectivity of the researcher during the research process (Chavez 2008; Innes 2009).

Darren Moore (2015) talks about the in-between relationship of being simultaneously an insider and an outsider. The space in between being an insider and an outsider refers to the situation in which an individual

may occupy a location where they can be part of a group but at the same time separate from the same group (Dwyer and Buckle 2009). While I share the same insider status as my respondents of being a foreign woman married to a Faroese man, I was at the time an outsider in terms of socio-economic factors, in the sense that I occupy a job in the Faroe Islands that matches my educational level. Due to this, I had to reflect upon my position within the field, whereby I had both an insider and outsider relationship with my respondents.

#### 4.2.3 Presentation of the Respondents

In this dissertation, I refer to the individuals interviewed as respondents; I have reflected upon the terms “respondent” and “participant”. However, it is important to stress that my respondents were not inactive during the interview process; they were actively reflecting upon their life world and story and “constructing” and presenting the field for me, so they responded in an engaged manner. On the other hand, they have not participated in writing up my analysis or results, and in this sense the responsibility for this research lies entirely with me rather than them. Karin Widerberg (2001) states that interviews can be described as a conversation between the researcher and the respondent, in which it is the researcher who has an agenda and themes to talk about but, at the same time, the respondents do have opportunities to introduce new subjects, themes or perspectives into the interview process (Widerberg 2001).



My original intention for this dissertation was to conduct 20 couple interviews, followed by individual interviews with the women. However, due to difficulties in recruiting couples willing to participate, I had to readjust my plans, so I ended up with only four couple interviews plus 17 interviews in which I only interviewed the woman in the couple. I am aware of the validity issues concerning the way in which respondents may think through the interview differently if they are influenced by their partner's presence. During the process, the couples did have time to reflect upon their position as a couple and as individuals, and some of them did disagree on some issues. Due to the time limits, I did not conduct individual interviews with each member of the couples.

I conducted 21 interviews with women from different countries (the couple interviews are also among those 21 interviews, so in total I interviewed 25 people). All of my female respondents were from non-European countries, married to Faroese men and were between the ages of 27 and 50 years old. I also chose women who have lived in the Islands for at least four years and are working in the Islands. I interviewed five women from Thailand, five from the Philippines, seven from African countries, two from other Asian countries, one from South American countries and one from another country<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>24</sup> I will not mention where she is from in order to maintain anonymity.

Almost all of the interviews were tape recorded when we met at either the respondent's house or at my place. However, three of the interviews were not taped because the respondents did not wish it and one interview was conducted over Skype and taped. As a researcher, I have to respect the choice of some women who do not wish to be taped.

Fourteen of my respondents lived in Tórshavn and the others were from villages. The reason for this is because it was difficult for me to recruit respondents and those who were in Tórshavn were easier to contact and more willing to participate. The women I spoke to had different educational backgrounds. One woman from the Philippines has a master's degree, three of them have BA degrees and one of them was working within catering in their home country. The respondent from South America had not a degree from their home country. Two of the Thai women have a vocational degree, one has an MA in marketing, one has a BA degree and the last one did not have a degree. Four of the African women held a master's degree, two of them have a vocational degree while the last one did not have a degree from her home country. One of the women from other Asian countries has a master's degree and the other did not have a degree. At lastly, one of the respondents has a bachelor's degree from her home country. Most of the women I spoke to were educated, able to speak English and had

attended school in their home country. All the interviews were conducted in English and transcribed by myself.

The women met their partners in different ways. Some met through internet dating, others were through mutual friends, at school or while their now husband was on holiday in their home country.

The men I interviewed were between 30 and 55 years of age. They came from different parts of the Faroe Islands. One lived in Tórshavn and three lived in villages; they also had different educational backgrounds. Two of them were educated as ship's engineers and the other two had university degrees. They were married to women from different countries; two of the women were from the Philippines, one was from Thailand and one from Africa. Even though I conducted only four couple interviews, we (my supervisors and I) evaluated them to contain good data that I can use.

#### 4.2.4 Ethical Concerns and Transcription

Ethical concerns and how to maintain the anonymity of my respondents is important for me as a researcher. My respondents were also aware of their position as “objects” of research and wished to maintain anonymity. Living in a small-scale society, it is important that they are not recognised in my dissertation. Doing research on stereotyping and marginalisation among migrant women was something I had to think through because it is a sensitive issue. I had

to make sure that the respondents felt safe to talk about those issues. Most of my respondents were vocal about the stereotyping and marginalisation issues and wanted to share their experiences.

I have done my very best to follow ethical guidelines when doing research within social science. For example, for security and ethical reasons, I kept all the transcribed interviews in a locked drawer at my office. The interviews are furthermore encrypted on my USB stick and my work computer.

Besides using pseudonyms, I have not mentioned the respondents' specific ages or whom they are married to. Furthermore, I did not mention where they work in the Faroe Islands, although I do mention whether they are working in qualified or unqualified jobs. Concerning the couple interviews, I did mention the level of education of the Faroese men, but not where they live or work in the Faroe Islands other than the name of the town or village. I also chose to conduct all the transcriptions personally in order to maintain anonymity.

I had to take into consideration which information I choose to reveal in the dissertation. This dissertation has touched upon sensitive issues such as stereotyping and mail-order bride discourses, which can be hard to talk about. My respondents were open about these issues because they think these topics are important issues to talk about, and many said that they want to inform Faroese people about who they

are. Each interview lasted around one hour and fifteen minutes and was conducted in English. We have to bear in mind that English is not the respondents' first language and, when writing up my analysis, I decided to make grammatical corrections or structure the sentences better when I use quotations from the interviews. I did this for two reasons: first of all to make the women's communication clearer, and secondly, because I am not interested in conducting a linguistic analysis that takes into account idiomatic usage of English. Furthermore, by correcting grammatical mistakes and removing idiomatic expressions, it was easier for me to ensure respondent anonymity.

#### 4.3 Analytical Strategies

In this subchapter, I will present my analytical strategies for this dissertation. I start by reflecting on the themes and questions chosen for the interviews, before proceeding to explain my use of intersectionality as a tool for conducting a reflective analysis. I end the chapter by giving an outline of my analysis, which can be found in Chapters 5–7.

##### 4.3.1 Reflection upon the Themes and Questions Chosen

Before conducting my fieldwork and interviews, I prepared the themes and questions I wanted to talk about. The questions and themes I chose to talk about are the essence of my research; nevertheless, during the interviews the respondents did discuss other “problems”

they have encountered in their daily lives concerning bringing up their children, their relations with the Faroese authorities, schools etc. As Alvesson and Sköldberg (2005) state, the respondents are also reflecting upon the situation and the themes being talked about. When conducting research, researchers try to uncover and understand the life-world through the respondents' "reality" and how they interpret their life-world (Cohen and Rapoport 1995). At the same time, my respondents may also disagree with how I as a researcher choose to interpret the data I have received from them, because their perceptions and my perceptions of their "reality" are not the same. This is why a hermeneutic approach is important when analysing data.

The interpretation of data is important in relation to the construction of knowledge. How we as researchers interpret data demands reflexivity, and a hermeneutic approach in order to interpret the data presented to us, because the interpretation of data and the theoretical assumptions of the researcher are not always neutral. In other words, the researcher's way of thinking is part of constructing what we call "reality".

Alvesson and Sköldberg (2005) claim that the two elements of reflexive research are the processes of interpretation and reflection. According to them, interpretation is influenced by the supposition or pre-supposition of the researcher's values, political position, use of

language etc. Because of this, a reflective and hermeneutic approach to data is important. A hermeneutic approach is the relationship or polarity between the subject and the object (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2005). Researchers are conditioned by being part of some particular historical and cultural background, through which their life-world is already influenced by theory and temporality (Heelan 1997).

As I am interpreting the data collected through theories, I had to think about the pattern of interpretation of data, during which as I a researcher will have a “dialogue” with both the data and the theory. I will have to elevate my preconceptions to enable a deeper understanding of the text and critically reflect upon those preconceptions (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2005). This is also what Mohanty refers to as not falling into the analysis trap; as researchers, we have to be reflective by using a hermeneutic approach to the text. The aim of research is the production of knowledge and, as a researcher, I am involved in this knowledge production. As Cunliffe (2003) states: “Researchers need to go further than questioning the truth claims of others, to question how we as researchers also make truth claims and construct meaning” (Cunliffe 2003: 985).

#### 4.3.2 Intersectionality when Conducting Analysis

Intersectionality is not the main methodological or analytical tool for this dissertation. However, I think the concept will contribute to seeing

differences and similarities among the respondents. Furthermore, as this dissertation focuses on not essentialising women as a group, an intersectional approach to the analysis will make us reflect outside the box and move away from the analysis trap in order to analyse the complexities of gender and migration. Kimberly Crenshaw first wrote about intersectionality in analyses of black women and employment in the USA (Crenshaw 1989). She argued for the importance of taking into consideration intragroup differences by conceptualising race, gender and other identity categories. Crenshaw (1989) presents three categories of intersectionality; the first is structural intersectionality, the second is political intersectionality and the third is cultural intersectionality. Each of these intersections has an impact upon black and migrant women.

One theorist who has further developed the concept is Ange-Marie Hancock. According to her, the term intersectionality is dual because it can refer to both a normative theoretical argument and an approach to conducting empirical research that emphasises the influence of differences (Hancock 2014). My own position, as elaborated below, is to focus on intersectionality as an approach to conducting empirical research. This is not to disregard the theoretical significance of intersectionality but, given my reliance on post-colonial feminism as well, I have made the choice to delimit my usage of intersectionality to applying it as an analytical approach.



I conceptualise and utilise intersectionality as a method to understand the dynamics of gender and the social (re)construction of foreign women living in the Faroe Islands. The use of intersectionality in gender and feminist studies is an important empirical tool. It gives us a better insight into and understanding of how class, gender and education affect or contribute to the redefinition of “third-world” women in accordance with different interactions. I will not use intersectionality as an analytical approach in itself, but will discuss the concept throughout my analytical process, applying it as a tool for the discussion of similarities and differences among my respondents. The experiences of migrants moving to a new place as newcomers are, for many, characterised by a combination of a new position in the receiving country in relation to gender and class, and the construction of (new) social identities in their everyday lives (Christensen and Qvotrup 2012).

The questions I have raised in this dissertation will be analysed by applying different theoretical conceptions; and, by making use of intersectionality as a methodological tool for analysis, the race, gender and background of the respondents will help us to understand stereotyping, social mobility and family relations. This intersectional approach will take into consideration their background, where they live in the Faroe Islands, their level of education, their age upon migration, and their current workplace in the Faroes Islands. These

chosen variables are tools for reaching a better understanding of the women (and the men in the couple interviews) and for gaining insight into their lives, experiences and choices.

#### 4.3.3 Outline of the Analysis

I have conducted a three-chapter analysis for this dissertation, during which different issues will be analysed and discussed. In the first analysis chapter (Chapter 5), I will discuss the women's perceptions of themselves, their backgrounds, choices and encounters with stereotyping. In the second analysis chapter (Chapter 6), I will discuss how the couples negotiate their lives and social relations, and the third analysis chapter (Chapter 7) is dedicated to how the women (re-)position themselves within the wider society. These are the overall themes I have chosen to discuss. The analysis is empirically based, meaning that the women's narratives take centre stage, and these will then be analysed within the theoretical concepts chosen for the dissertation. Furthermore, I will make an analysis in which the theoretical concepts chosen will be discussed within each chapter. However, I will draw upon the theoretical aspect that fits best within each analysis, as each of these theoretical concepts has strengths and weaknesses when analysing the women and their choice to migrate to another society.

Understanding the individual choice to migrate is quite complex, and analysing individual women is complex as well. Hypergamy and economic welfare are often discussed when analysing or discussing the North–South migration process and relations. However, I believe that the migration process and the choice to marry western men concerns more than just hypergamy and economic welfare. Therefore, this analysis will elucidate women’s choice to migrate for other than economic incentives.

According to my interview data, women from non-European countries married to western men often experience being stereotyped, and their marriages are stigmatised. However, how migrant women perceive themselves and what they make of those discourses will be discussed in the analysis. Why did they choose to marry a westerner? What was it like to move to the Faroe Islands? In addition, what were their expectations when choosing a cross-border marriage? Moreover, what are the impacts of stereotypes and how do these women deal with them? These are the questions I will try to answer in the first part of the analysis, in which the self will be discussed. Furthermore, in Chapter 5, I will also discuss their expectations when marrying a western partner and before moving to the Faroe Islands.

In Chapter 6, I will discuss and analyse the negotiations and transactions undertaken by the women married to Faroese men. I am,

furthermore, making an analysis of the four couple interviews that I conducted. I will also analyse and discuss the women's relationships with their in-laws/family in the Faroe Islands and the process of making new friends and getting to know Faroese people.

Chapter 7 will discuss the societal aspects, i.e. opportunities and limitations on the Faroese labour market. Most migrants across Europe have experienced being othered on the labour market and the Faroe Islands is no exception. The power relations of not belonging and being a stranger are obvious when migrants apply for jobs in the receiving country. A number of issues arise that differentiate them from the natives; and one of those issues is the language barrier; both Faroese and Danish are required to obtain qualified positions on the Faroese labour market. How do they experience downward or upward social mobility and where are they represented on the labour market? In addition, how do they cope with de-skilling and how has it transformed their lives? These are some of the questions tackled in Chapter 7.

I will draw discussions in each chapter, where the findings and theoretical perspective will be discussed and drawn together.

## Chapter 5: The Women as Agents

This chapter will try to answer the question of self-conception; i.e what do migrant women married to Faroese men think of themselves and how do they experience stereotyping? I will also analyse the reasons why my respondents chose to move to the Faroe Islands and shed some light upon how they met their partner, and their experiences when the first moved to the Islands. Furthermore, I will discuss their expectations of the Faroe Islands as a place, their experiences with stereotyping and their expectations of marrying a Faroese man.

### 5.1 Moving to the Islands

During migration, migrants have to (re)negotiate their identities, gender relations and ways of thinking. They have to learn how to fit into the receiving society, where new structures other than those internalised in their country of origin prevail. Identity makes up one's self-conception, i.e what comes to mind when one thinks of oneself (Stets and Burke 2003).

During the interviews, I asked my respondents about their choices and reasons why they chose marriage migration. They gave me several reasons for their choice; gender and family relations were among the reasons why some of my respondents actively decided to look for a western partner. These women are not attracted to the lifestyle and unbalanced gender relations between men and women in their home countries. Therefore, some of them decided to actively look for a

partner abroad. The way in which they met their partners varied; for some of them it was through dating sites and for others it was through friends, work or holidays.

Sara is a young woman in her thirties, reflecting upon the first time she came to the Faroe Islands to visit her then boyfriend. They met on the internet and chatted for a year before she decided to visit the Faroe Islands. *"It was my secretary who introduced me to internet dating, I was a hard-working woman who worked for a big company and did not have time for love."* Sara told me about her life as a woman in Thailand, she was busy with work and never thought about getting married. However, when she met the man who became her husband, she wanted to give love and marriage a chance. *"Moving here was a new experience for me, I did not bring any money with me and took a chance and applied for the permit and work permit."*

*"When I came here, I thought that everything was different as I had lived in Bangkok. There were only mountains and snow here and the airport was so small. Everything was totally different but I did like the fresh air and the nature,"* says Sara.

Fiona, another Thai woman whom I spoke to, recounted her experiences and why she decided to move to the Islands. *"I met my husband on the internet, I had a good life in my home country but was curious about the outside world...I saw on television how men are*

*romantic and how everything was good in Europe, and I wanted that.”*

Fiona married a Faroese man but was quite unlucky in love; she realised that reality and TV are not the same; since she was young, she wanted to move to Europe. She had created and constructed an image of Europe and western men and thought that life would be better in Europe. The desire for a better life and being respected as women is what made Europe attractive to many of my respondents. Most of them realised after moving to the Islands what the Faroe Islands is about and how different it is from other, more cosmopolitan European countries.

In relation to their dreams of Europe, most of them were quite confused and could not relate to the Islands as the imaginary Europe they had dreamt of. *“Europe is Europe, but when I landed here, I was shocked because it was small and very different from where I come from,”* says Lea from Thailand. Modernity and the imaginations of Europe as a place are not simply shaped by economic desires but also by a “cartography of desires” (Pflugfelder 1999) whereby gender, culture, imagination, and modernity influence the desire to marry to the North (the richer North). In most cases, marriage migration involves women from poorer countries moving to industrialised and cosmopolitan places; the imagination of the Faroe Islands as part of the Danish Kingdom led to disappointment in the women when they arrived in the Islands. *“I did not know anything about the Faroe Islands,*

*I had never heard of it before, but thought that it was just like Denmark as it is part of Denmark,”* says Lea.

In relation to their dreams of Europe, most of them were quite confused and could not relate to the Islands as the imaginary Europe they had dreamt of. *“Europe is Europe, but when I landed here, I was shocked because it was small and very different from where I come from,”* says Lea from Thailand. Modernity and the imaginations of Europe as a place are not simply shaped by economic desires but also by a “cartography of desires” (Pflugfelder 1999) whereby gender, culture, imagination, and modernity influence the desire to marry to the North (the richer North). In most cases, marriage migration involves women from poorer countries moving to industrialised and cosmopolitan places; the imagination of the Faroe Islands as part of the Danish Kingdom led to disappointment in the women when they arrived in the Islands. *“I did not know anything about the Faroe Islands, I had never heard of it before, but thought that it was just like Denmark as it is part of Denmark,”* says Lea.

Most of the respondents did not have any knowledge of the Faroe Islands other than that it belongs to Denmark. Their imagination of Denmark as a cosmopolitan place with high buildings, shopping centres and a town-like lifestyle was their expectation. Even though the Faroe Islands is a modern society with cultural events, coffee shops



and restaurants, daily life cannot be compared to bigger cities with a larger population.

Choosing migration and leaving everything behind was a hard decision for the respondents. Everything they had internalised and learned as socialisation in their home countries had to be “reviewed” as they had to (re)position and (re)organise themselves in society. Due to losing the networks they used to have, these women have to re-socialise to a new culture, network, language and ways of thinking. As Bourdieu explains in the theory of practice, social agents, structures and interactions determine social and daily life and in order to gain an understanding of these interactions it is important to understand where and how they are produced (Bourdieu 1977). Social structures and primary and secondary socialisation are what constitute individuals; therefore, by choosing migration, migrants as agents find themselves vulnerable within the new field as the new structure consists of different laws and rules for migrants. The locals find themselves in an advantageous position within this field as they are accustomed to the rules and know how to position themselves.

The couples met in different ways. Some of them met their partner on a dating site and these women consider themselves active agents in the decision-making around choosing a partner. Three of my respondents were divorced women with children and had to think

about their children's future when choosing a partner. It was a reflective process for them as they had to choose someone who would accept their children and where the child/children could feel safe. Finding a father-figure for their children was an important issue for those women who had children prior to their marriage to a Faroese man. According to Nicole Constable (2003), women from non-western countries involved in cross-border marriages often lose their agency and are made invisible in their choice to marry a westerner. This is due to the power relations of the global North and South, where the North as industrialised countries providing economic welfare create an "us" and "them" dichotomy. Women are often portrayed as passive and not as active agents making choices about whom they desire to marry through internet dating. However, by choosing marriage migration, these women are active agents with an "agenda" and are creating the life they desire.

*"I met my husband on the internet. He was nice but I did not fall in love right away and I had my doubts and wanted to be careful; I had my children to think about; what if he was crazy and I could not escape?"* says Rita, a young woman in her thirties from South America. She had been married before and moved to the Faroe Islands with her children from a previous marriage. Most of the women I spoke to were cautious about their choice of partner and were reluctant to marry right away. They wanted to get to know their partner better before visiting the

Faroe Islands. Not living in the same country makes it difficult for them to get to know each other before marriage. The internet was their way of communicating, enabling them to chat, talk on skype, and some of them phoned each other regularly.

Moving from their home country to the Faroe Islands created changes in the life-spheres of the women because they had to leave their families, friends and work in order to start a new life in the Faroe Islands. Loneliness is one of the issue they discussed and, as Rita added, this was something she experienced when she first moved to the Islands; she reflected upon how everything was different from her home country. *“I didn’t like it when I first moved here, it was always bad weather and I wasn’t used to it. It was always raining and windy and I experienced huge cultural differences with the way Faroese people are with children and how they interact socially”*. Her interactions with Faroese people were quite limited when she moved to the Islands as her husband is a sailor and her in-laws were not living in the same city as her. She remembered those times as hard, when she had to manage on her own while her husband was away.

*I chose to stay at home with the children when I moved here as they have only me as support. In addition, I believe this is the reason why I did not learn the language fast as I was always at home. I was often lost when we received letters from the*

*kindergarten and school about gathering and stuff. And it was bad as I did not feel part of the community.*

Being disconnected and not part of the community was an issue they discussed. Some of the respondents found themselves alienated from society and daily life when they first moved to the Islands. They were dependent upon their partner socially as they did not have family or friends as a network. Their only network was their partner and in-laws. *“It was difficult at the start, my husband worked every day until 5pm...everything and everyone was in black, it was difficult to get to know Faroese people at that time. My only network was his friends and families and my in laws didn’t speak much English,”* says Susan from Thailand.

Migrants as strangers are often confronted with existential issues of feeling like an outsider on the inside. Schutz (1976) discusses how migrants’ objectivity is the outcome of an existential crisis:

*The deeper reason for his objectivity, however lies in his own bitter experience of the limits of the “thinking as usual”, which has taught him that a man may lose his status, his rules of guidance, and even his history and that the normal way of life is always far less guaranteed than it seems. Therefore, the stranger discerns, frequently with a grievous clear-sightedness, the rising of a crisis which may menace the whole foundation*

*of the “relatively natural conception of the world” while all those symptoms pass unnoticed by members of the in-group, who rely on the continuance of their customary life. (Schutz 1976: 104).*

Migrants do have to take into account their lives and the nature of their place within the receiving country. Things they once took for granted and made their world coherent are now uncertain and fragmented (Marotta 2017). They will have to internalise new ways of thinking and new practices in the receiving country, which may seem alien to their primary and secondary socialisation. The women’s sense of loneliness and dependency on their husbands varies as they find themselves more dependent upon certain factors than others. The language issue is one the main reasons why migrants are dependent upon their partner<sup>25</sup> concerning mundane things, like paperwork and how to navigate in society<sup>26</sup>. Some of them spoke about loneliness and feeling like an outsider due to the language issue: *“I do feel lonely and bored at birthday parties and gatherings. I just sit there and try to listen but I can’t follow. I don’t like the family gathering and choose not to go and use the excuse that I have to work,”* says Sara from Thailand. In a sense, they do lose their agency as individuals when moving to the

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<sup>25</sup> The Faroe Islands belong to Denmark, so both Faroese and Danish need to be learned to be fully included in society.

<sup>26</sup> Interviews conducted by me in 2017.

Faroe Islands, as they become more or less dependent upon their partners due to the language until they learn some coping strategies and how to navigate by themselves.

Nevertheless, my respondents are satisfied with their decision to move to the Faroe Islands, even though they have experienced life changes both socially and individually. They think that their decision to migrate has had both positive and negative consequences. They talked about how peaceful and safe they feel in the Faroe Islands; they are not scared to send their children out and they can feel safe when the kids are outside playing.

*“I choose to stay here because it’s safe for me and my children and I make more money compared to what I was making in the Philippines; now I can go on holidays and have a high standard of living even if I don’t like my job here,”* says Wendy who has a university degree in her home country but is now doing an unqualified job in the Faroe Islands.

## 5.2 Migrant Women as Subjects Reflecting upon Stereotyping and their Womanhood

The aim of this section is to explore the extent to which my respondents have experienced stereotyping among the locals and family. The majority of respondents have experienced stereotyping for their choice to migrate and marry a Faroese man. Their choice to move far away from home to start a family in the Faroe Islands is sometimes

questioned. Barbara, a young woman in her late thirties whose family is originally from a non-European country, had lived in Europe before marrying her Faroese husband. She shared her experiences about how people questioned her for her choice to move to the Faroe Islands. *“I experienced people asking me why did I move to the Faroe Islands; they asked me if there was something wrong; In their mind, there must be something wrong as I chose to come here and marry a Faroese man.”* This respondent is a well-educated woman who has lived in the Islands for the last 12 years, but she still feels like an outsider and not “Faroese” enough for her family and some locals. She furthermore adds that it was hard for her to move to a new country and deal with other people’s perceptions of her.

*“You know, moving to a new country and having to deal with misunderstandings and other people’s opinion of your situation made everything more difficult being an individual...that just made everything more difficult for us as a couple,”* says Barbara. At the beginning, when she had just moved to the Islands, she tried hard to be “like” a Faroese, she tried to do things “the Faroese way” in order to gain acceptance from her in-laws and other Faroese people. The only contacts she had at that time were her in-laws and her husband’s friends.

*There's always an othering process going on in every community. It's quite tricky how you perceive yourself and how other people perceive you. It was quite hard to make friends here in the Faroe Islands as I'm a black woman, people always perceive me as African and have some assumptions about who I am.*

Race and country of origin constructed during colonial times do have an impact upon how the gender ideologies of non-western women are perceived in western society. Barbara, above, described the power relations between western and non-western countries, and the consequences of imperialism and colonial times with an image of "others" as backward and poor, whose culture and ways of thinking are questioned. Marginalisation and othering of migrants occurs due to their skin colour, race and appearance. As Barbara mentions, it was hard for her to adapt to her host country because there is always a constructed perception of who is she due to her skin colour and appearance. The effects and consequences of colonialism can still be seen through the economic and political relations between European countries and former colonies at an international level (Stoltz 2000). Post-colonial theorist Edward Said (1978) discussed the effects of colonisation not only at an economic and political level but also at an individual level where the orient was constructed and made into "the other", where the relationship between the orient and the occident is



a relationship of power and dominance (Said 1978). My respondents shared their experiences of when they had felt that their cultural background and way of doing things were not accepted or respected.

*“I feel like everything I said and told was not accepted or was corrected, nobody ever tries to see things my way,”* says Rita from South America. Sandra from Africa reflected: *“Not doing things the Faroese way was not much tolerated by my in-laws – Sometimes I feel that there is a lack of respect for the ‘other’ culture.”*

In her book *Romance on a Global Stage*, Nicole Constable talks about the experiences of women from the Philippines married to American men (Constable 2003). Both the men and the women are often stereotyped, with the men depicted as “buying” a wife, wanting someone to control, wanting someone who is submissive or a sex slave (Constable 2003) and the women are depicted or represented as poor, selling themselves or using marriage as a ticket out of poverty.

Discourses or narratives of migrant women as “mail-order brides” or ordered from the internet are some of the comments my respondents have experienced. Sandra from Africa shared her experience with stereotyping and how she has encountered it. She met her husband while she was on holiday in the Faroe Islands and decided to settle down on the Islands. They were in a relationship for some years before they decided to get married. Her husband was very reluctant to pursue

a relationship with her at the beginning: *“He was scared to marry me because I’m a black woman from Africa,”* says Sandra. He even told her that his friends and family were advising him not to marry a woman from another country and culture. At that time, she knew that race and culture are a huge issue when a white male marries a woman from an African or Eastern Asian country. The dichotomy between the good woman and the “bad” woman who desires to take advantage of the white male is constructed according to where the women are originally from.

“Third-world” women are often portrayed as commodities and victims of globalisation, whereas the white male is portrayed as a consumer, abuser and pleasure seeker (Schaeffer-Grabel 2004). Women often lose their agency through marriage migration as they are categorised according to where they are originally from and to whom they are married. *“When I was on a trip with my husband to another village, a lady asked him, where did he buy such a pretty woman,”* says one participant. She and her husband were both shocked by this comment and did not know how to respond. She also feels that her husband has to justify his choice to marry a foreigner.

*I feel bad about that but he can justify as much as he wants but some people will always have a pre-image of us [migrants]. I think my husband doesn’t get it, he can explain to them as*

*much as he wants about his choice but some people already have in their mind an image of me as a woman and him as my husband for choosing me. (Sandra)*

Throughout the interviews and the stories told by these women, I can see a pattern in which there are constructed pre-formed images/pre-constructions and stereotyped discourses about the women's character. Historical and colonial times as well as international media have constructed a biased image of Thai, Filipina and African women who are desperate to move to industrialised countries through marriage. I will not deny that in some cases it is true that women from poorer countries marry men from western countries based on economic incentives. But there is a generalisation of "third-world" women as "predators" whose incentive is to take advantage of western men.

Sandra is not the only who has experienced her partner being subject to stigmatisation. Jenny, a young woman from Africa, recounts how it was when she moved to the Islands; and how her in-laws and her husband's friends reacted to the fact that she was an African woman.

*My husband's friends and family advised him to make a pre-nup before the marriage to protect himself. And I felt humiliated as some people thought that I was poor and I was*

*marrying him for money. I also experience how some people do look down on our marriage and stigmatise us a couple.*

Men involved in cross-border marriages are also stigmatised by society for their choice to marry a foreigner. They are often described as “*gamal drongur*” i.e bachelors in Faroese, which often has negative connotations. Those “*gamlir dreingir*” and sailors<sup>27</sup> are often married to women from non-western countries. They are often not considered as eligible bachelors among Faroese women. However, during the last few years, men who are considered eligible bachelors by Faroese women are also getting involved in marriage migration. This is because individuals are more mobile and have other ways of encountering each other than internet dating<sup>28</sup>.

According to Chandra Mohanty, women’s rights and desires are being shaped within a western perspective and standard by leaving other groups and cultures on the side-lines (Mohanty 2003). These women’s reasons for marrying a western partner differ, some of them desired a Western partner because they are divorced and categorised as damaged goods in their home country, others desired a partner who will treat them as equal and for some others it was the imaginary

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<sup>27</sup> Not all men married to migrant women are sailors

<sup>28</sup> Individuals meeting at universities or conferences etc.

dream that everything is better in Europe. Unfortunately, there is a tendency to generalise these women's desires and womanhood.

Rita shared her experiences of stereotyping: *"People think that I'm poor and needed to be saved from something, I don't understand that kind of thinking and I get pissed off. I also tell them that my husband is also lucky to have me as a wife as I gave him a family."* She thinks that some people are ignorant when they talk about foreigners, and furthermore, she mentioned that if she ever gets divorced from her husband, she will move back to her home country and not stay here.

These constructions and perceptions of non-western women are often the effect of orientalising gender and gender roles, whereby non-western women are often perceived as more subordinate than western women. They are perceived as more traditional wives with traditional gender performances. Homogenising women from non-western societies and essentialising them without knowing anything about their cultural differences or historical specificities has been a critique made by post-colonial feminists (Mahmudul 2005). The criticism of radical liberal western feminism is the essentialising and homogenisation of women from non-western countries. The ontology of the migrant as the other has its origins in colonial times and the construction of knowledge, whereby "third-world" countries are considered backward, poorer and culturally different from the colonial

countries. Post-colonial feminist criticism of western feminist theorist focuses on the essentialisation of the nature of women without taking the intersection of race, gender, ethnicity and country of origin into consideration.

Wendy from the Philippines shared her experiences of how she felt stereotyped due to her race and culture:

*When I'm shopping with friends, I do feel the people working there look down on us if we're in groups as if we are poor and are like rats. Moreover, some people do look down upon our culture as we do send remittances to our family home to support them. But this is our culture and we have to live up to it no matter what other people think of us.*

The above respondent feels that she is “othered” in the Faroe Islands because there is a misunderstanding of her as a woman, both ethnically and culturally. Negative stereotyping and stigmatisation may create a feeling of social and cultural inferiority; in other words, the respondent above felt socially and culturally inferior due to her ethnicity. There is clearly a social construction of race and gender here, whereby some ethnic women feel different and not accepted due to the “otherness” of their culture. Not being Faroese and having a different cultural understanding qualified them as “backward” in some people’s eyes.

Wendy furthermore adds that she is treated differently when her husband is with her, in contrast to when she is with her ethnic friends. *"I feel that some Faroese people have more respect for foreigners who look like them and have the same colour as them. I feel that I'm treated differently when my husband is with me and in totally another way when I'm alone or with my group of ethnic friends,"* says Wendy.

In her essay, "Under Western Eyes" (1995), Mohanty tries to uncover how ethnocentric universalism is produced in certain analyses. According to her, there is a representation of third-world women as a coherent group sharing the same interests, experiences and goals without taking into consideration the socio-political and historical differences among them. These women are characterised as homogeneous and having the same interests due to their country of origin and their culture. Their womanhood is defined by their race and ethnicity without taking their background, social status or interests into consideration. The homogenisation of them as women creates a biased image of them as women.

Poststructuralist gender theory draws upon the linguistic idea of how gender is constructed and understood (Butler 1988), which means that gender is constituted inter-subjectively as well as linguistically. The construction of knowledge is linguistic and the place in which knowledge is constructed will also define how it is understood. The

“other”, as Mohanty points out, is attained linguistically; thus, migrant women may become “victims” of linguistic structuralism. The understanding of them as women may become biased where cultural and societal differences and understandings of their reality are not taken into consideration when doing research. How they perceive themselves as women is quite different from the stereotypes they have heard or experienced. They do not recognise themselves through those discourses of gender and racial stereotyping and feel stigmatised for their choice to marry a Faroese man. *“Othering is done in almost every community and it is quite tricky how you perceive yourself and how others perceive you,”* says Barbara.

Annika, a young African woman, was quite shocked by the new family she married into. She is also a well-educated woman who has lived and worked abroad, outside her home country. She met her husband through mutual friends and they decided to pursue their relationship. They got married after a year and she moved to the Faroe Islands afterwards. She described both her (ex) husband and her (ex) in-laws as very traditional.

*I was shocked when I got to know my in laws and husband better. I was expecting a modern family but they were very conservative and traditional and I was not used to that. What I*



*wanted from a man was someone responsible and who contributed emotionally to the family but this was not the case.*

The othering of migrant women's gender performances or who they are "supposed" to be occurs due to a biased relationship or power relations between "us" and "them" and the othering of culture. My respondents often feel like "victims" for their choice to marry a white man:

*I think as an individual you will experience a lot of prejudices in the Faroe Islands; you have to prove who you are and challenge those thoughts – they think that we are using their men only as a platform, but it is our effort that will prove that we are not that kind of women, says Anna from Africa.*

My respondents do not recognise themselves in those traditional gender relations. They perceive themselves as strong and independent women who take care of their family as every other Faroese woman does, as well as being active in the labour market. According to Butler, gender performances are a social construction and through gender practice individuals conform to the society they live in.

As I mentioned before, there is a preconceived idea of why women from non-European countries choose to marry into the west. As Anna mentioned, she has to prove to others that she is not here to "use" her

husband as a platform for economic benefits. Neo-classical economic approaches argue the mutual benefit of international marriages, where rational individuals are the major cause of migration and economic incentives are the main reason why women from the poorer south marry men in developed countries (Borjas 1989). Their marriages are often stigmatised and the women are seen as the classical image of benefiting from hypergamy, where women from poorer countries marry men from richer countries to attain a higher social class status for themselves.

I will not dispute that, in some cases, hypergamy is the main incentive for marrying a western man<sup>29</sup>; but I will argue that hypergamy is not one of the main reasons why my respondents chose to marry western partners. Gender performances and mutual rights between a man and a woman are some other reasons why some women choose marriage migration. Moreover, in some cases, women do not find men in their home country attractive enough. Stereotyped discourses and pre-constructed discourses about the women who marry Faroese men have a negative effect on them; they do not feel appreciated as women in society. Wendy from the Philippines reflects upon how she feels stereotyped and “othered” in the Faroe Islands.

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<sup>29</sup> Here I am referring to the women I have spoken to as I cannot generalise about women and their desires.

*I don't feel respected by the state and I feel bad that some people do look down on us. I feel low when I think about how some people think badly of us and think that we don't have an education and we can't do anything else other than cleaning jobs.*

She also mentions that she sometimes wants to shout out loud at those looking down upon her. *"If I was in my home country, I would be doing a better job than you."*

The discourses about migrants from non-western countries have a tendency to be biased and there is a construction of migrants as economically poor in public debates, where they are socially and historically shaped as unequal (Leinonen 2012; Andrijasevic and Anderson 2009). The job market situation will be further explored in the third chapter of this analysis, where the focus will be on labour-market relations and the women's overall position in Faroese society. Sune Qvortrup Jensen (2011) mentions how othering constitutes character and identities. My respondents, as adult women, have to (re)evaluate their identities and ways of thinking due to migration. And, as Wendy mentions, she does feel low sometimes when she reflects upon how some people assume that she is uneducated due to her job position in the Faroe Islands. The questions I can ask or reflect upon here are: *Do some of my respondents feel that they are less than*

*a local Faroese due to their position in society, skin colour, country of origin and/or race? Does being othered as women have a negative impact upon their identity as women in the Faroe Islands?*<sup>30</sup>

In her article entitled “Marriage across borders”, Lena Gerholm (2003) shows that couples in interracial marriages with a partner having a different religion or skin colour state that most of the problems do not exist in the relationship itself but rather in the couple’s relation to the society around them ( Gerholm 2003). She furthermore mentions how individuals imagine or perceive differences within mixed couples; the more the partner is perceived as “different”, the more mixed the marriage is perceived to be (Gerholm 2003). This means that colour, ethnicity and religion are some factors which define how mixed or “different” couples or marriages are. The intersection of ethnicity, race, country of origin, and colour of skin are some of the intersections I have observed in relation to how “different” or foreign my respondents feel in the Faroe Islands. Some of the women believe that their skin colour and race makes a difference to how they are treated in the Faroe Islands. In other words, there is a marginalisation of them as women, depending on where they are originally from. This can be categorised as a marginalisation of race, skin colour and country of origin.

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<sup>30</sup> These empirical questions will be discussed in the second chapter of the analysis.

### 5.3 Expectations and Choice to Marry a Westerner

In this section, I will make an analysis of the women's expectations before they committed themselves to the marriage and their expectations of marrying a European man. Some of the respondents talked openly about their choice to marry a westerner rather than someone from their home country. They expressed a desire to find someone who would appreciate them and with whom they can be equal. Gender equality in the private sphere was an incentive for them to marry a westerner. Wendy from the Philippines, who was a divorcee with a child prior to her marriage in the Faroe Islands, discussed why she did not find men from her home country attractive enough as potential partners. She is well-educated and she and her child were living with her parents while she worked within her academic field. I wanted to know why she did not (re)marry someone from her home country and why she has actively pursued finding someone from Europe.

*"I was married before and got a divorce from my husband. And it's very negative to get a divorce in my community. Society often dictates that women must choose to stay with their husband even if he is an abuser...we have in a way to accept our destiny."* A divorced woman with children is often considered "damaged goods"; this makes it difficult for divorced women to find someone from their country of origin to marry.

Due to this, divorced women from such countries are more inclined to find a European husband because they are not perceived as “damaged goods” in Europe. Wendy thinks that patriarchy is still accepted in her home country, where the practices of dominant masculinity and unequal gender relations among men and women are still found and accepted. As women are becoming more independent economically by gaining higher educational levels and earning more money, they are finding men from their home country “unattractive” on the marriage market because they do not want to conform to the traditional gender repertoires that are expected of them as women.

*“In Thailand, the women have to obey the men – but women are getting more and more educated and they don’t see Thai men as attractive as they were before. Women want more in a man as women can take care of themselves and are not dependent upon their husband,”* says Sara from Thailand. She adds that she does not want to conform to traditional gender performances in which the man is the head of the family and the patriarch. She believes in equality between men and women where there is negotiation between the partners. Even though migrant women are the ones doing most of the housework<sup>31</sup>, my respondents feel that they have attained gender equality by having a partner who respects them, with whom they can

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<sup>31</sup> This is also the case with Faroese women: the newest statistics show an increase in housework among women in the Faroe Islands.

negotiate and talk openly and who also helps with the housework as well. They categorise men from their home countries as abusers, cheaters and not modern or responsible enough to have as a partner. Finding men from their home country “unattractive” is a recurring theme throughout the interviews; most of my respondents have also constructed an image of western European men as responsible, romantic, taking care of their family, who would not cheat on them and respect them as equals.

In her research, Nicole Constable examines both men (western men) and migrant women in cross-border marriages and the couple’s gender expectations towards each other (Constable 1997). Constable discusses the imbalances within expectations among western men and “third-world” women in cross-border marriages; given that some of these men are in search of a more “traditional” wife, whereas the women are looking for a “modern” husband so that they as women can perform gender roles which are not as “traditional” as in their home countries (Constable 1997). In some situations, this can cause an imaginary gendered other where there is an expectation of the husband or the wife which they cannot live up to.

Sara talks further about her incentive to marry a western partner and her expectations when marrying a western man: *“Thai men are not leaders and they’re not loyal, there are many women they can choose*

*from; therefore if I am a strong woman, they will not want me. I have heard that foreigners are more leaders as men and that is what I'm looking for."* She adds that she wants a man who will listen and understand her, someone she can communicate with and not take orders from. *"In Thailand, women have to obey the men, there is a different gender order."*

Gender relations among men and women are other reasons why women from non-western countries find western men. Even though Sara describes herself as a strong woman, she desires to marry a "leader", a man from whom she can learn things and who can "lead" the family. Globalisation and gender mobility across the world have challenged "traditional" gender roles and practices; with mobility and women being more educated, new gender practices and performances are being constituted. I will furthermore argue that my participants find themselves in between gender performances, whereby they combine gender performances from their home country and the receiving country<sup>32</sup>. They are negotiating and mixing both Faroese culture and the culture of their home country and finding a balance in the private domain.

Gender is constructed through psychological, cultural and social means (West and Zimmerman 1987) and it is not static with a stable

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<sup>32</sup> Here I am referring to the Faroe Islands as the receiving country.



identity. It is rather an identity created over time, and instituted through a repetition of acts (Butler 1998). Migrant women's desire to marry a westerner is a way of escaping from and resisting traditional gender expectations of who they ought to be as women. They perceive European women as modern and with more rights and gender equality, which is not common in their home country. They furthermore mention that they find it "easier" to be a woman in the Faroe Islands as their family is not here and there are fewer expectations and less pressure on them as women as there are fewer cultural<sup>33</sup> and social controls over how they ought to be as women. As they obtain the status of "migrant" in the receiving country, the expectations or unwritten gender contracts do not "affect" them as much as they affect the locals. They have space to choose and mix gender performances/roles from their home country and the receiving country.

Gender performances and acts, which migrants have internalised, may be challenged in the new field, as they have to adapt to new gender repertoires and practices. However, I will argue that my respondents do negotiate between their internalised gender performances and the new ones encountered in the Faroe Islands.

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<sup>33</sup> I cannot generalize Europe. I am aware of the differences between Scandinavian countries, Western European countries, Eastern European countries and South European countries concerning gender rights and equality.

*I do feel more independent as a woman here and many things are more acceptable here as a woman. I can shout and say things to my husband without being scared. I don't not need to hide and do things in "secret" as there are not expectation of me here to how to be a good girl or a good woman. (Wendy from the Philippines)*

Another woman reflected and compared women from her home country to women in the Faroe Islands:

*Being a woman in my home country is quite difficult and gender roles are difficult as well; there is an expectation of you as a woman to have kids and a family and take care of them – the women in my country carry the burden of life by putting food on the table, taking care of the house, children and husband – I can see the same pattern here among native Faroese women. They are still the main caretaker of the family. Of course I see the men are also helping, but still I can see that women here – just like my home country – are taking care of almost everything. (Sharon from Africa)*

This respondent's comparison of native Faroese women to women from her home country is interesting, because the latest research

conducted by the Ministry of Social Affairs shows that a higher percentage of women than men are still involved in “unpaid work”<sup>34</sup>.

As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, after migration, migrants have to adjust to a new reality. This often consists of a (re)construction of identity, gender performances and (re)positioning the habitus/oneself within the new field. Being married within a new culture away from their home country, these women have to internalise new ways of living, because gender is a project that has cultural survival as its end (Butler 1988). Due to this, migrants find themselves (re)constructing new identities or gender performances. Finding themselves between two cultures, migrants will also find themselves in between gender performances, in between identities, and in between ways of living. What they have internalised as primary and secondary socialisation is challenged by migration. Andrea from Africa shares her thoughts about her culture and how women married in the Faroe Islands need to change their way of being:

*Many foreign women get into trouble with their husbands as they don't understand each other culturally and still think they're in Africa. As Africans, we're louder and show too much feelings...it's the mentality. But living here, you can't shout and*

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<sup>34</sup>[https://d3b1dqw2kzexi.cloudfront.net/media/10592/39583\\_amr\\_virkis%C3%A6tlan\\_faldari\\_a4-47-si-%C3%B0ur.pdf](https://d3b1dqw2kzexi.cloudfront.net/media/10592/39583_amr_virkis%C3%A6tlan_faldari_a4-47-si-%C3%B0ur.pdf)).

*fight all the time; in Africa we live in communities, your family will know if you're fighting with your husband but it's not the same in the Faroe Islands. You have to change when you live here and leave the aggression.*

A third socialisation process occurs with migration, whereby the migrant has to internalise the norms and culture of the receiving country. The internalisation of the first and second socialisation processes intersects with the norms, behaviour and structure of the receiving country, where the migrant has to adapt to new ways of thinking and behaving when entering a new gender system, culture and structure. Schutz (1976) argues that the life world of the migrant transcends that of the host as their experiences are situated in another life-world; this means that the “strangers” – here migrant women – find themselves in a position where the cultural and language codes are difficult to interpret (Schutz 1976).

#### 5.4 Discussion

As I mentioned before, I am interested in the other layers of migration apart from economic incentives in order to understand my participants' choice of marriage migration. There are several reasons at the individual level of my analysis as to why my respondents have actively searched for a western partner to marry. First of all, they have developed an image of Europe and European men, entailing that

European men will make better husbands than men in their home country. And they expect that the opportunities for them to be a woman in Europe will be better than in their home country. There is a positive stereotyping of western European men and a negative stereotyping of men from their home country.

Secondly, as most of my respondents are women with a college or university degree or other kind of vocational qualification, they do not find the gender-role system in their home country attractive. As they mentioned, there are different gender systems for men and women, within which men are allowed to practise hegemonic masculinity while women have to live up to specific gender roles. Due to this, these women do not find the men or the gender hierarchy of their home country attractive. These women are using marriage migration as a mean to escape from and resist certain traditional gender expectations.

Thirdly, divorced women with children are perceived as “damaged goods” and stigmatised on the marriage “market” in their home country. Three of the respondents were divorcees with children before arriving in the Faroe Islands, which means that they are not attractive to the local men in their home country. These women are sometimes stigmatised in society, because religion and what is acceptable to society for men and women differs. This leads to some women actively

looking for a partner abroad to marry and act as fathers for their children. The number of family reunifications in which children are reunited with their mothers is growing in the Faroe Islands (the numbers can be seen in Chapter Two of this dissertation).

The concept of structure and agency can be discussed here as gender is performed, influenced and constituted through certain structures. Even if gender can be discussed from a phenomenological perspective, it is also constituted and kept alive by specific social structures within the territory,<sup>35</sup> where a certain social structure keeps specific gender relations alive. These women as agents desire to move away from the socially accepted gender structure in their home country to find new social structures where they can choose new or combined gender performances. By choosing marriage migration, my respondents as agents are attaining their desire for gender equality in their private lives, but are also limited within certain spheres due to structures in the receiving country<sup>36</sup>.

Their choice to migrate, to marry a western partner and move to the Faroe Islands does have some negative or biased consequences; this is due to the economic and power relations between the North and the South. As I mentioned above, some of the respondents have

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<sup>35</sup> By abiding laws, religion, norms or unwritten gender contracts.

<sup>36</sup> I will discuss this subject at the society level; i.e. how limited their options are on the labour market.

experienced being stereotyped and othered in the Faroe Islands. Their womanhood is often essentialised and homogenised, even though they have different ethnic and cultural backgrounds, different educational levels and different class backgrounds in their country of origin. These intersectional differences among the women I have interviewed seemed to be commonly glossed over or forgotten in situations where they are stereotyped. I will say that race, skin colour and country of origin do have an influence upon the categorisation or stereotyping of these women. Women from Eastern Asian countries, such as Thailand and the Philippines, are perceived as docile, doing all the housework, traditional, poor and without an education. Thailand is often considered to be related to sex tourism, and the women are generalised and categorised as sex workers. Some of my Thai and Filipina participants mentioned that some Faroese people perceive them as “cheap” women or “mail-order brides”. The African respondents are often categorised as being poor, uneducated, loud and aggressive women. Those are the intersections I have identified among these three groups concerning stereotyping<sup>37</sup>. There is clearly a constitution of hierarchy where gender, race and country of origin intersect when we analyse the narratives of my respondents. These

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<sup>37</sup> I have also spoken to women from other countries but where I have only one or two interviews among different groups; i.e two women from South America one from the Caribbean, one from Singapore etc. But I will add that their experiences are quite similar to the bigger groups due to their race and country of origin.

women are perceived as the other because their skin colour and country of origin “defines” how they are supposed to be. They are defined as culturally different, creating a dichotomy between what is “civilised” and “uncivilised”.

On the other hand, the other group of women I interviewed, that is, women from countries other than the Philippines, Thailand and African countries, experience the Faroe Islands differently. They did not experience stereotyping, and having a different ethnic background did not matter. Women belonging to larger migrant groups do feel more stereotyped than those in smaller migrant groups. Women belonging to smaller migrant groups socialise more often with the locals than women from larger migrant groups; this I believe gives them a status of “belonging”, whereby they feel “accepted” by the locals.

Foucault (1980) talks about an understanding of power and the locus of power whereby individuals are not just the object of power, but contribute to resistance against it or its continuity. My respondents are “creating” their own power when actively choosing a different gender system, one which they desire. Both men and women are using power as strategies, which means that some of these men would have likely stayed bachelors if they had not found a wife from abroad, whereas the women desire to have gender equality – and moving to



Europe for a better life is potentially one way of acquiring this. This is why defining “third-world” women as commodities for western men to “consume” is a one-sided and biased analysis.

The deconstruction of the hegemonic image of who migrant women are is deconstructed by taking into consideration their culture, structure, religion and background. The intersectionality of doing gender and the understanding of what gender equality means for an individual differs due to culture, society and background. Discourses of Eastern Asian women as mail-order brides and other groups of women as poor, uneducated and in need of the white male to save them are not something my respondents can identify themselves with. They perceive themselves as middle-class and strong women who desire equality in their private lives. They desire equality in their marriage and at the same time a man who can “lead” the family. The individualistic gender relations which are found in many western European countries are not what they are attracted to. However, they think that the relationship between a man and woman has to be equal, and the man has to take responsibility for the family and be a “leader”, as one of my respondents mentioned.

Gender equality is a quite complex discussion when it involves couples from different parts of the world. One has to ask: what are the markers used to define gender equality within the private sphere?

“Traditionalism” versus “modernism”, or patriarchy versus equality are among some of the markers used to define gender equality. I would say that these women are combining what we call “traditional” gender roles and “modern” European gender roles. Such a combination is not unfamiliar in the Faroe Islands, where women do prioritise family life over career. Gender research in the Faroes Islands (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016) shows that a high percentage of women are in jobs that are lower paid than men’s, and also that a large number of women are in part-time jobs. At the same time, this research on gender and part-time work showed that Faroese women were more involved in doing the housework than men (Hayfield, Olavson and Paturson 2016).

I will conclude by saying that gender performances and equality within the private sphere are not fixed or something that can be determined. They are negotiated among couples and the concept means different things to different people. Couples or women involved in marriage migration knew what they wanted before marrying into the Faroe Islands. As a researcher, I have to be neutral and to listen and understand their way of thinking without being biased. But this entails having to understand where my respondents are coming from culturally and personally as my research and analysis are based on reflexivity and acquire a hermeneutic relation to the analytical process.

## Chapter 6: Family Inclusion and Socialisation

In this chapter, I will make an analysis of the negotiations between couples, family inclusion and socialisation. I will analyse marriage “ideologies”, negotiations among the couples, their relationships with their in-laws and their social relationships in the Faroe Islands. A consequence of migration is the loss of social ties, which may leave the migrant feeling lost and alone. Even though my respondents are already included in a Faroese family, they will have to (re)socialise and (re)internalise new norms in order to understand the cultural code of the locals.

### 6.1 Marriage Ideologies

Marriage as a transaction consists of negotiations and expectations. Furthermore, I will make the assertion that, due to being from two different countries and cultures in a cross-border marriage, couples have to negotiate and understand each other’s culture and new ways of living have to be negotiated. The expectations about why couples choose marriage migration may differ. As I mentioned before, I am focusing upon reasons other than economic incentives for why my participants have chosen to marry a westerner. A couple’s choices are often stigmatised and stereotyped by society and their marriage is defined as an economic means for the woman to escape her home country. Furthermore, the Faroe Islands is a small society where family background is quite important in defining who you are. Migrant

women are found to be without a history or background in the Faroe Islands, which leads to a loss of social status and social ties. On the other hand, some of the men who marry migrant women are not considered eligible bachelors for Faroese women and are found to be “unattractive” partners on the marriage market. Due to this, some of the participants feel that their marriage is being stigmatised by society. *“Stigmatisation of my marriage is something I experience quite often, some people look down on my marriage as they think that I’m here due to money and that I was poor and needed a white man to save me,”* says Anna. The choice to marry someone not from their home country is categorised as an escape from poverty.

Most of my participants belong to middle-class families and are in possession of a bachelor’s or master’s degree or some other vocational degree from their home country. Being perceived as poor and without an education is quite a generalising picture of them as women, simply because they are from poorer countries than western countries. Women from poorer countries than the west are often referred to or seen as women without agency or rational choices. Their choice to marry a westerner is often questioned and perceived as a gateway from their misery back home. I will not deny that in some cases the incentive to marry a westerner is purely economic; but the generalisation that perceives all women from non-western countries

who marry white men as doing so due to economic incentives is something my participants experience quite often:

*I felt strong stigmatisation among my in-laws; I see myself as a strong and independent woman who can afford my own things such as expensive clothes and bags etc. I have experienced people asking me how I can afford these brands, thinking that I am using his money to buy expensive things. (Wendy from the Philippines)*

Wendy sees herself as a strong woman who is able to take care of herself, and that she can be herself in her marriage.

*I think as an individual you will have to prove yourself and challenge those thoughts about us migrant women – people do think that we are using their men as a ground force; it is our efforts that will prove we are not those kinds of women. (Anna from Africa)*

Marriage ideologies and imaginations about how well western men treat women is another reason why migrant women choose a foreign partner:

*The reason I chose a European man is because I thought that he would treat me better than someone from my home country and would appreciate me. I wanted someone who would treat*

*me as his equal and be good to me. I have heard that white men help with the household and treat women as equal. (Annika from Africa)*

Annika has now divorced her husband, as she did not thrive in the marriage. She wanted someone who contributed emotionally to the family, where they could be equal to each other, but this was not the case in her marriage. The desire to be treated as an equal was another reason why Jenny chose to marry her husband; she imagined that marrying a white man would give her the opportunity to escape traditional gender expectations where there are different gender hierarchies for men and women:

*I chose a husband in Europe because I thought that he would be more caring and would never be violent and would treat me as equal. This is what I wanted. I was surprised that my husband was not what I expected him to be...now I know that being white does not mean that the men are not violent, it all depends upon how you are raised and your values in life! (Annika from Africa)*

Gender equality is one reason why my participants were attracted to marry a western man. The women are constructing an image and ideology of race, of who the white man is and his gender performances. White men are described as being helpful, not

cheaters, not violent and men who respect women. The women are vocal about their choices, as they do not find men from their home country attractive enough due to the unequal gender relations between men and women. By actively choosing a western husband, these women are resisting those gendered division of power in their home country. "Escaping" their home country and resisting the "traditional" gender roles which these women do not find attractive, gives them power over their individual lives by positioning themselves as agents of change.

Judith Butler (1988) argues that gender is not static as it socially and politically constructed. Gender performances as a social construction are done inter-subjectively, where the performance is a behavioural repertoire which organises, defines and reproduces the relationship between men and women and how to behave in a gender-appropriate way. The structures and norms of society regulate and constitute gender norms, which in turn regulate what is masculine and feminine. These norms constitute and create unwritten gender norms and cultural codes into which the locals are embedded. Butler furthermore argues that gender is an act that has been rehearsed and requires individual actors in order to actualise and reproduce as reality over and over again (Butler 1988). The women I spoke to desire to perform other gender repertoires or performances than those that constitute

the norm in their home country. They want more gender equality<sup>38</sup> in their relationship, where the household chores are shared and they can speak their mind and be respected as an equal.

*“Men are dominant in my home country” says Sara from Africa. She adds, many men there cheat on their wives. This is the reason why I have chosen to marry a European husband, thinking that he will treat me better and will appreciate me. Someone who will treat me as his equal and who is good to me. White men often help with the household.*

There is a generalisation here about who a white man is as husband, and the way he treats women. They are perceived as more attractive on the “marriage or husband market” compared to men from the participants’ home countries.

Wendy from the Philippines adds:

*Some Filipino men practise infidelity, hit their wives and practise gambling; I don’t respect them as I have had some bad experiences with men there. I want a husband I can talk to and who doesn’t hit me and respects me as an equal. The men in my home country are the patriarchs of the family. But this is how society dictated the man; most women choose to stay with their*

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<sup>38</sup> Here, this means a man respecting them as equal in their relationship.



*husband even if they are mistreated by them as they have to accept that this is their destiny.*

She reflects upon the inequality between women and men in her home country where there are distinct gender norms for men and women.

There are misunderstandings about the power relations between western men and “third-world” women in cross-border marriages, where the women are perceived as a commodity that western men may consume. The typology of power varies as the power relations I am discussing here consist of the empowerment of my participants as women, whereby choosing marriage migration changed their lives. By choosing marriage migration, these women are resisting gender expectations of them as women. They are active agents making rational decisions by shaping their lives in the way they desire within the private sphere. Nicole Constable (2003) argues that women in cross-border marriages are often perceived as victims of western men, because there is a difference in economic power relations between “third-world” countries and western countries. Furthermore, domestic laws in the receiving countries often contribute to making women legally dependent upon their marriage or their husband to obtain a residence permit. This engendering of power is often found within legal institutions where women are dependent upon men to

obtain residence permits. But what my participants refer to as power and gender equality lies within the private sphere; where they can choose different gender performances from those in their home country.

## 6.2 Finding a Way to Make Things Work

Marriage is a social transaction within which there is both genetic reproduction and household production (Adshade and Kaiser 2008). The meanings and negotiations within marriages differ between different societies and countries. Cultures and structures also have an influence upon how marriage is negotiated and understood among individuals. Being from different cultures and countries, my respondents have to negotiate to find ways to integrate Faroese culture and their own culture into their daily lives and households. Distance and place do have an impact upon their relationships and, due to this, most of my respondents got married quite soon after they met their future husbands. In other words, the process of getting to know each other better takes after they are married.

*There is a huge cultural difference and things between us..things we take for granted here in the Faroe Islands, is a serious issue for them..men shall be faithful and shall not talk or even look at other women. I had to explain to her that this is normal here to talk to women friends, this is how it is done here.*

*It was hard to begin with as I had to explain everything to her (Sammy)<sup>39</sup>*

The concept of marriage and what it means to be married varies between the west and other, “traditional” societies; the criteria for what comes first: love, romance, responsibilities or duties may differ between western society and other societies:

*Everthing happened so fast between us, we got married soon after we were a couple. I was much younger at that time, we had to adjust to each other in different ways and my husband was very patient. But after one or two years we got to know each other better and things got better. We have grown together and I had to adjust here in the Faroe Islands. For us, we have grown up together in the marriage and we are stronger together now. (Pam, Sammy’s wife)*

Maya is a young woman from Africa who speaks Faroese well and is active on the labour market. Being married to someone from a different cultural background has been quite a challenge in terms of understanding each other’s cultural codes, raising children and the food culture. However, they have had to adjust to each other’s ways of doing things in order to find common ground. Some of my

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<sup>39</sup> Sammy is one of the men from the four couple interviews I conducted.

respondents find Faroese men very calm and not as expressive as men from their home country, and they have had to adjust to that. Maya thinks that there are challenges in being married to a Faroese man, as they are not expressive and can sometimes be too laid back. She describes her husband as “lazy” with helping around the house and she has to “push” him to participate and help with the household chores. *“My husband is quite lazy and can get too comfortable. He’s also quite shy and not too talkative...I sometimes have to push him or encourage him to be more active at home. He needs someone to tell him what to do or else he doesn’t do it,”* says Maya.

Being in an intercultural relationship means new ways of living, where there is (re)negotiation and (re)adjustment of the understanding of marriage. The couples have to adjust to each other’s cultural codes and ways of living in the receiving country. Rebecca from Africa shared her thoughts about why some of the mixed couples she knows are divorced now. She mentions that some couples do not understand each other culturally and this creates misunderstandings.

*We as African we can be quite aggressive and show too much feeling, it’s the mentality. But here of course you can’t shout and fight all the time...people aren’t loud here, you have to adjust to the culture. In Africa we live in community, everybody in your family will know if you have a fight with your husband,*

*but you can't do that here...you have to change and leave some of your culture behind to make things work. (Rebecca from Africa)*

Rebecca thinks that the main reason for divorce among mixed couples is due to the cultural differences and not getting to know each other properly before marriage.

Being in an intercultural marriage can be a challenge, as the individual moving to the receiving country will have to conform to a new culture, ways of thinking, cultural signs and norms. To conform to these differences, couples have to negotiate and find middle ways to do gender in the marriage. Tanja from Thailand says that the way of thinking here and the Asian way of thinking are quite different because of cultural differences. *"The negotiations within intercultural marriages are difficult, as you will have to negotiate a lot to understand each other and moreover to understand each other's cultural code."*

How people perceive marriage and their expectations of each other varies among the couples. Sammy and Pam live in a small village and have been married for some years, he is a sailor and Pam is from the Philippines and employed in an unqualified job. Pam stated that her desire was to marry a foreigner and she met her husband through a friend who was in a relationship with a Faroese man. Sammy was quite

vocal about his choice and why he does not find Faroese women attractive.

*If you have to compare Faroese women to my wife, I will say women are more liberated and individualistic here, my wife has grown up to take care of her family and husband. Just the same way my mother was back in the day. And this is something I like better and find attractive in a woman. I will call myself conservative and was brought up with my mum staying at home and taking care of the house. Women nowadays don't want to do any housework.*

Sammy, who is a sailor, says that he helps his wife when he is off duty; however, it is mostly his wife who undertakes most of the housework. *"I sometimes help with the housework, but she's the one doing most of the work...I'm a sailor, so when I'm home I do help sometimes".*

Sammy's incentive for finding a woman from another country is the "traditional" gender relations with distinct gender roles for men and women; where women are the ones doing the unpaid work, taking care of the children and the husbands and men are the breadwinners. Space and gender can also be discussed within transnational relations, where gender relations and performances are kept alive even if the agent has crossed the border to another country. On the other side,

Pam thinks that the relation between wife and husband concerning the economy is quite different from that in her home country.

*I think there's a huge difference between the men here and in my country, i.e. if a man is working it's the woman who takes care of the house and the economics; the husband will give his salary to his wife and she will earmark the salary. But it's different here, it's separate money where the man has his money and the wife her money... but in the Philippines it's the woman who takes care of the house and the economics even if she's working, she's the "boss" of the household.*

The "traditional" gender relations and gender performances, where the wife is in control of the household earmarking the paycheck, is culturally expected in Pam's home country. Pam is used to different gender relations, and supports the "traditional" way of living. She supports her husband and sees him as the "boss" of the family, as he is managing and earmarking the economy in their household. In a Faroese or European context, the couple above will be considered "conservative" and "traditional" as they both desire "traditional" gender relations in their marriage. Pam does not consider herself the "boss" of the household, because she does not have "control" over her husband's salary and cannot earmark money for the household. Not

having “control” over her husband’s paycheck can be considered a loss of autonomy over the household.

The couple has experienced stigmatisation among the locals, and Sammy talked about stigmatisation for choosing a wife from an East Asian country. His choice does have some consequences, as some local Faroese do look down on the marriage and question their motives. *“Some people think that as a husband I want my wife just to take care of me because she’s from Asia. And my neighbour was angry with me and accused me of that because my wife is younger than I am.”* Pam has also experienced negative stereotyping as an Asian bride and woman among some locals.

*I don’t understand why some people are so negative to Asian women marrying here. One couple asked me to go back to my country and said that we don’t belong here. I have also experienced racism in town, where some people think that there are too many foreigners entering the Faroe Islands.*

Sammy and Pam share a “traditional” marriage relation in which she is working a full-time job and also taking care of the house while Sammy is the main breadwinner who finds the “traditional” gender relations attractive. The couple are satisfied with their marriage and their way of living; they describe their relationship as equal, where they are both contributing to the relationship and household as equals.



Tommy is also a sailor living in Tórshavn and is married to Dania from Africa. The differences they have encountered in their relationship concern the ways in which they have been raised to think about what male and female roles are in a relationship and in society.

*There are of course challenges, but when you love each other you make things work and learn to know each other. The difference is also the expectations of men and women, but I like to plan everything with my wife and treat her as an equal..the other difference is of course the food, she doesn't like Faroese food and I have to accept that. (Tommy).*

When Tommy is home from sailing, he does the household chores, helps out in the house and makes dinner when his wife is at work.

*My wife is used to another way of living, I was shocked at the start that she thought she has to do everything, as it is mostly the women running around for the men in her culture, in contrast to here. But I'm not used to this way of living, where a woman has to do everything for me...it is of course about upbringing, where you respect women and treat her well and it was natural for me to treat well and do things for her.*

Dania, on the other hand, found it hard to accept her husband interfering in her sphere and had to adjust to the new way of living with her husband.

*I'm trained to be a certain way in my home country, my husband is doing things around the house, but I treat him like an African man, where I want to make him food all the time and do things for him – but he doesn't like that. When he's at home, he spoils me and makes me sit down and spoils me. But I get restless and want to do things, but in a way I like it as we want to start a family and he's good at taking care of the house. It's difficult in my home country to be a woman as the men don't do anything.*

The gender relations and expectations among these two couples are different. Although both men are sailors, they have different ways of thinking concerning family life, gender relations and the gendered division of labour. Space and place, the age difference<sup>40</sup> and ways of upbringing may have an influence upon their approaches to marriage and gender relations. Sammy is living a life with “traditional” gender relations, and finds the gendered division of labour between men and women that existed during his childhood more attractive; whereas

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<sup>40</sup> Sammy is much older than Tommy and has a young wife, whereas Tommy and his wife are a young couple in the same age range.

Tommy's upbringing was different, and the household chores did not only involve women. Even though they both have the same educational background as sailors, they see things differently concerning gender relations and the division of labour between a man and a woman. Their discourses about "western liberated women" are also different when they refer to Faroese women<sup>41</sup>. On the other hand, both women are familiar with the gender relations and a gendered division of labour in which the wife takes care of the house and does the housework, even if she has a paid job as well. In the case of Pam, there is a continuity of the gendered division of labour in her marriage. And even though she does not feel like the "boss", because she does not have economic control in her household, she is performing transnational gender practices; that is, enacting gender practices from her home country in the receiving country. They are both negotiating a gendered division of labour in their household. Dania, on the other hand, had to adjust to her husband "helping" around the house and spoiling her, which is also a negotiation, as she is "trained" as a woman to do the housework and "serve" her husband. Both couples are negotiating, resisting and enabling transnational gender practices and finding middle ways regarding gender relations in their relationships.

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<sup>41</sup> Sammy has not been in any relationships with Faroese women, whereas Tommy had Faroese girlfriends before he married his wife.

Judith Butler states that gender relations and performances have cultural means at its end, where those performances are constituted intersubjectively in order to (re)produce and preserve those relations and performances. As gender performances and relations are constituted differently according to structure and place, migrants may find gendered relations a challenge in the receiving country, as they are socialised and used to different structures and norms, which produce different gender performances. As gender performances are not static and do not have a seamless identity (Butler 1988), there are possibilities for discontinuities, continuities or finding a middle way of doing gender in the receiving country. At the same time, the habitus constitutes both primary and secondary socialisation, and even though the habitus is not durable and conforms to change, some respondents find themselves transferring gender performances or practices across borders. In other words, the habitus conforms to norms learned during primary socialisation, and constitutes a “stable” identity.

Unlike Sammy and Tommy, John and Janus both work ashore doing office work. John’s wife is from the Philippines and Janus’ wife is from Thailand. John met his wife Pamela on an online dating site dedicated to individuals searching for a Christian partner. Finding a Christian partner was crucial for both John and his wife Pamela, as their faith is of great importance to them.

*“I was active on the internet and chat forums to find a girlfriend and I wanted to find someone with the same beliefs that I have,”* says John. He was interested in meeting women from other cultures than his own, and does not find Faroese women attractive as life partners.

*I don’t find Faroese women appealing, perhaps because I’m a little bit old school. Women there are more housewife type of women, raising the kids and taking care of the house..I’m not saying that I want to leave everything to my wife, I also make dinner and help around the house. By an old-type or traditional life I mean I’m more attracted to the female role and male role. Nowadays, in the Faroe Islands there are no gender differences and everybody wants to be alike, and I don’t believe in that.*  
(John)

He also mentions that the gender roles have to be different for men and women and, due to this, he kept away from Faroese women. His wife Pamela, who is also an active Christian, agrees with her husband’s comments; she mentions that their common ground is Christianity. She was also active on the internet looking for a Christian husband, and her desire was also to marry someone from another country than the Philippines.

*It was my desire to marry someone from another country as I don’t like men from my home country..I was praying for a blue-*

*eyed man and a real Christian, someone who is white..there are good men in my home country, but there are also many bad men...for me, my desire was to marry a foreign man and my family was OK with that (Pamela from the Philippines).*

Pamela had worked within sales and marketing for about ten years before she moved to the Faroe Islands. She, like many others, could not find a job within her own field, and is now doing an unqualified job. The migrant habitus consists of cultural dispositions and norms. These dispositions may in some circumstances be challenged when migration takes place, when a new set of gender performances, norms and cultural understandings are necessary, which are different from what one is used to. In the case of John and Pamela, they were both searching for a Christian partner where the gendered division of labour, i.e. female and male gender roles, is accepted and respected within a couple. The white male “syndrome”, where women imagine that European men are better than the men from their home countries, is a stereotyping of the white man and is constructed by the cartography of place and gender, where the white male is constructed as better than men from their home country. John and Pamela practise transnational habitus as a couple, where Pamela is still conforming to the gendered habitus of her home country, which leads to a transnational habitus (Guarnizo 1997). The negotiation between them

is influenced by a Christian way of living, where men and women have different gender roles within a couple.

John experienced some family members and friends advising him to make a pre-nuptial agreement before marrying a foreign woman, because her agenda could perhaps be to steal his money and house. He has also experienced some remarks or people “joking” around him, mentioning that he has ordered a wife on the internet. *“There is this joke that I have ordered a wife on the internet, and that I have to make sure to double click so as to order a wife for my neighbour as well...this is a ‘joke’, but you can hear that they mean it sometimes”*, says John. He told his wife about the pre-nup discussion after he married her.

*He told me about the pre-nup discussion he had with his friends and some family members after we got married – if he had presented this idea to me before our marriage, I would not have married him, as I need someone who trusts me and loves me...I would not have accepted that (Pamela).*

Othering and distrusting “third-world” women’s agenda when marrying a Faroese man is quite common, according to my interviewees. Mohanty (1995) points out her concern about how women from “third-world” countries are perceived in western countries. The representation of who they are as women is often

biased. These women are perceived as “matrimonial predators”, whose only desire is to marry western men for economic incentives.

Janus and Nancy are a couple who have lived abroad before moving to the Faroe Islands. Janus never thought about what he was looking for in a woman and did not actively pursue a foreign wife. They met in her home country while he was there for a working trip. They are both open about their relationship and did not want to marry, but due to the laws of family reunification they were forced to do so in order that Nancy could obtain her residence permit. *“We married because we had to...we applied for family reunification without being married, but the Danish authorities rejected our application, this is why we had to marry to make it easier to obtain a visa,”* says Janus. Neither was it Nancy’s dream to be a married woman. *“I didn’t want to get married because I didn’t want to be a wife....I never had the dream to be a wife. Some Asian women’s main dream is to marry and be a wife, but that was not for me...and yes we were forced to marry due to the circumstances”* says Nancy. Nancy and Janus did not have the dream to marry, as it was not important to them. The “traditional” and biased perception of Asian women does not fit Nancy. They also discussed and reflected upon their marriage and negotiations between them as a couple from different parts of the world with different cultural backgrounds. *“As a couple we’re living our way...we pick up the good things in Thai culture and the good in western culture...we think that*



*some Faroese things are good and some Faroese things are bad; we mix things our way, as we feel more international”* says both Janus and Nancy. On the other hand, Nancy does not want her child to be brought up the way she was.

*My culture is hard. I would not put my child through the way we were raised, my child shall have a childhood and have the possibility to express himself and not only obey his parents...the western way of raising children is good, as the children can express themselves, but in my culture we have to only obey our parents* (Nancy from Thailand).

Conforming to gender expectations, norms and ways of living is a challenge when migration occurs because there are (re)negotiations of identity or transformations in the habitus and way of living. The habitus is not static, it conforms to change when new circumstances occur; in other words, the habitus does not produce unchangeable practices (Bourdieu 1984, 1990). On the other hand, the habitus may also contribute to transitions of new experiences which are found within different practices. When migrants find themselves in different social orders, they will have to (re)develop different or combined practices, blending the migrant's past and present (new) experiences. With migration, the habitus will have to conform to the new field, where other rules, norms and regulations are valid. In the case of Janus

and Nancy, the combination of both cultural ways is transcending place and cultural barriers, as they are combining both the Thai and Faroese ways of living.

They have both been subject to people questioning their incentives to get married and the stereotyped discourses of Nancy being a mail-order bride.

*I haven't experienced it directly, but my mother-in-law has experienced people asking her where her son bought me...and my mother-in-law has to defend us and make people understand that he did not buy me. I have sometimes asked her if she is shy about having a daughter-in-law from Thailand...if she is shy to have me in her family. (Nancy)*

Janus has also experienced people "joking" about his choice, and he does not care, as he cannot relate to those prejudices.

*Yes I have experienced people "jokingly" asking me where did I buy her..you know the thinking that Faroese men buy an Asian wife. But I don't care what people think of us. If a western man meets an Asian women on the internet, everybody thinks that it's strange, but I have Faroese friends who have met a partner or girlfriend on the internet, and nobody thinks this is*

*strange...but people look down upon international couples who meet on the internet. (Janus)*

He thinks that those prejudices and stereotypes are alive in Faroese society as a consequence of some men's experiences with foreign women marrying them for money and divorcing them after they got permanent residence. And, due to this, there is a stereotyping of all foreign women marrying Faroese men; *"people think that we are marrying predators and that these women are here to take advantage of us men,"* says Janus.

The dynamics among these couples differ regarding the incentive and desire to marry a foreign wife. Those incentives differ regarding the expectations and negotiations among the couples. Sammy and Tommy are both sailors and have different views and gender expectations of a relationship. They have different ways of thinking concerning the gendered division of labour. Sammy is attracted to "traditional" gendered roles, where there are distinct male and female roles, whereas Tommy has a more liberal and non-gendered view about the gendered divisions of labour. In other words, their desires and expectations of their partners differ. The intersection of place, i.e. where they live in the Faroe Islands, age and upbringing constitutes these two men's ways of viewing male and female gender roles within the private sphere, even though they both have the same educational

level. The women, on the other hand, are both “traditional”, as they desire to conform to other gender performances; they are attracted to “traditional” gender performances. There are paradoxes between Dania and her husband as she is attracted to the “traditional” lifestyle but at the same time she has to adjust to her husband’s lifestyle and life-world because he not attracted to the “traditional” gendered division of labour.

Janus and John also have different views and expectations, even though both of them have a degree and are doing office work. The gender expectations and dynamics also differ between these two couples. The main criterion for John was to find a wife who shares his faith and lifestyle, where there is a female role and a male role. And the main importance for Janus was to find a woman with whom he can be together, no matter what her ethnicity or culture. Having lived abroad, he is used to different cultures and ways of living, and did not have a particular gender-role expectation for his wife. His wife Nancy shares his point of view, as she did not desire marriage and was not attracted to it, even though they were in a relationship. Even though both men are from villages and have almost the same educational level, they have different points of views about marriage and gender roles. The intersection of background, living abroad and practising Christianity differs between these two men, and appears to influence their way of thinking and how they perceive what is male and female.

Even though John and his wife are educated, the “traditional” lifestyle was more attractive to them due to their faith, where there are different roles for men and women. On the other hand, faith is not important for Janus and Nancy, and they are open to other cultures and ways of living.

## 6.2 Being Accepted as Equal

*“The family-in-law is something I’m still struggling with, as they had very low expectations of me and our relationship when we became a couple.”*

Marrying or entering a new relationship involves in-laws and other members of the family. With marriage migration to the Faroe Islands, the in-laws have a certain responsibility for integrating and including the new member of the family. In most cases in the Faroe Islands, the in-laws are also part of the integration process for the migrant who is moving to the Islands, because there is no integration policy in the Faroe Islands. Integration and inclusion are often a family matter, and migrants are often dependent upon their husband or in-laws to receive information or learn about their rights as citizens in the new society.

On the other hand, Faroese culture is often a challenge for women marrying into the Islands, as the Faroe Islands is a small society and still culturally homogeneous.

*It was quite hard when I got pregnant as my in-laws would come and make comments about the food I'm eating, the way I'm eating and the African food I'm eating. They always expected me to serve them tea or coffee [the cultural code here]...and they always commented on the way I do things, which is not good for them, as it is not the Faroese way. (Sandra from Africa)*

She also feels that the fact that she was not doing things in the Faroese way was not very well tolerated by her in-laws. The othering of her culture and expressions that her culture was not good enough was her experience as well. *"Sometimes it's hard, I feel that there's a lack of respect for the 'other' culture. I don't like the way the family interferes in our way of living and makes comments about the way I am, the way I do things and the way I talk."* The othering of cultures was constituted during colonial times, when the term Orientalism became a representation of the other based on the idea of a hierarchical relationship between hegemonic and subordinate groups (Melman 1992). As Edward Said (1978) argues, orientalism was constructed as a western hegemonic discourse whereby the culture of the colonised was othered and seen as inferior.

Dania from Africa described her first marriage quite negatively with reference to her relationship to her ex in-laws: *"his family was nice,*

*but we didn't understand each other and they didn't accept me."* The in-laws were quite suspicious about her motives for marrying their son, and he was advised to make a pre-nuptial agreement before marrying her. Her ex-husband was torn between her and his family, and he eventually made her sign the pre-nup. Dania felt that they did not trust her due to her ethnicity, and thought that she was poor and would (mis)use her now ex-husband. She also felt that her culture was othered.

*When they came to our house, they would open the fridge and make comments about the food we have. Once, while we were having dinner together, I was looking at my phone to check some messages and my ex-mother-in-law asked me if this is how we do things in my home country, if we eat while looking at the phone. I was angry and did not understand why my ethnicity was an issue in this matter. (Dania from Africa)*

The loss of agency among the in-laws and the othering, whereby the woman is considered not to be acting in the "desirable" way due to her ethnicity, is constituted according to the cartography of power between first-world and third-world countries. Qvotrup Jensen (2010) discusses the impact of othering and identity and how othering may have an impact upon identity formation or, in this case, the (re)formation of the subordinate group.

*They treated their other daughter-in-law from a western European country differently and never mentioned her ethnicity and how she does things. I think they treated me differently because I'm not from Europe, always making negative comments about my culture and ethnicity; if they want me to respect the Faroese culture and integrate, they will have to respect me and my culture as well. (Dania from Africa)*

The discursive process of othering by powerful groups constitutes and defines the subordinate groups into existence. These discourses often have reductionist power relations to them, where the identity and characters of the migrants get ascribed (Qvortrup Jensen 2010).

*I did not feel that it was accepted that my husband has married a foreigner from the first day I moved here. I did say hello to some of the family members we met when we were walking around in town, but they did not answer back. My mother-in-law is OK, she's a nice woman – maybe they don't feel comfortable with me as this is a small place and they don't know how to react to foreigners. But generally I think that Faroese people are nice and polite and honest people. (Wendy from the Philippines)*

However, some of the respondents chose not to mingle or be social with their husband's family due to the language barriers. *"I do feel*



*lonely and bored at birthday parties, I just sit there and try to follow, but can't follow. This is why I don't like family gatherings and choose not meet up and use the excuse that I have to work,"* says Sara from Thailand. The language, cultural codes and being othered due to their ethnicity are some of the issues that respondents pointed out.

Furthermore, leaving family and friends and building new social relationships in the receiving country may become a challenge for the women, because the language and cultural ways of being social differ from their home country. My respondents find it hard to socialise with Faroese people due to the language barrier and their "shyness". The social relations among Faroese people are quite close, as they can relate to each other in the context of family names and relations. Faroese people generally have close relationships and friendships with each other, as their friendships are often from childhood (Gaini 2013). There is no urge to constitute new friendships or meet "new" people, as their social relationships are based upon their childhood friendships. My respondents find it difficult to establish relationships/friendships with the local Faroese; some of them mention having to adopt another identity and way of being when they are around Faroese people.

*"Faroese people would not tell you their feelings and I feel so stupid to be so expressive – I was a very talkative person and I*

*have to change myself to fit in. I'm more "closed" myself now, and have changed my personality vis-à-vis Faroese people as they don't understand my way of being...I have to take on another identity and be more cautious in the way I express myself (Rita South America).*

The habitus is a system of dispositions which consists of ways of thinking, feeling, speaking and acting, thus structuring all expressions (Krais 1993). With migration, the habitus has to go through transformations in order to understand and fit into the new field and family. Culture and norms are internalised by the locals through primary and secondary socialisation and habitus.

Migrants will often have to (re)internalise and (re)socialise according to new norms. Being a stranger within a new field means change within the migrant's life-world. The understanding of culture and norms is achieved intersubjectively (Marotta Vince 2017) and through shared meanings. My respondents, as stranger or newcomers, cannot share the life-world or experiences of the locals and the locals cannot identify themselves with the life-worlds of my respondents, because the language, culture and use of common signs are not embedded in a shared system (Marotta Vince 2017). These situations create an otherness to the migrants' culture and ways of expressing themselves,

because neither the hosts nor the migrants can identify themselves with each other's ways of life.

### 6.3 Discussion

In this chapter, I have analysed and discussed what marriage means to the respondents, and how the spouses negotiate between each other regarding their marriage. Furthermore, I have analysed the complex dynamics between four couples and their views upon marriage and gender performances. When moving to a new country as a marriage migrant, the migrants have to conform to the expectations of their in-laws and find new social relations in the receiving countries. For some migrants, conforming to a new society is a challenge, as the language and cultural understandings differ from those of their home country. Marriage and the concept of it have different meanings for the couples and the incentives for their choice differ from couple to couple.

Firstly, the women talked about the expectations they had when marrying a western man. They have created an image and ideology of western men as better husbands than men from their home country; what I call "the white male syndrome" is a stereotyping and construction of western men being better carers, lovers and providers for them as women, whereas men from their home countries are reduced to being aggressive, cheaters and not respecting them as women. Power relations among western and non-western countries

relate to cultural power as well, where women from “third-world” countries are attracted to the imagined power relations and gender dynamics of the western world. When choosing migration as women, they are able to resist “traditional” gender performances and choose gender dynamics which they find appealing to them.

Secondly, when migrating, these women are confronted with cultural differences and codes both in their marriage and in society. Most of them got married soon after meeting each other due to distance, cost and visa issues. Because of this, the process of getting to know each other occurs during the marriage. Marriage migration is a way for women to escape the gender structures of their home country, and by choosing migration they are resisting certain expectations of them as women. On the other hand, the cultural differences may be a challenge, as they have to negotiate new ways of living, and learn to understand the norms and cultural codes. Their identity may be challenged through the process of inclusion, as they are not embedded within the norms of the receiving country. Being strangers in the receiving country, migrant women have the opportunity to choose their own identity and gender role by combining identities and gender performances from their home country and the receiving country.

Thirdly, the couple interviews revealed complex dynamics and gender expectations among four different couples. Their incentives to engage

themselves in marriage migration differs depending upon the intersection of age, background, where they live in the Faroe Islands, upbringing and religion. Even though Sammy and Tommy have the same level of education and are both sailors, they do not perceive marriage and gender relations in the same way. Sammy, who lives in a small village, is quite “traditional”, finding Faroese women too liberal for his taste. The “traditional” lifestyle, with a gendered division of labour between men and women, is more attractive to both Sammy and his wife. The differences between these two men are in their upbringing and where they live in the Faroe Islands. Tommy’s upbringing was different from Sammy’s, in that the housework included both men and women. The age difference between the two men, with Sammy being much older than Tommy, may have had an impact upon the way in which they perceive gender relations.

On the other hand, John and Janus are work ashore doing office work and both live in villages outside Tórshavn. What differs between them is their Christian upbringing, faith and having lived in different countries than the Faroe Islands. Living a Christian life and having a Christian partner is important to both John and his wife. They both discussed the idea that men and women have different responsibilities and roles in a household. On the other hand, Janus and his wife did not originally plan to marry, but had to do so due to migration laws. They are not attracted to “traditional” gender roles and perceive each other

as equal. Having lived abroad, Janus is quite open to other cultures and ways of living. These four couples differ from each other where the gender dynamics differs. Two of the couples combine different ways of living, where there is a combination of Faroese culture with the women's culture as well, whereas the other two couples are doing and performing a transnational gender repertoire, reproducing "traditional" gender repertoires from their wives' home country, which they find more attractive. A "traditional" gender repertoire, however, does not mean gender inequality, as both partners consent to this lifestyle and have agreed to it.

Changes and continuities in gender relations are quite complex because the women's identities are entangled in a transnational habitus where they are used to different structures and gender norms in their home country. How the habitus displays itself lies within daily habits and routines and, as Bourdieu argues (1984), different circumstances generate different kinds of habitus, which results in systems of distinctive social meanings. In some cases, there are continuities in the gendered habitus, whereby the migrant practises a transnational habitus. And in other cases, the migrants have to display and combine repertoires in order to adapt to their new life-sphere.

Establishing new relationships and new social relations is a challenge for some of the respondents. Their motives for marrying a Faroese

man are questioned, and the men are advised to draw up a pre-nuptial agreement in case the woman is marrying him only for economic reasons. Furthermore, the migrants have to adjust to the locals, which is a challenge due to the language barrier and the differences in cultural codes. Some of the women find themselves and their culture being othered by their in-laws because their way of living is not accepted by them. Ethnicity and where they are from creates a power relation between them and their in-laws, as their culture and ethnicity is being questioned and othered (in a negative way). This creates a feeling of not belonging in the Faroe Islands, as their culture is not accepted among their new family.

Furthermore, they find themselves without a history in the receiving country and there is a destabilisation in their life-world. They are faced with new cultures and norms, where their own culture and norms are not accepted; in other words, they are confronted with the dichotomy of “us” and “them”, and they feel excluded. Being a stranger and not knowing the social codes places the migrant in a disadvantageous position in the field, where their social relations are mainly within their own ethnic group as they understand each other culturally and may speak their language. The host and the stranger in the receiving country find themselves in positions of not understanding each other. As the host’s life-world is embedded in the receiving country, the stranger will have to identify or act according to the life-world or

natural attitude of the host members (Marotta 2017). (Re) negotiations of identity and conforming to the host culture is a destabilisation of the migrant's life-world (Marotta 2017).



## Chapter 7: (Re-) Making Sense of the Non-Sense: An Experience with Social Mobility

*I don't feel appreciated here by the government and I feel bad as so many people look down on us – some people think that we're not educated and we can't do anything else than cleaning jobs or unqualified jobs! Sometimes I want to scream at these people, to let them know that I'm a well-educated woman and that I would be doing a better job than them if I was given the chance or was in my home country.*

Upward or downward social mobility is quite common for migrants from non-western countries moving to European countries (Siar 2013). My respondents have mixed experiences with downward and upward social mobility in relation to the labour market in the Faroe Islands and social status in their home country. According to Mauss (1966), migration is a total event in the life of a migrant, during which the newcomers will have to learn how to (re-)position themselves in the receiving country in order to be included in the wider society. What I mean by that is, the migrant will have to learn the “rules of the game” and what is demanded in the host country in order to be included. They are often confronted with new structures in the host country, which can be a challenge or a hindrance to inclusion.

### 7.1 Experiences with Downward Social Mobility

The latest statistics, from 2018, show that migrants are on the lowest strata of Faroese society when it comes to the labour market and wages<sup>42</sup>. The total number of migrants from non-European countries working in the Faroe Islands is 430, which is an increase from 1% to 1.6% of the labour force between the year 2014 and October 2018<sup>43</sup>. The labour market is a challenge for most migrants and my respondents experienced structural barriers when applying for jobs. As they are originally from non-European countries, their credentials are often not recognised in the Danish system and, furthermore, language is a challenge as they have to learn both Faroese and Danish.

Rebecca from Africa has a master's degree from her home country and was working for an international company before she married and moved to the Faroe Islands.

*I am a strong woman by nature and did have some expectations before moving to the Faroe Islands. I was told that I would not be able to use my degree here but I was optimistic that they would use my qualifications as I am highly educated (Rebecca from Africa).*

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<sup>42</sup> <http://kvf.fo/greinar/2018/10/10/4-prosent-av-arbeidsmegini-eru-utlendingar>

<sup>43</sup> <http://kvf.fo/greinar/2018/10/10/4-prosent-av-arbeidsmegini-eru-utlendingar>

Rebecca was optimistic and she said in the interview that she was in love and was excited about starting her life in the Faroe Islands. Work and career were not a priority at that time, as she wanted to start a family. As I mentioned in section 5.1, my respondents in general did have expectations of an imaginary Europe before they moved to the Faroe Islands. The deskilling of migrants on the labour market is common in many European countries, where migrants from Eastern European and non-European countries are marginalised (Nowiski 2012; Siar 2013). They are often found in the lowest-paid jobs or jobs that are not attractive to the locals.

Out of the 20 interviews that I conducted, 16 of the respondents had a college, university or vocational education/background. Their life-sphere completely changed and some of them feel that they have stagnated in the Islands. Wendy from the Philippines has a master's degree from her home country and yet she is working as cleaning lady in the Faroe Islands. She thinks that the job conditions are bad in the Islands for most migrants as most of them have to take unqualified jobs that are not attractive to the locals. She left her career in her home country when she moved to the Faroe Islands. Wendy was vocal about her situation and the Faroese government:

*I don't feel appreciated by the government here and I feel bad because some people look down on us. I feel low because some*

*people think that we don't have an education and can't do anything other than cleaning jobs.*

Job opportunities are limited for migrants in the Faroe Islands and they are not able to compete as equals on the job market. These women are othered and marginalised such that fish-factory work and cleaning jobs are mostly undertaken by migrants<sup>44</sup>. Moreover, they have to compete against each other in order to obtain even cleaning jobs (Høgnesen 2015). Mohanty states that women from “third-world” countries are often stigmatised as poor and uneducated, and that there is a construction and production of the “third-world” woman as a singular and monolithic subject (Mohanty 1991; Spivak 1988). Those who have experienced deskilling in the Faroe Islands do feel marginalised on the labour market, reinforcing the stereotypes of them as a singular monolithic group from non-western countries. This is creating a dichotomy of “us” and “them” on the labour market, where the structures of the host country do not conform to migrants’ needs.

Sara from Thailand says that language is a barrier when moving to a new country, and in the Faroe Islands two new languages have to be

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<sup>44</sup> (<http://kvf.fo/greinar/2018/10/10/4-prosent-av-arbeidsmegini-eru-utlendingar>)

learned. She is also in possession of a master's degree and worked within her own field in her home country.

*The language is a barrier, and I had to apply as a cleaning lady, because you don't need to know the language as a cleaner. In my home country, a cleaning lady is the lowest in society. I don't like the work but I can't sit at home and do nothing..I'm sad I can't use my education here, but I had to take the job that almost all foreigners do here, cleaning jobs.*

Those women who have experienced deskilling are frustrated about their situation, as their human capital is not recognised. As I mentioned in the theoretical chapter, migrants' human capital is often non-transferrable into the new field. This means that some of them have to start over, because they are in a disadvantageous position in the host country. Therefore, they will have to adapt and re-socialise their habitus to new practices as they find themselves moving downwards on the social ladder (job market), even though they have a degree.

Identity is multifaceted; it is a relational and contextual process relating to how an individual or group considers, constructs, perceives and positions themselves according to social categories such as gender, culture, race, class, education and occupation (La Barbera 2015). Therefore, downward social mobility and marginalisation on

the labour market may contribute to social exclusion, whereby the individual cannot identify him/herself in relation to their occupation in the Faroe Islands.

*My friends from my home country were shocked when I started to work at the fish factory, they didn't understand that I wanted to do that. When you have a university degree, you don't think that you will end up as a cleaning lady or in the fish factory..but I did adjust to the new situation, I had to. (Barbara).*

Some of the women find it hard to accept de-skilling and downward social mobility on the labour market and cannot identify themselves with their occupation in the Islands.

*Sometimes I was sad and frustrated, but my family back home were the ones who encouraged me to not give up and to stick to the fact that things will change. They know that it's hard work and it was hard on the family as well as me, I had to do night shifts (Anna from Africa).*

Mia has now stopped working to focus on her family and is planning to study later when the children are older.

In the following section, I will discuss how my respondents (re-)positioned themselves in the new field and how they tried to give meaning to their life changes on the labour market.

## 7.2 Incentives and (Re-) Positioning on the Labour Market

In his theory of practice, Bourdieu differentiates between different sorts of capital, characterising cultural, economic, symbolic and social capital as human capital (Bourdieu 1986). Being in a disadvantaged position, migrants as strangers have to find new ways to position themselves within the wider society. As strangers, they will have to learn the rules of the game that is available to them as migrants and strangers. Furthermore, Bourdieu discusses the importance of the field; this is where the rules are formalised and where the agents and institutions integrate and interact with each other according to specific rules (Bourdieu 1986). As their human capital is non-transferable to the Islands, these women have to shift their priorities in accordance with the transformation of their life-sphere. Being flexible on the job market was an advantage for those who are in cleaning jobs; they are able to juggle between taking care of their children and having a flexible work timetable.

Some of the women's priorities changed when they started a family, in some cases meaning that they did see the advantages of being a cleaning lady. Rebecca, who started at the fish factory when she moved to the Faroe Islands, changed her occupation to cleaning lady after giving birth to her first child.

*I didn't like the fish factory and I say that the cleaning job is OK because I have a child and can be more flexible on the labour market and don't need to rush to work at 8 o'clock in the morning. I thought I wanted to be a career woman again, but my priorities have changed (Rebecca from Africa).*

Sara from Africa, who also has a master's degree from her home country, reflected upon her situation and how her priorities have changed as a woman, wife and mother.

*I gave up everything to start a family here in the Faroe Islands. I'm a person who would choose family over career and this is why I decided to move to the Faroe Islands – finding happiness was the most important thing for me, even though my career is also important. But I chose family over it (Annika from Africa).*

Even though they have experienced deskilling and are not satisfied with their working opportunities/conditions, they have chosen family life and children before their own need for a career. The natives are often in an advantageous position in the field, as they have internalised the specific rules of the Islands and they know the strategies of how to navigate within this specific field. Recent research on gender and part-time jobs in the Faroe Islands shows that native Faroese women choose part-time jobs over careers. Their choice to work part time often revolves around their family life (Hayfield,



Ólavson and Paturson 2016). This said, native Faroese women do have a choice to compete on the labour market, whereas migrant women do not have the opportunity to compete as equals and are disqualified from applying for jobs within their own field. Most of the jobs in the Faroe Islands require Faroese as the main language (some require both Faroese and Danish) and a Danish educational qualification. The women who had pursued an education prior to migration to the Faroe Islands find that their credentials are not recognised there. Some of them are forced to “upgrade” their certificates, as required within the Danish system. As agents, they are forced to conform to the structural restrictions and barriers and are not “allowed” to compete as equals with the native Faroese on the labour market.

Kirsten Holst Petersen and Anna Rutherford (1986) apply the term “double colonisation” for women from once-colonised countries. By “double colonisation” they mean that women from “third-world” countries have to resist the control of colonial power both as a colonised subject and as a woman. In other words, women from “third-world” countries experience the oppression of colonialism and patriarchy at the same time. In the case of my respondents in the Faroe Islands, the term “triple discrimination” can be applied to a skilled migrant woman experiencing de-skilling on the labour market. Being a woman, a migrant and from a non-western country, they are not given the opportunity to compete as equals with native Faroese women on

the labour market. Additionally, being from a non-western country, their credentials/certificates are not recognised in the Islands. Their experiences with structural barriers are quite complex as they have to shuffle their priorities in the new life-world and transform their human and cultural capital in order to adjust to the new environment.

### 7.3 Duties as Daughters

Even though my respondents feel marginalised on the labour market, they do find some coping strategies and incentives in their current situation. Most of the women I spoke to are sending remittances back to their home country, and are earning more money in an unqualified job in the receiving country than they would working within their own field in their home country. The term 'remittances' has a cultural understanding to it, as it is embedded in social structural norms and transnational relations (Van Der Zee 2012). It is the cultural norm to support one's family or a sibling's education by sending remittances when migration occurs. Some of the respondents have children in their home country and their parents or other family members are taking care of the child/children.

*I'm a divorcee and have a child in the Philippines. My son is living with my parents and I send them money to take care of him. And it's your duty as a woman to take care of the family.*

*But I've also taken care of other members of my family who can't provide for themselves. (Wendy from the Philippines)*

The cultural aspect of sending remittances is to contribute to the household. In addition, remittances are perceived as a form of development aid as they have an impact upon the development of household and local economies (Raghuram 2008). However, the cultural aspect of sending remittances may impose pressure upon those who migrate. Some of the women may find it a burden if they have to contribute economically to their extended family as well, as it is culturally expected of them to help other members of their family.

*I do see it as a burden sometimes, but this is culturally expected to take care of your family and even those who are not close. Those family members are quite dependent upon the remittances send by us women. (Wendy from Philippines)*

As they are earning more money in the Faroe Islands, the women are providers for their families in their home countries. This is an incentive and strategy for them to cope with their situation, even though they have lost their social status on the labour market. After migration, migrants from the South with higher education often experience downward social mobility when moving to the North (Siar, 2013), while simultaneously experiencing social upward mobility in their home country. Hypergamy, where women from non-western

countries marry into the North, is considered upward social mobility, because they receive higher social status in their home country when marrying a white, western man (Constable 2003). At the same time, some of the women experience a change in lifestyle, as there are expectations on them from their home country to send remittances home. This often means they have to work to provide for themselves and their family back home. Some of the women mentioned how the remittance culture has created conflict between some couples, as the Faroese husband was not aware of these obligations prior to marrying. Butler (1988) mentions that gender performances have a cultural end. Some of these women are performing their duties as daughters to support their family financially. In some cases, remittances are a transnational factor re-enforcing “traditional” gender performances and the obligation these women have to their family; and not performing those expected gender performances or cultural obligations may ultimately have sanctions attached (Butler 1999).

The downward social mobility they experience is often on the labour market, where their credentials are not recognised and they are marginalised. On the other hand, this is sometimes combined with simultaneous upward social mobility in their home country. Annika, an African woman married in the Faroe Islands, says:

*I have gained some status, and in my country you gain social status when you marry a white man...but when you marry a white man you don't see the difference as the reality is different. The good thing is, I can make more money here and I can afford to pay for my siblings' education even with a cleaning job and I can support my mother as well.*

Moving to the Faroe Islands and marrying a white man does not make them rich, however, and these women have to work hard in order to take care of their families and to send remittances back to their home countries.

In his theory of human motivation, Maslow (1954) discusses the hierarchy of needs and motivations. He explains the different typologies of human satisfaction using the pyramid of needs, where there are different levels of accomplishment. Those different needs are: physiological needs, safety needs, the need for love, affection and belongingness, the need for esteem and the need for self-actualisation. He furthermore mentions that one does not feel the second need until the first is satisfied (Maslow 1954). As the respondents are earning more here in the Islands, they have the means to support their families financially and materially.

*I'm earning more here than in my home country, and this is a consolation for me, as I'm getting a large pay check. It's a*

*consolation even though I'm not happy in my work. I'm partly supporting my family, and sometimes I think that you can't get everything you want in life...I have to change my attitude to console myself – what else can I do?* (Wendy from the Philippines).

Because they are not able to use their human capital, migrants have to transform their life-sphere as they experience upward social mobility in their home country and downward social mobility in the receiving country. It is not uncommon for migrants to have to accept downward social mobility due to being a stranger in the new field, as their language, diplomas and human capital are devalued in the receiving country.

#### 7.4 Living a “Double Life”

In this part, I have chosen to account for the experiences of three highly educated women who felt shame vis-à-vis their parents for being employed in unqualified jobs. Due to the conflicting situation of (simultaneous) upward and downward social mobility, some of my respondents chose not to inform their family members (or not right away) about where they are employed in the Faroe Islands. As education and climbing the social ladder are quite important in their home countries, their families have strived and made sacrifices to send them to school to enable them to climb the social ladder. Being a

cleaning lady or working in the fish factory are considered low-status jobs in their home country, as they are mainly for individuals with lower social status. Social status has quite a different meaning for them as migrants compared to how the local Faroese people in general understand it. While education and the workplace are of great importance in relation to social class in the countries they have come from, the meaning of social class and experience is different in the Faroe Islands. In the following section, I have chosen not to mention the country of origin of my respondents in order to maintain their anonymity and I have chosen to refer to them as respondents 1, 2 and 3. I have chosen to go into some depth with their stories because these three particular respondents contributed another perspective on the issue of the homogenising and essentialising of women from “third-world” countries. This section will contribute to showing different dynamics among these women and to understanding their dilemmas as women and daughters and how the intersection of space, place and social status is still an important factor for the migrant’s transnational relationship with her family.

These three women, whose stories are singled out for further analysis here, are highly educated women with university degrees who were working in prestigious jobs in their home countries. Their choice to marry into the Faroe Islands changed their lives in terms of the wider society; they experienced non-recognition of their qualifications and

deskilling on the labour market. They shared their experiences of Faroese society with ambiguities and they have ambivalent relations to their new situation in the wider society. They feel as though they have disappointed their parents because they are not living up to the standard they ought to have achieved, as they were sent to school and university in order to do better than their parents, and moving up in social class is important in their home countries. Respondent 1 talks about her relationship with her family:

*My family doesn't like what I'm doing here, and this is the reason why I've not invited them to visit me here yet. They're not proud of what I'm doing because I've been studying for so long, and now I'm in Europe working as a cleaning lady. I'm also ashamed that my family are disappointed in me.*

Even though she is supporting her family economically, and has gained upward mobility by marrying a white man and sending remittances home, the family has a hard time accepting that she has been deskilled into an unqualified job. In this case, social status is related to space and place, where the intersections of place, space, country of origin and background are important to how social status is understood and accepted. Even though she is supporting her family, they cannot accept her downward class journey on the labour market, and this causes disappointment for her.



Respondent 2, who was working for an international company in her home country, did not think about how moving to the Islands would change her life until she found herself in an unqualified job after a year in the Islands and did not have anything in common with her workmates. The downward class journey was hard for her, as she did not recognise herself and felt she had experienced a loss of identity.

*This changed my life a lot. I was very frustrated and was not used to doing this kind of work..and I met other foreigners at the workplace telling me that they've worked here for many years and I thought that's going to be me for the rest of my life...I couldn't accept that. I was also a part of the realm where almost all foreigners were...cleaning ladies or fish factory [workers].*

She chose not to inform her parents right away about her life in the Islands, not until her mother came to visit her in the Faroe Islands.

*The first time my mother came to visit, she didn't know what job I was doing here. And when she came, she cried every day and asked why I was doing this job, as my father and she had sold everything to send us to school so that we can achieve our dreams someday..my mother was broken..she didn't understand why.*

Due to their marginalisation on the labour market, these women are not “allowed” to be active and free agents within the new structures because they cannot compete as equals against the locals. They have to find new ways to (re)negotiate their identities and to (re)position themselves on the labour market.

A downward class journey on the labour market is also the case for respondent 3. Similarly to respondent 2, she gave up her career to start a family in the Islands. She considered herself to be family oriented, even though her career was also of great importance to her. But finding love, happiness and starting a family have always been on her agenda. However, after a year, she started to apply for jobs in the hope of working within her own field, but her education was not recognised in the Faroe Islands and there was the language barrier as well.

*At that point I knew I couldn't learn Danish and Faroese at the same time, as I had my daughter to take care of..and there were also issues in my marriage and I wanted to stand on my own feet.*

Even though respondent 3 has been living in the Faroe Islands for over five years, she has not yet informed her family back home about the working conditions in the Islands. She feels as though she is living a double life, because she is hiding the truth from her family.

*I have actually never told my mum where I'm working here..and I will never tell her. When she asks, I just tell her that I'm doing some small office jobs here and there and she asks me to push forward and try to find work in my own field. It's quite important for my mum that her children do well. If my mother knew what I'm doing here, she would be disappointed and would want me to move back to [my home country].*

These three women's downward class journey shows that structure can be a hindrance for agency, when their human capital is reduced to unqualified and lower-paid jobs. Being new to this life-sphere, these women have to transform their habitus and priorities, and often motherhood and family life take over. Respondent 2 says:

*I told my mum that I wanted to be like her..she stayed at home and took care of us and raised us. At the start it was hard for her to understand, but in the end she did understand that my priority has changed as a woman and a mother.*

All three women mentioned that they feel liberated as women, wives and mothers, as they are able to find a balance between family life and work, because they do not partake in an eight-to-four job at the office.

*The cleaning job is OK as I have children now and have time for them and take care of them as I can be flexible and don't need*

*to rush to the office at eight o'clock..now that I'm a mum, I don't miss my career and I love my job as I can be there for my children. Maybe one day when the kids are big I will consider working in my field again but for now, I don't desire it.*  
(Respondent 2)

Even though these women may feel liberated economically, as they are making more money in an unqualified job, they are not aware of (or do not want to admit to) the symbolic violence to which they are being subjected. Symbolic violence is central to how social class inequalities are reproduced (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977). Fundamentally, this explains why individuals accept and (re)produce subordination without resistance. The consolation of earning more in an unqualified job creates a vicious circle of structural subordination and re-enforcement of symbolic violence, where they are assisting and internalising a social class structure within which they can be othered and marginalised. As Mohanty argues, migrant women in the western world are perceived as uneducated, without agency, poor etc., and by accepting symbolic violence without resistance, women from “third-world” countries will still be othered as poor and uneducated, and their human capital will be diminished to unqualified and lower-paid jobs.

### 7.5 A New Life and a Different Field Experience

In the following section, I have chosen three other women who did not have university degrees when they moved to the Islands. These three women have a different perception of their class journey in the Faroe Islands, as they did not have a university or any other kind of education other than college (gymnasium) from their home country. In this section, I will again use the terms respondents 1, 2 and 3 in order to maintain their anonymity.

Respondent 1 comes from a poor background in her home country. She was able to finish college and moved to the Faroe Islands at quite a young age. She socialised mostly with Faroese people when she first moved to the Islands and learned the language quite quickly. This gave her an opportunity to start over again, as she saw this new field as being full of new opportunities and not constraints.

*I have only positive things to say about the labour market here..I got a good job and I was very open to learning new things. And people here were open to me as I speak the language fluently – I was included quite fast on the labour market. Everything takes time and my boss was very positive towards me. I've just finished studying now and I have a dream to be in a leadership position someday and I will push myself to it.*

Respondent 1 saw new opportunities within this new field. The language was a barrier for her as well when she moved here, but her experience was learning the language in order to position herself as an equal in the wider society. Her attitude was that she had to push herself, as she does not perceive the field as a constraint on her career. She was open to new opportunities: *“Society can’t force people to integrate as equal on the labour market, the individual moving to the new country has to do their part as well.”*

Similarly to respondent 1, respondent 2 moved to the Islands quite young, and came from a poor background in her home country. She did not feel welcome in the Faroe Islands at the beginning. Learning the language helped her to become part of society and now she has social relations with both the locals and other migrants in the Islands. She is now attending college and hopes to graduate soon. *“You know, I never lost hope..I knew that something good would happen to me and I didn’t give up.”*

The third respondent was also quite young when she moved to the Faroe Islands. She comes from an upper-middle-class family and did not work in her home country. She started to work in the fish factory when she moved to the Islands. After some time, she was able to manage the language fluently and is now studying as well.

*It's important to learn the language when living here and I learned it quite fast as there were not so many foreigners when I moved here...and learning the language is very important in order to get a job.*

She furthermore reflected on the fact that moving to the Islands at quite a young age was an advantage.

*Moving here quite young was an advantage and it helped me to be more open..if I had moved here when in my late thirties it would have been different and more difficult to learn new things and become integrated..I'm happy being here and I'm happy with the decision I've taken.*

These three women have a different perspective on the field and saw new opportunities in it. Their life stories are quite similar, as they moved to the Islands very young and without a degree. They were able to learn the language quite fast, as there were few foreigners in the Islands when they first moved here. Mastering the language gave them the opportunity to study and obtain jobs which are not unqualified. They were able to play by the rules of the structure in order to be included as equals on the labour market and in college and university.

The analysis above, of the three educated respondents and the three respondents without a degree, shows a pattern and intersectionality

of background, education, and age which influences how these women were able to (re)position themselves within the wider society. Through their education, the highly educated women have already constructed an identity of who they are and where they belong on the social ladder, whereas those who did not have a degree saw new opportunities in the Faroe Islands. Another feature of these women's stories was that those who moved to the Islands at an early age were able to learn the language quite quickly. Moving to the Islands in their early twenties was an advantage for them, as they were able to (re)define themselves as individuals and experience upward mobility on the labour market, opportunities that would have been difficult to attain in their country of origin. In contrast to the three other respondents, who already had a degree from their home country, the three respondents I discuss in this section were able to conform to and navigate around the structures of the receiving country. Their identity and habitus were not already shaped by their level of education.

## 7.6 Discussion

In this chapter, I have analysed how my respondents try to make sense of their new lives in the Faroe Islands in relation to wider society, specifically vis-à-vis the labour market. First of all, these women have to find coping strategies and incentives to accept downward mobility on the labour market. One of their coping strategies is to acknowledge that the wages are much higher in the Faroe Islands doing an unskilled



job than working within their own field in their home country, even though they are othered and marginalised on the labour market for engaging in unqualified and low-paid jobs. They have been forced to activate their embodied capital to do unqualified jobs, which is a complete change from what they were used to.

Secondly, they have to find ways to cope with their new situations. As they are making more money in an unqualified job, this creates an incentive and compensation for them as women, because they can perform their duties as daughters and send remittances home to their families. Some of them are paying university expenses for their younger siblings. Even though they are on the lowest wage strata in the Faroe Islands, they are satisfied with their wages, because they can support their families and perform their cultural and caring duties in their home country.

Thirdly, the respective downward and upward social mobility is experienced differently by women who already had a degree before they moved to the Islands and those who did not have a degree when they migrated. Family expectations and the shame were too hard for some of the respondents to face, and therefore some of them chose not to allow their family to visit them in their new home country or they chose not to inform their family about their working conditions. Some of their family members find it hard to accept the downward

social mobility of their daughters, as they had expected them to have a better life when they migrated to Europe.

Fourthly, those who migrated to the Islands at a young age and without a degree found themselves on advantageous ground. They learned the language quickly and went back to college and can now work in highly paid jobs. Their life journeys are quite different from those of the three well-educated women, as the women who did not have a degree prior to migration were able to play by the rules of the game, could (re-)position themselves differently and climb the social ladder on the job market. The structures in their case were not a hindrance because they were gaining new opportunities they would not have had if they had not migrated. From an intersectional point of view, age at which they migrate, background and education are assets defining or affecting the social mobility of the women. Furthermore, the younger they were when they migrated, the easier it was to learn the language, and also those who did not have a degree prior to migration found themselves climbing the social ladder sooner than those with a degree. They saw the field as an opportunity to learn new things rather than a constraint. They were able to transform their human capital and climb the social ladder in terms of education, work and wages.

Fifthly, choosing family life and childrearing is one of the coping strategies of the women to *(re-)make sense out of non-sense*. They discussed the fact that they have time to focus upon family life and be present in their children's lives as they have the opportunity to be flexible on the labour market.

The dichotomy of downward and upward social mobility is quite complex concerning the labour market, wages and social status. Even though these women are on the lowest wage strata in the Faroe Islands, they find themselves satisfied with a better life. The coping strategy and the incentive of believing that they are earning more money is an illusion in a Faroese context as they are in low-paid jobs, cannot compete as equals on the labour market with native Faroese women, and they are in a disadvantageous group if they get a divorce.

In this case, I will say that the utopia of being economically liberated is relative to the fact that they are able send remittances which are of high value in their home country; but at the same time, they find themselves on the lowest wage strata where they are economically not liberated as women if they need a divorce. Gender equality on the labour market and wages are failing as the structures discriminate against migrant women, because the majority of them are forced into a marginalised position. The structures are reinforcing the dichotomy of us/them on the labour market, because they are not given the

opportunity to compete as equals with native Faroese. The system and structures are creating a wedge and a class distinction between locals and migrants, resulting in a situation of A and B citizens. The consequences of this can furthermore create a gender-related “new poor”, whereby migrant women who are marginalised on the labour market are economically dependent upon their partners. And if they need a divorce, this could be impeded due to economic dependency, which may force them to stay in the marriage. And this is a disempowerment for them as women.

## Chapter 8: A Discussion of the Theoretical and Methodological Bricolage

In this chapter, I revisit the theoretical choices I made for this dissertation, to discuss whether my decision to combine gender theory, post-colonial theory and Bourdieu's theory of practice has led to new insights and understandings of the empirical field under investigation. As I mention in my theory chapter (Chapter 3), the application of a transdisciplinary approach is generally undertaken in order to understand the present world and its complexities. This is done by drawing upon different theoretical strands and forms of knowledge. My dissertation covers an empirical field which is quite complex, and where I have aimed to analyse the consequences of migration at a micro level, emphasising the respondents' personal experiences, family experiences and their relations with the wider society. Because my aim is to unravel other layers of marriage migration than economic incentives, I argued that an inquiry based on a single theoretical approach would not grasp or open up space for a discussion of the other layers of meanings and implications of undertaking marriage migration. My aim was to gain an understanding of the complexities of being a married migrant woman in the Faroe Islands and, therefore, I needed to employ theories that are able to elucidate such complexities.

Different theoretical strands are applied and discussed in the analytical section, where I make use of gender theory, and where gender performances, gender expectations and gender roles are discussed. Secondly, I applied post-colonial feminist theory in order to gain an understanding of my participants as women from non-western countries. I discuss their experiences with stereotyping among the locals, family members and wider society. Lastly, my usage of Bourdieu's theory of practice, in which habitus, fields, capital and symbolic violence are discussed, paved the way for considering the women's encounters with the new field and understanding their coping strategies for dealing with these encounters.

Migration is the movement of people from one place to another, and with this movement there follow both positive and negative consequences for the migrant. These consequences are part of what I wish to understand through this dissertation. When migrating, the respondents are moving from one structure to another; each country has its own structures regulated by law and norms, within which the individual acts. I furthermore argue that the complexities of being a woman and a stranger from a "third-world" country cannot be grasped through singular theoretical thinking or diminished to a single theoretical thought.

Space and place knowledge is quite central to transdisciplinarity (McGregor 2012). In other words, “place knowledge cannot be created unless there is a bridging of different disciplinary perspectives” (Somerville 2010: 331)

Each of the theoretical perspectives chosen here have their weaknesses and strengths. The theory of gender performances and roles discussed in the analysis takes into consideration the phenomenology of doing gender and the intersubjective relations that regulate where and how gender performances and roles are culturally expected to be performed in the “right” way. The idea of co-considering gender and place and how gender roles and performances are constructed in specific places is interesting for this thesis. Applying this theory illuminates different dynamics among the respondents, whereby some of them are choosing marriage migration as a means to escape and resist certain gender expectations of them as women, while others are keen to transfer those performances, roles and expectation across borders.

While Butler’s (1988) theory of gender performance has been extremely useful, not least in combination with theories of gender and place, she does not discuss “third-world” women in relation to stereotyping or othering. Post-colonial feminism bridges the gap between gender performances and roles relating to how “third-world”

women experience stereotyping, where a biased relation between “third-world” countries and “first-world” countries is constructed. Post-colonial feminism thus opens up a discussion of “third-world” women and the biased discourses about them as women, and furthermore the representation of them as women. Mohanty and other post-colonial feminists aim to move away from Eurocentric feminist norms by pointing out the importance of background, history, culture and other factors when the “third-world” woman is discussed. The aim is to eradicate the idea of “third-world” women as subordinate, poor and uneducated, and to move away from a situation in which the characters of “third-world” women are often essentialised through biased discourses. The use of post-colonial feminist theory in my analysis has foregrounded similarities, differences and transnational dynamics, and has opened up space for discussions concerning gender equality in the private sphere, as well as othering among family members, locals and in the wider society.

However, the criticism I have concerning post-colonial feminism is the lack of discussion about when or where “third-world” women or agents meet structural challenges in their home countries. In other words, in the post-colonial feminist debate, I miss a parallel critical debate about “traditional” norms and laws imposing certain patriarchal gender relations upon them as women in their countries of origin. By choosing marriage migration, “third-world” women are



resisting the “traditional” norms and gender expectations of them as women, which are culturally and historically constructed. The desires of “third-world” women vary; some thrive with a “traditional” lifestyle whereas others are longing for a more “westernised” lifestyle under a less patriarchal system. What I wish to point out is that some women are also experiencing stereotyping and stigmatisation in their home country, if they do not live up to the culturally expected gender performances. In some societies, “third-world” women are stigmatised if they decide to divorce their husbands; they are considered damaged “goods” and not potentially marriageable after a divorce. Based on my interviews, they do not find the men or the gender structure in their home country attractive. In a way, “third-world” women are also silenced in the discourses of post-colonial feminism, because their desires and their reasons for choosing migration to the richer North are not discussed.

There are definitely structural and cultural issues, stereotyping and stigmatisation of “third-world” women in “third-world” countries. Therefore, there is a need for theoretical reflection in which the issues of structures, norms, culture and the subordination of women in “third-world” countries are discussed; a theoretical approach which takes into consideration the desires of “third-world” women and their thoughts on patriarchal society, where there are different gender rules and systems for males and females. This should not be done through

a western lens, but rather situated in such a way that issues other than colonial perspectives are taken into consideration. There is a need for theoretical investigations in which “third-world” women and “third-world” countries as places are the point of departure. Culture, norms and structural hindrances in daily life and the labour market need to be taken into consideration in such a “third-world” model. Being a divorcee with children and not finding the gender performances of their home country attractive are some of the reasons why “third-world” women are choosing marriage migration and are not finding men from their home country attractive as partners. These issues need to be taken into consideration within a “third-world” theoretical model.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, looks at the interplay between habitus, capital, and the field, and I also draw on his concept of symbolic capital. The migrants’ habitus and their capital, along with the challenges they face in the new field, are some of the issues I discuss in the analysis. The respondents’ coping strategies as women in wider society are discussed from a Bourdieuan perspective. The theory is applied as a tool to understand individuals when there is non-recognition and transformation, when their capital is not recognised within the new field. Furthermore, the women’s strategies and their (re-)positioning in the new field, along with their encounters with symbolic violence, are discussed in the third part of the analysis. These

concepts were discussed using a gender lens whereby I drew upon gender and post-colonial concepts in order to discuss habitus, capital and the field, because there is a lack of gender perspective in Bourdieu's theory of practice.

The aim of Bourdieu's theory of practice is to overcome subject and object relations by taking into consideration the social structures and cultures under which individuals act. Critics of Bourdieu (King 2000; Yang 2014) think that his notion of habitus is not compatible with change, but is quite deterministic. According to Yang, the habitus described by Bourdieu lacks rationality and is unable to anticipate change (Yang 2014). The social agents as such are not acting with consciousness, but it is the habitus acting as a product of the system under the dispositions of the habitus. Critics of Bourdieu argue that social agents are made passive objects of the social forces which reproduce themselves through the internalised structures (King 2000).

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consciousness, but it is the habitus acting as a product of the system under the dispositions of the habitus. Critics of Bourdieu argue that social agents are made passive objects of the social forces which reproduce themselves through the internalised structures (King 2000).

Theories are not complete, in the sense that they usually cannot grasp the complexities of the whole social world in one analysis. But by combining different theoretical forms of knowledge, and putting together a bricolage, I am bridging the discontinuities between theoretical ideas in order to understand the social world within which my migrants are acting. Each disciplinary approach has its limits of knowledge and ideas (Nicolescu 2005) and, by bridging those limits, I can combine theoretical ideas in order to move beyond those limits.

My methodological understanding regarding how to construct knowledge has been directed throughout towards the aim of not falling into the analysis trap that Mohanty talks about (1995). Due to this, I did mix and reflect upon my methodological tools and the consequences of constructing knowledge about “third-world” women. I also make use of Haraway’s (1988) notion of situated knowledge and have reflected upon my positionality within the field, regarding the question of where, for whom and by whom knowledge is constructed. Those tools made me reflect upon where (that is, the place from which) I am constructing knowledge about my respondents. I am

simultaneously aware that, being away from their home country, my respondents are also reflecting upon the situation of being interviewed.

“The transdisciplinary methodology elaborate by Basarab Nicolescu facilitates our exit from a world in which thought is fragmented by the scalpel of the indisputable dichotomy of binary logic, crushed under the load of excessive specialisation, a “disciplinary big-bang” (Berian and Maties 2012: 29). I argue that combining methodological understanding, as I have done in this dissertation, will reduce the dangers of the analysis trap that Mohanty talks about. Drawing upon multiple methodological insights creates reflexivity and hermeneutic qualities when conducting interviews and analysing data.

Furthermore, in order to move away from the analysis trap and from the homogenisation and essentialisation of “third-world” women, I applied an intersectional methodological approach and reflected upon the analysis. This methodological approach as a tool distinguished similarities, differences and other dynamics among the women.

These theoretical and methodological bricolages and combinations have created an overall understanding of these women at different levels; a personal level, their relationships in the sending countries and the receiving country, and their relations to wider Faroese society. Working across each discipline, gender studies, post-colonial feminism

and social science theories have helped me to gain an understanding of the individual complexities and dynamics in societal relations. “Transdisciplinarity concerns that which is at once *between* disciplines, *across* the different disciplines, and *beyond* all disciplines. Its goal is the understanding of the present world, of which one of the imperatives is the unity of knowledge” (Nicolescu 2005: 4).

## Chapter 9: Conclusion

*I'm married to a man who is not well educated and sometimes I feel that he is "stupid" but I don't say anything. Our relationship is more important..I believe a man doesn't want a wife who is too bossy or smarter than him...this may make him feel less; a man needs to feel he can "protect" his wife and he can't do that if she's too independent. This is why I pretend sometimes to be less smart than him.*

The aim of this dissertation is to gain a better understanding of non-western women who have married into the Faroe Islands and how the choice of marriage migration changed their lives. The dissertation is empirically based; I have conducted 21 semi-structured interviews, of which four are couple interviews. The research question guiding this dissertation is: ***How has marriage migration influenced and shaped the lives of migrant women marrying into the Faroe Islands?*** I have answered this question by means of a three-chapter analysis, during which different themes and topics were analysed and discussed within each chapter.

In the first analysis chapter (Chapter 5), I focus on the women's choice and agency and their decision to marry a Faroese partner. Furthermore, I discuss how they experienced othering and

stereotyping in the Faroe Islands. In the second analysis chapter (Chapter 6), I focus on and discuss the negotiations and transactions taking place between the couples and their social relations with in-laws and local people. And lastly, the third analysis chapter (Chapter 7) focuses on and discusses the women's experiences of wider society and how they (re) position themselves as women in Faroese society.

There are several reasons why my respondents chose marriage migration, and this decision has changed their lives in different ways. The imaginary Europe, where they can achieve a better life with a western husband, is among one of the reasons as to why some of them chose marriage migration. The white man is seen as a better husband who will respect them and treat them as equals. They have constructed an image of both Europe and western men as desirable partners who will not cheat on them, will treat them as equals, will "lead" the family, take part in the household and be someone they can talk to. Three of the respondents were divorcees with children, and the stigmatisation of being a divorced woman in their home country had made them look for a western partner.

The women's understanding of what gender equality or equal partnership is in a marriage varies. To some of them, having a husband they can talk to or someone who "leads" the family, and at the same time respects them as equals, is one definition of what equality is. To



others, a “traditional” lifestyle, where there are separate, gendered roles for the man and woman, is attractive. Even though “traditionalism” may seem attractive to some women and couples, they emphasise that their marriages are based upon mutual respect, whereby the husband and wife are equal within the marriage. Marriage and the concept of marriage have different meanings for the women and the couples, and the incentives for their choice differ. Culture, place, history and traditions constitute norms and understandings of what being male and female means. The majority of my respondents are educated women and do not find the gender repertoires or the men in their home countries attractive. The patriarchal and hegemonic masculine gender rules, under which women have to live up to specific gender performances, were structures they wished to escape. Choosing marriage migration was a means to escape from and resist the “traditional” gender performances of their home countries.

Furthermore, gender equality within the private sphere does not have a universal definition. Individuals involved in marriage migration find themselves involved in dynamics within which culture, country of origin, educational background, religion, norms etc. influence their marriage and relationship. These couples have to negotiate two different cultures within their private sphere, and there is a negotiation of their daily lives, bringing up children, their marriage and

social life, food etc. At the same time, the respondents as strangers have to learn about and internalise new ways of living, as there is a destabilisation of their life-world when entering the new field.

At the same time, these women find themselves stereotyped and othered for their choice to marry into the Faroe Islands. Due to the geographical and economic power relations between the “first world” and the “third world”, these women are often perceived as having married into the west due to economic incentives. The negative and pre-constructed discourses of them as women is biased, and they are homogenised as a group. They are considered to be “marrying up” because they are originally from poorer countries than the Faroe Islands. How can we describe marriages between couples from “third-world” countries and “first-world” countries? Are marriages only “up”, “down” or “equal”, or are there other ways or criteria to describe the patterns of these marriages? These women are often stereotyped as having been “bought”, as “mail-order brides” or uneducated and poor, based upon the economic power relations and other historical perspectives within which a biased dichotomy between “us” and “them” has been constructed. Even though the majority of the women were better educated than their husbands in the Faroe Islands, they are still seen as “marrying up”, as the socio-economic standard of these western men is not taken into consideration. This phenomenon is called global hypergamy, where the geography and economic power

relations between “first-world” and “third-world” countries are the criteria to label those marriages, leaving out the socio-economic relations of the individuals involved in marriage migration. Thus, these women find themselves in a situation of both upward and downward social mobility. Upward mobility is due to gaining status in their home country and downward social mobility is due to being stereotyped, and sometimes marrying men who are considered “not attractive” to Faroese women, while at the same time their human capital and credentials are not recognised in the receiving society.

I argue that the terms for defining the pattern of marriage migration are quite complex, as there is the geographical mobility, the socio-economic standard of the western men and the “third-world” women, and their upward and downward mobility on the labour market to take into consideration. However, the women are earning more money in an unqualified job in the receiving country than they would in a qualified job in their home country.

Integrating into wider society and the labour market is also a challenge for these women as they have to re-position themselves and internalise the rules of the game in the receiving country. Furthermore, their credentials are often not recognised on the labour market and their lack of local language skills, when they cannot speak Faroese and/or Danish, is also to their disadvantage. This leads to

deskilling on the labour market, by which some of them find themselves on the lowest strata of the job market and in terms of wages. They find themselves moving down the social ladder in terms of the job market, when they have to embody and activate capital in terms of unqualified jobs. This marginalisation on the labour market is an othering of them as women from “third-world” countries, as they experience symbolic violence in relation to their capacity. This situation “empowers” the pre-conception of “third-world” women as uneducated and poor, as they are over-represented on the lowest strata of the labour market. This marginalisation creates a “new poor” segment in society, as these women are in low-paid jobs with lower retirement funds from the labour market. This also creates a dependency relation, in which “third-world” women are economically dependent on their partners. This can cause women to stay in abusive relationships or relationships in which they are not thriving, for economic reasons. There is a need for empowerment of “third-world” women in the Faroe Islands so as to give these women opportunities to compete as equals on the labour market by creating equal opportunities. This can be done by (re-)schooling them into the educational system or “upgrading” their credentials to the Danish/Faroese level. The structures of the receiving country are hindering them from using their human capital. These structures are contributing to the subordination of “third-world” women on the

labour market by marginalising them into unqualified and lower-paid jobs.

The other aim of this dissertation was to “escape” from the essentialisation and homogenisation of marriage migrants in the Faroe Islands. Throughout the analytical part of this dissertation, I have presented an intersectional discussion and elaborated upon the different dynamics among these women and couples. These women could not identify themselves with the stereotyped images of them, because they perceive themselves as middle-class, strong women and not victims of marriage migration.

The structure and agency relations can be reflected upon; the consequences of marriage migration for my respondents are freedom to organise and negotiate their own way of living within the private sphere. Through marriage migration, they have escaped certain expectations of them as women in their home countries. The complexities and meaning of gender equality in the private sphere are negotiated between the couples. The women involved in marriage migration and the couples I have interviewed were satisfied with their lives and achievements within the private sphere. On the other hand, the women who have experienced de-skilling in the wider society are not satisfied with this situation, but at the same time they find consolation, because they are earning more money in the Faroe

Islands. In relation to cultural understanding, the majority of the women feel misunderstood, as they have not yet internalised the culture of the host country. Some of them find themselves not being accepted due to their ethnicity, and I will state that colour of skin and country of origin do have consequences and do influence stereotyping.

This dissertation has shown that the stereotyping of these women is based on a biased construction and understanding of the “third world” and the “first world”. The women I interviewed have positioned themselves as active agents in order to “create” the life they desired. And by choosing marriage migration, they have experienced both positive and negative consequences in the host country. The simplified typology of “marrying up” or “marrying down” does not apply to the women whose experiences are discussed in this dissertation. This typology creates a dichotomy of “poor” and “rich”, “us” and “them”, where the socio-economic aspects, educational levels, backgrounds etc. of the women and men involved are not taken into consideration. Instead, the geography of global hypergamy is the criterion for explaining marriage migration between “third-world” women and “first-world” men. Labelling the pattern of these marriages leaves out the complexities, and stigmatises the “third-world” women as “marrying up”.

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KVF (10.10.2018) (The Public Faroese News Broadcasting) <http://kvf.fo/greinar/2018/10/10/4-prosent-av-arbeidsmegini-eru-utlendingar> (4% of the labour force in the Faroe Islands are Foreigners. And most of the are working within cleaning services]

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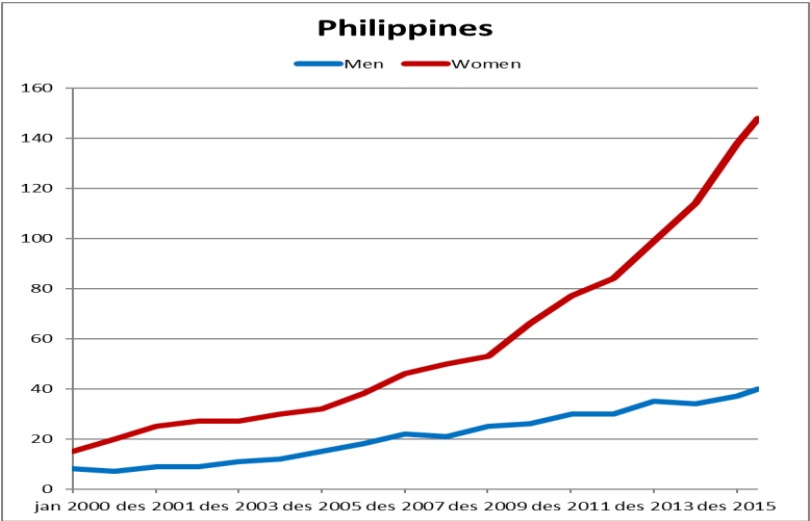
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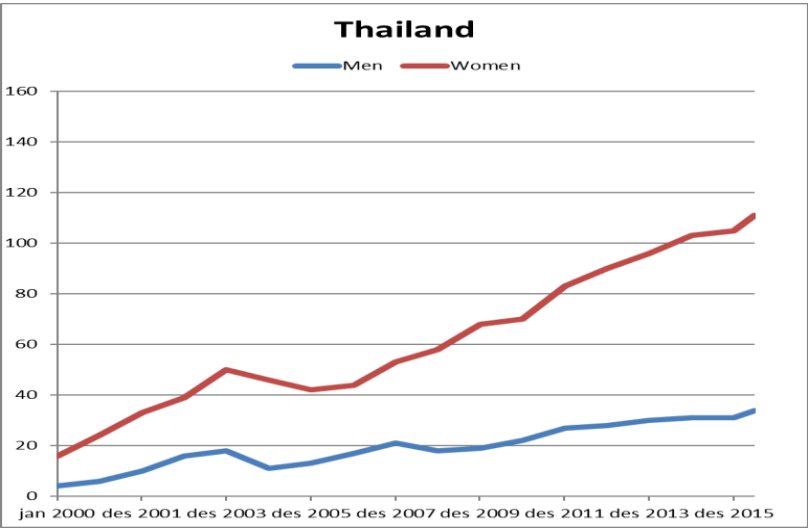
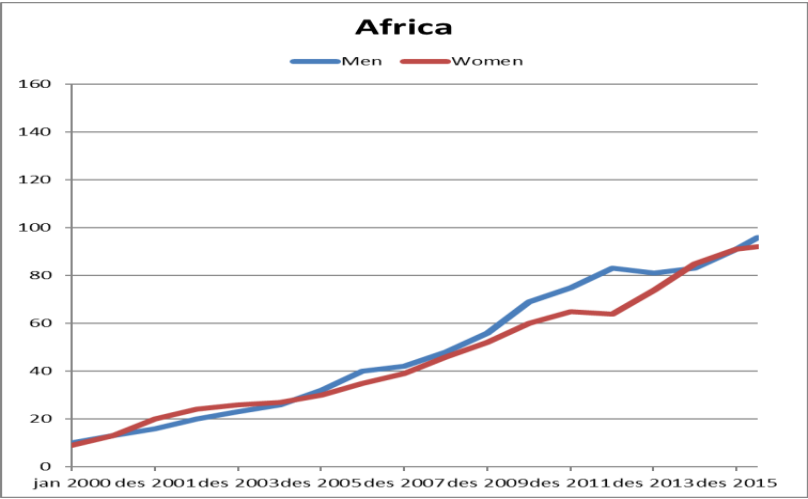
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Appendices

**Appendix 1: The diagrams show the growing number of inhabitants in the Faroe Islands originating from the Philippines, Africa and Thailand in the period 2000-2015.**





## **Appendix 2: Overview over Respondents**

| <b>Pseudonym</b> | <b>Country/Continent of Origin</b> | <b>Children</b> | <b>Education</b> | <b>Town/Village</b> |
|------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|---------------------|
| Anna             | Africa                             | Yes             | University       | Village             |
| Annika           | Africa                             | Yes             | University       | Town                |
| Dania            | Africa                             | Yes             | Vocational       | Town                |
| Maya             | Africa                             | Yes             | Vocational       | Village             |
| Rebecca          | Africa                             | Yes             | University       | Town                |
| Sandra           | Africa                             | Yes             | University       | Town                |
| Sharon           | Africa                             | Yes             | Primary          | Town                |
| Rita             | South America                      | Yes             | College          | Town                |
| Pam              | Philippines                        | Yes             | University       | Village             |
| Pamela           | Philippines                        | Yes             | Vocational       | Village             |
| Rina             | Philippines                        | Yes             | University       | Village             |
| Tara             | Philippines                        | Yes             | University       | Village             |
| Wendy            | Philippines                        | Yes             | University       | Town                |
| Lea              | Thailand                           | Yes             | College          | Village             |
| Nancy            | Thailand                           | Yes             | Vocational       | Village             |
| Sara             | Thailand                           | Yes             | University       | Town                |

|  |                     |     |            |         |
|--|---------------------|-----|------------|---------|
| Susan  | Thailand            | Yes | University | Town    |
| Tanja  | Thailand            | Yes | Vocational | Town    |
| Kala   | Other Asian Country | Yes | University | Town    |
| Sima   | Other Asian Country | Yes | College    | Town    |
| Barbara                                      | Other Country       | Yes | University | Town    |
| <b><i>Husbands in Couples Interviews</i></b> |                     |     |            |         |
| Janus  | Faroe Islands       | Yes | University | Village |
| John   | Faroe Islands       | Yes | University | Village |
| Sammy  | Faroe Islands       | Yes | Sailor     | Village |
| Tommy  | Faroe Islands       | Yes | Sailor     | Town    |



### **Appendix 3: Interview Guide**

#### **Part 1:**

- 1) Life trajectories – where are they from? Background, age, education, family, where did they work in their home country
- 2) How did they meet their partner?
- 3) What were their expectations before moving to the Islands
- 4) Did they experience stereotyping and stigmatisation?

#### **Part 2**

- 1) Why did they choose a Faroese partner?
- 2) Their thoughts and understanding on marriage, “partnership” and gender equality in the private sphere
- 3) How is it to be a woman, wife and mother in the Faroe Islands compared to their home country?
- 4) Their social life in the Faroe Islands – who do they socialise with? Do they attend *bindiklubb* (knitting club), church or any other activities. Their relationship with their own community and ethnicity

#### **Part 3**

- 1) How did moving to the Faroe Islands change their lives?
- 2) How was it to find work in the Faroe Islands?

- 3) What was their experience with their working place? (here I was thinking about upward and downward mobility)
- 4) The best thing about living in the Faroe Islands and the worst thing? What do they miss from home?





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