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Inconspicuously foreign

Everyday identity work within the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to explore the identity work of members of the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen from a sociological perspective. Building on a symbolic interactionist view of social interaction, I explore the strategies of presentation of self in a diasporic environment, in which members adapt their role performances according to ongoing changes to rules of interaction. Using my own insight knowledge as a Faroe Islander, I have conducted between 50 and 60 hours of ethnographic fieldwork, from which I have taken fieldnotes. Much of my data has materialised on behalf of my ongoing relations with the Faroese community in Copenhagen. The results of this study suggest a clear distinction by the informants of how they present themselves at home in the Faroe Islands and in their community in Copenhagen. Another reference to the presentation of self in the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen centres on the symbolic boundaries between being inside and outside the diasporic boundaries, which demands different role performances. This can be dramaturgically explained as frontstage and backstage behaviour. In the presence of other Faroe Islanders, management of role performance intensifies in line with added scrutiny, which can result in a conflict of roles. The term “moral hangover” represents the consequences of a failed alignment between role performances. Unexpected encounters with other Faroe Islanders can break down an ongoing role, turning the performance from anonymous to scrutinised, which subsequently results in a conflict of roles between the backstage and frontstage regions.

Key words: Presentation of self, symbolic interactionism, situational ethnicity, impression management, ethnic identity

Word count: 17 768

Popular science abstract

This study uses fieldnotes from between 50 to 60 hours of ethnographic field research to explore how Faroe Islanders living in Copenhagen stage their behaviour according to how they perceive the bystanders in everyday social situations. As a Faroe Islander myself, I have used my role as an insider to gain insight into the daily lives of my informants. As a discrete ethnic group in a foreign culture, Faroe Islanders communicate their identity in different ways as they move between inside and outside their community. Part of this negotiation of identity centres on overcommunicating and undercommunicating ethnicity. As Faroe Islanders share the same roots as their neighbouring countries in the Nordic region, their ethnic identity is not physically observable. This allows for a switching between the role as Danes and Faroe Islanders in different situations during their everyday. In order to maintain the roles that are being displayed, different strategies are employed, for example by way of a team effort. However, unexpected meetings with other Faroe Islanders can result in a breakdown of the role that is displayed. This study attempts to understand the strategies behind the managing of identity of the Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen as they switch between different roles.

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1. Introduction

This study is largely inspired by my own personal experience of changes in rules of interaction in my own environment. Whilst some of my childhood friends some six years ago moved from the Faroe Islands to Denmark to pursue their studies, I instead moved to the UK, and did not interact with any Faroe Islanders during my everyday life. During this time, I made several trips to Copenhagen to visit my friends. As I interacted with many Faroe Islanders there, I became aware that the way in which Faroe Islanders - including myself - presented themselves differed from what I had known growing up in the Faroe Islands. Having taken up Sociology studies, I particularly took an interest in the different ways we can explain such changes of behaviour, especially from the perspective of face-to-face interaction. Since then, I have taken much interest in the subject of social interaction, not least because it is helpful to understand how my own social behaviour is shaped by rules of interaction.

1.2 Aim and research questions

This study explores identity work in everyday interaction amongst members of the diasporic Faroese community in Copenhagen. I analyse ethnographic fieldnotes from participant observations in Copenhagen with an interactionist approach. The main aim is to explain how Faroe Islanders manage their foreign identity in everyday life in a well-established diaspora. I am interested in finding out how Faroe Islanders negotiate the presentation of self within the particular structures of their environment as an ethnic group. As a further matter, it is my hope that my study can add to the potential of other minority studies on an everyday level.

As a Faroe Islander myself (though not a member of the community in Copenhagen), I have actively made use of my pre-existing knowledge about the setting, and utilised my ongoing relations to the Faroese community in Copenhagen, to gain access to the daily routines of the everyday life of Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen. The following questions will be considered:

- 1) How do Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen reproduce their ethnic community?
- 2) Which strategies do they use to manage boundaries between belonging and not belonging to the Danish society?
- 3) How do they switch between presenting themselves as Faroese and non-Faroese?
- 4) How do they manage unexpected or embarrassing encounters that challenge their presentation of Faroese self?

In order to answer these questions, I will discuss various situations depicted from my fieldnotes in which Faroes identity is either accomplished or avoided in everyday situations. Using a series of theoretical concepts and previous research related to my field, I will demonstrate in detail how ethnic community and diasporic boundaries are reproduced by community-members, how social circles are separated and what role ethnicity plays herein, how different role performances are managed, and examine the significance of the so-called “moral hangover”.

The first question will be addressed in section 5.1. The second question will be addressed in sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4. The third question will be addressed in sections 5.5 and 5.6, and the fourth question will be addressed in section 5.7.

1.3 Setting the scene

In this section, I will present and contextualise the Faroe Islands in relation to Denmark, as well as give a description of the social and cultural traits that shape everyday interaction in the Faroese diasporic community in Copenhagen.

1.3.1 A miniature continent

As most maps of the world illustrate, the Faroe Islands are a particularly small and isolated group of islands. Apart from their nearest neighbour, fellow archipelago the Shetland Islands, the countries surrounding the North Atlantic Ocean make the Faroese archipelago look remote and miniscule; they are encapsulated in a dot smaller than your finger tip, pinpointed almost precisely amidst Norway, Iceland and Scotland. Say your map is digital, and you zoom in on the Faroe Islands, you notice that the array of small cities, towns, and villages emerging is invariably surrounded and bounded by water. Now, you may have already taken note of some ever-present details in the image and self-image of life in the Faroe Islands: it is a small-scale island society. The smallness and remoteness are also two circumstances that come into play when Faroese Islanders meet other Faroese Islanders abroad. In foreign surroundings, the importance of home becomes especially relevant and, as a consequence, active management of identity also becomes pertinent.

As is typical for many small-scale societies, the Faroe Islands can often be found either in the top or the bottom of various global indexes. For example, they have a relatively low divorce rate, a high maternal age and high birth rates (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2011). A close-knit and homogeneous island society, the geographical remoteness and the well-developed infrastructure add to the relative social density of their inhabitants. From a sociological viewpoint, one can argue that Faroese society is small-scale and late-Modern at the same time. This is based on traits such as urbanisation, high specialisation and division of labour, strong connection to the outside world, high geographical mobility, and a welfare state akin to the Nordic model, (Johannesen K. H., 2012: 91). Relying heavily on their natural resources, fisheries make up more than 90 per cent of the export goods (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2018b).

Particularly relevant to my study is the interplay between the abundance of old traditions that have survived in Faroese culture and the late-Modern characteristics of the

Faroese society, which serves as a stark contrast to Faroe Islanders who have moved to large-scale urban areas. As Faroese anthropologist Firouz Gaini reports:

For most Faroe Islanders it seems to be a more intricate test to describe the internal variation in society than to illustrate the outside world, it is a much trickier task for Faroe Islanders to describe the internal variation in their own community than to explain the outside world. Every stone, every valley and every mountain has a name and a story as well as a link to other places in the Faroe Islands. It is like a miniature continent with a condensed social structure that could be expanded to a much larger context (Gaini, 2013: 13).

Such circumstances reinforce the contrasting experience of the island community at home as opposed to the adopted city environments in large-scale societies. Furthermore, these circumstances play a significant part in how Faroe Islanders define their identity when they are abroad in general. A study from 2007 estimated that the number of Faroe Islanders living in Denmark equalled nearly half the population at home, which was some 48.000 at the time (Den Nordatlantiske Gruppe i Folketinget, 2007). These figures underpin the expression sometimes heard in the Faroe Islands that half of all Faroe Islanders have lived in Denmark at some stage of their lives. Despite a steady stream of people who move abroad for better education and career opportunities, a corresponding counter stream of young Faroe Islanders moving back home has in recent years counteracted the brain drain of Faroese society. Moreover, in early 2017 the Faroese population had surpassed 50.000 for the first time, demonstrating a positive tendency of late (Statistics Faroe Islands, 2018a).

Because of the remote location of the Faroe Islands, it is often said that the inhabitants are a particularly adaptable group of people. For many, it has been necessary to move abroad to pursue work or education, which has entailed settling in foreign cultures and adopting a foreign language. This way, Faroe Islanders have a strong connection with the outside world in general. As a result of the Faroese school system, Faroe Islanders are commonly fluent in several foreign languages. The language capacity, particularly for young Faroe Islanders, also stems from the exposure to foreign television channels, for example Danish, Swedish, Norwegian, German, British and American. Whereas some non-Faroese television programmes for children are Faroese dubbed, older children predominantly watch English speaking television programmes with Danish subtitles, which stimulates two foreign languages at the same time. As there is little Faroese entertainment content on the internet, and Faroese

is not available for subtitles on online streaming media, familiarity with foreign languages will likely continue in the future.

1.3.2 Neither here nor there

A few decades ago, the Faroe Islands might have been a mystery to most outsiders. During the previous decade, however, the tourism sector has grown rapidly to become an important industry today. Visitors from near and far are now equipped with prior knowledge of their travel destination as they set foot on the islands for the first time. However, notwithstanding the connections with the outside world, the Faroe Islands have ambiguous relations to the international community in political terms. An autonomous and self-governing country within the Kingdom of Denmark today, the Faroe Islands have a long-standing history outside its current union with Denmark and Greenland, and in many areas their circumstances can seem paradoxical. Gaini (2013) summarises some of these intricacies by outlining that the Faroe Islands as a country:

- is part of the Danish Kingdom, yet outside the European Union
- has its own stamps, flag, anthem, etc. yet no seat in the United Nations
- is outside Schengen, yet Faroese citizens travel as Schengen-country citizens
- does not have a military, yet it is part of NATO via Denmark
- has distinct bank notes, yet the currency is Danish Kroner
- does not have an indigenous population, yet Faroese Islanders do not stem from immigrants
- has its own language and culture, yet it has strong roots in the Nordic region together with its neighbours

Due to their historical trajectory, the Faroe Islands may therefore be perceived as an in-between place that is neither here nor there: not a sovereign state, though with its own jurisdiction and capacity.

Traditionally, the island as a metaphor has been a base in anthropological research, depicting a strong image of isolated and self-sustaining communities (Eriksen, 1993b). Though, in many cases, we can say that remote island communities are microcosms that more or less reflect the structure and properties of larger urban communities (Gaini, 2013). Here it

ought to be added that critics of the so-called ‘cultures as islands’ argument state that there is no such thing as a completely isolated island community since island inhabitants are originally connected from different territories (Ibid.: 10).

Modern small-scale societies, including the Faroe Islands, are often characterised by high recognisability and, in effect, an absence of anonymity. High recognisability arguably hampers the individualisation process, which is central to our perception of a modern urban society. This has strong implications for social life. As a study on recognisability in the Faroe Islands from 2012 the reports, in a homogeneous society, with high recognisability, social actions have the potential for stronger and more immediate (and negative) social consequences, social conflicts and breach of norms compared to large societies (Johannesen, K. J., 2012).

1.3.3 National identity: choosing a passport

Most Faroe Islanders have been in discussion with foreigners, in which they have tried to explain their national identity. However, as implied, that is not a simple task. The Faroe Islander comes from a place that, in international legal terms, is neither here nor there. Therefore, Faroe Islanders seems to have a somewhat fluid set rules to go by when introducing themselves to an outsider. This position becomes clear when it comes to the manifestation of the national identity; the passport. When applying for a passport, Faroe Islanders have the right to choose between a red EU passport and a green Faroese passport. Some who have chosen the green passport, including my own relatives, have sometimes found themselves in a tense and embarrassing situation in airports on the other side of the world in which the passport inspector has looked bewildered at the green passport that says “Føroyar” on top, and “Denmark” directly beneath. Not recognising the Faroe Islands, the inspector may ask questions, either to himself in silence, or to the anticipating owner of the passport, as to the existence of the country that is the Faroe Islands¹.

A growing number of people choose the red, or European, passport. The reason is partly that the EU passport offers more opportunities. Some point to border crossing incidents as a reason for choosing the red passport. For older Faroese citizens, the choice has not been necessary as they have simply kept the green passport, before the red one became available for Faroe Islanders. For some, the green passport reflects a nationalist sentiment, in which case,

¹ Today the biometric passport makes the work easier for the passport controller as the computer does the work.

the red passport rejects the Faroese identity. Furthermore, using a red passport can imply a blessing of the Danish state and its political power over the Faroe Islands as an autonomous country. From a more pragmatic perspective, for international students, EU tuition fees are often lower than overseas fees, and the EU passport automatically grants you all the rights that other EU citizens have in these terms.

The choice between two different passports arguably reflects the everyday life of the Faroe Islanders abroad. During their daily routines, they move between Faroese and Danish social settings. This has implications for the negotiation of identity, and mirrors the ability of the Faroe Islanders to adapt to their surroundings. As in choosing one passport over the other, in their everyday lives, Faroe Islanders choose one identity over the other. In this study, I will attempt to uncover the strategies behind this choice between identities.

1.4 Disposition

The disposition of this study will be the following. Section two will present the theoretical framework which will form the basis of the analysis of my material. Key theoretical concepts will be outlined and related to this study. It begins with an explanation of my understanding of the self from a symbolic interactionist perspective. It then continues to describe the main points in Erving Goffman's dramaturgy, and different strategies of impression management. This is then followed by a discussion of situational ethnicity, in which I explain the links between the presentation of self and ethnicity. Finally, section two will describe how a sociological image of "the stranger" may help understand the processes of presentation of self in the context of my material.

Section three will give an overview of the research perspective which supports and guides my study. By introducing a number of central concepts and relevant previous research, the aim of this section is to give the reader an indication of the relevance of this study.

Section four will, firstly, explain my motivations as a Faroe Islander to undergo this research and give an indication of my own relations to the setting. Secondly, it will offer a brief discussion of the advantages and limitations of ethnographic research in relation to my particular setting. Finally, this section will explain the ethical considerations that are relevant to this study.

The last section will summarise and discuss the results of this study.

2. Theory

In this chapter I will present the theoretical framework which will form the basis of the analysis of my material. Key theoretical concepts will be outlined and related to my study, which support my analytical perspective. I begin by explaining my understanding of the self from a symbolic interactionist perspective. I then describe the main points in Goffman's dramaturgy, and strategies of impression management which I will apply later. Following this, I will present the term situational ethnicity, which encompasses the link between the presentation of self and ethnicity. Finally, I will describe how a sociological image of "the stranger" may help understand the processes of presentation of self in the context of my material.

2.1 Symbolic Interactionism – a perspective

By the means of extensive fieldwork, social anthropology and sociology have had the advantage of studying everyday social life first-hand. Drawing on such a tradition of studying social life, symbolic interactionism takes a micro-sociological perspective and focuses on face-to-face encounters to understand the meaning that is attached to the behaviour of social actors (Scott, 2015: 11). Through the production of symbolic meanings in social interaction, identities emerge from interaction patterns. Moreover, from a symbolic interactionist approach, identity production is seen as an ongoing process which is never complete. In this study, I adopt this perspective and focus on the negotiation of identity in the everyday life of Faroe Islanders living in Copenhagen.

The analysis of my material will build on the notion that there is no true self, and that social behaviour is shaped by the social surroundings (Cooley, 1902). With the help of symbolic interactionist theory, I will depict the presentation of different versions of the self of my informants, particularly focusing on the management of impressions and social information in daily situations. The key concern for a symbolic interactionist perspective is not objectively defining reality, but rather understanding how actors experience their own situations (Scott, 2015: 13). In this study, I take a symbolic interactionist approach to depict the processes and strategies which create these experiences. As Herbert Blumer says, coining the term 'symbolic interactionism' (Carter & Fuller, 2015: 2): "One has to get inside of the defining process of the actor in order to understand his action" (Blumer, 1969:16).

2.2 Dramaturgy

Although dramaturgy can be taken as a theoretical perspective in itself, it can be seen as a variant of symbolic interactionism in that its key concern with face-to-face interaction and the work therein committed to negotiating and performing identity (Scott, 2015: 15). In his dramaturgical account on social interaction, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959), Goffman describes how individuals in their everyday display a series of roles to others. As social actors, Goffman argues, we are ever concerned with how we are coming across and constantly try to set ourselves in the best light. As we enter the presence of others, the analogy goes, we enter the stage on which we give performances in order to control and manage how we appear to our audience. On stage, we play a range of different parts that are determined by our own view of the situation we find ourselves in. And, as an ongoing process, we adapt the roles we display depending on who we are interacting with. These observations are drawn from Goffman's field research in which he studied face-to-face interaction between members of the island community of the Shetland Islands (Goffman, 1953).

In addition to the performance itself, factors such as social surroundings and clothing play an important part of the impressions others receive from us. Our appearance is then interpreted by others in accordance to their corresponding expectations of the interaction. The performances portrayed by social actors entail two factors. Firstly, all of an individual's activity that takes place within a period in the presence of others, and, secondly, the performance has an influence on the observers (Goffman, 1959: 32). To Goffman, it was important to uncover not just the impressions given deliberately by the individual, but also scrutinise the part of our performance which is given off.

Adopting Goffman's analogy of the performance – both individual and in teams -, in this study I address the two central parts of the self: frontstage and backstage. The frontstage is where we behave knowing that there is an audience that is watching us. On frontstage public performances are given, and carefully scripted roles displayed which represent our identity (Scott, 2015: 17). The roles displayed frontstage follows the routines and the expectations of our behaviour. Here I refer in particular to the personal front, which can mean elements of identity ranging from clothes to facial expressions. The contrasting part of the performance is backstage, which is where the actor steps out of the public performance and instead relaxes in a private sphere. When backstage, the actor has time to reflect upon his public role performance and prepare before heading back on stage. Furthermore, when backstage, the actor becomes aware of his 'true' self, which can be considered a privileged insight (Ibid.).

2.3 Impression management

To Goffman, an individual only conducts himself from the perspective of the self, and thereby has no control over the social reality of the bystander. The capacity to give impressions comprises of two different categories of so-called sign activity; the impressions that the individual intentionally “gives”, and those the individual unintentionally “gives off” (Goffman, 1959: 14). The individual may meticulously utter verbal signs, which convey a meaning that is understood in the same way by all present, and no language barrier exists. However, as part of the same gesture, non-verbal signs may be performed, which the others may interpret as symptomatic (Ibid.).

A common concern for actors in terms of their role performing is trying to prevent incidents which disrupt their performance. Unexpected events can result in an embarrassing break with the role that is performed, and unmeant gestures can give off contradictory impressions. What Goffman calls ‘inopportune intrusions’ can occur if the performer is caught out of character whilst backstage (Goffman, 1959: 132). This jeopardises the staged image that the actor, or team of actors, have projected on themselves. In order to prevent such incidents, Goffman upholds, a number of particular techniques and strategies of impression management are used by the individual actor to execute his role performance.

‘Dramaturgical loyalty’, for example, refers to a certain moral obligation between team members not to reveal the secrets about their shared performance (Goffman, 1959: 135). This includes not betraying the reality of backstage into which the team members have exclusive insight. This also entails that others cannot be trusted to know their backstage behaviour. For many of my Faroese informants in Copenhagen, the frontstage region – or their public performances – relates to when non-Faroese friends are in their presence. And, in contrast, they are backstage when they are in the presence of only Faroese friends. Therefore, when Danes are present, there exists such a team-work between Faroe Islanders in which exclusive insight into backstage behaviour exists. This dimension of frontstage and backstage could also reference a particularly Faroese interaction order exists (Goffman, 1983), which constitutes as distinct domain of social interaction within the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen. Furthermore, another exclusive trait, which can be added to the Faroese social domain, is what Goffman refers to as ‘traffic rules’ of social interaction, which serve as protection of their personal territories from outsiders (Goffman, 1967: 12).

Another strategy of impression management is what Goffman refers to as ‘dramaturgical discipline’ (Goffman, 1959: 137). Here the actor conceals the struggle that goes

into giving the impression of being relaxed, or nonchalant. This strategy entails a certain awareness, which enables the actor carefully to manage facial and verbal expressions as well as bodily demeanour in order to give the appropriate display (Scott, 2015: 89). When an actor is dramaturgically disciplined, he is free to cope with any disruptions of the encounter whilst seeming immersed in the social activity at hand (Goffman, 1959: 210). Such discipline requires a disassociation with the performance.

Dramaturgical discipline may be useful as an individual who is abroad has an odd encounter with another member of the same ethnic group. For example, a Faroe Islander in Copenhagen may find himself isolated from his ethnic community when running into another Faroe Islander. Not expecting the encounter, he may try to act nonchalant in terms of the encounter so as to give the impression that his performance does not need to change, even though the encounter has compromised his role performance. In such a situation, the Faroe Islander may experience what Goffman refers to as a conflict of roles (Goffman, 1961) in that he has to play two separate roles simultaneously that do not fit well together (Scott, 2015: 104). A further dimension of role conflicts presents itself in areas in which many Faroe Islanders live and often cross paths with each other. Although many of the Faroese residents may know each other, in many cases, their relationship can be characterised as familiar strangers (Milgram, 1977). Despite their fellow ethnic identity, which enables many reference points, there may be little knowledge about each other's' real selves (Scott, 2015: 44).

Giving and giving off information encompasses other aspects of the performance as well, such as clothing. For example, as I will describe in my analysis, my informants may sometimes deliberately wear clothes which symbolise the Faroe Islands, which symbolise the Faroe Islands, revealing aspects of their identity. Other times, they may leave such pieces of clothes in the wardrobe as they prefer to present themselves as a member of Danish society more so than a member of the Faroese community in Denmark.

2.4 Passing

Other strategies of managing the self are related to specific social information. For example, In *Stigma* (1963), Goffman studies the strategies that stigmatised individuals use to deal with the rejecting effect of the stigma, and to control their 'discredited' identity (Goffman, 1963: 14). A stigmatised individual, according to Goffman, is unable to conform to the standards that are seen as normal. The problem with stigma is that it blemishes the character of the individual and spoils his identity in the eyes of others (Ibid.: 31). Whereas a discrediting stigma is

immediately visible physically, or publically accessible as social information, a discreditable stigma, on the other hand, is something that is regarded as deviant and can be hidden. To manage a discreditable stigma, for example, the social actor may try to pass as a “normal” person.

In a large-scale city, we may in our daily routines come across a vast range of people that we have never met before, and yet, when the day is done, none of the people we have passed by have left an impression on us. Perhaps there was no attribute that we noticed which was out of the ordinary or unexpected. However, if we pass by a person who, say, looks, smells or sounds unusual, we may well take note of that specific attribute and see it as a stigma. In *Stigma* (1963), Goffman looks at how stigma arises, how we avoid it and why. By stigmatised, he means a person who is unable to conform to the standards that are seen as normal. In my analysis section, I will use the terms passing to give meaning to the negotiation of Faroese identity in Danish culture both today, and through one informant’s reference to his experience the stigma of Faroese identity in Denmark in the mid-1990s.

2.5 Situational ethnicity

Ethnicity in interaction, much like social identity, is not a constant trait: it is relative to social situations. For it is through everyday encounters that ethnicity surfaces and becomes relevant for the social actor. With this premise in mind, the term situational ethnicity can be helpful in order to refer to the link between the presentation of self and ethnicity in terms of the social situation. Not least for members of ethnic communities in foreign cultures can the presentation of self be seen as attached to ethnicity. From that, we can recognise that ethnicity is produced and re-produced in social encounters. In line with the notion that the individual has many possible identities at his disposal which are used to control and stage how he appears to others, ethnicity plays a part in the negotiation of identity. A member of an ethnic minority may behave *ethnically* in some situations and *non-ethnically* in others (Eriksen, 1993a). Notwithstanding the notion that ethnicity is often relevant in many social situations, anthropological research suggests, in culturally diverse societies, many situations occur in which ethnicity is not important (Ibid.: 30). The point, here, is that ethnicity is practiced in specific moments in everyday life. This makes the question of *when* someone is ethnic highly relevant.

A common problem faced by social anthropologists is simply describing the identity of specific ethnic groups and defining their boundaries. For example, in his study on ethnic

relations in Thailand, Micheal Moerman (1965) had trouble describing how one ethnic group, the Lue, were distinctive from other ethnic groups. From asking individual Lue what their typical characteristics were, the responses were several of the same cultural traits as in other groups in the area. As the Lue did not have exclusive cultural traits in the form of livelihood, language and religion, Moerman asked the question of whether it was appropriate to describe the Lue as an ethnic group. Having pondered this, Moerman concluded that when someone is Lue, it is not according to objective cultural traits, but “by virtue of believing and calling himself Lue and of acting in ways that validate his Lueness” (Moerman, 1965: 1219). As he could not refer to clear boundaries of “Lueness”, Moerman defines it as an “emic category of ascription” (Eriksen, 1993a: 11). This suggests a subjectivity in terms of defining ethnicity, which, furthermore, comes from the insiders rather than the outsiders.

Past anthropological accounts on tribal communities note that ties to kinship and tribal groups have in local towns been perceived as irrelevant, yet, in polyethnic environments, the same group memberships have been emphasised by the same individuals (Wilson, 1941: 2). This relates to the case of my informants who may have an interest to emphasise a belonging or an un-belonging to Faroese ethnicity in situations where these boundaries are not clear-cut to observers

This can be linked to Goffman’s (1959) observation of individuals in everyday interaction overcommunicating their group membership, for instance to deliberately show off their ethnicity. In turn, individuals may sometimes undercommunicate their ties to their group, playing down ethnicity so as to make it less relevant to the situation at hand (Eriksen, 1993a: 21). In circumstances of extensive contact with outsiders, despite not being socially organised in line of their ethnicity, actors become strongly self-conscious of their identity. In urban environments, members of ethnic groups often find themselves negotiating their ethnic identity in such ways, having different strategies in different social situations (Goffman, 1959). This strongly relates to my fieldwork in that my informants downplay and highlight their ethnic identity throughout their everyday. In the analysis section, I will present such instances and depict the related strategies of presentation of self.

Nevertheless, the crucial underlying factor in human interaction is the situation itself. The important factor, nonetheless, is that these acts feed into situations insofar as the situation has its own laws and social rules. The individual, in interaction with others, is an ingredient of the situation that the individual finds himself in. As Goffman puts it, it’s “not men and their moments, but moments and their men” (Goffman, 1967: introduction). In other words, the interaction shapes the individual. In terms of my fieldwork, this translates to: diasporic

moments and their men/women.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that sensitising concepts help the researcher make sense of the empirical data at hand as many concepts in social sciences can seem ambiguous and cause uncertainty in terms of how to investigate them (Blumer, 1954: 6). Several sensitising concepts have played a part in my organising, understanding and defining of my field research, for example by sensitising me for markers of ethnic identity in social interaction.

2.6 The Stranger: an analytical concept

The concept of a stranger is, from a Simmelean perspective, grounded in a constant oscillation between the inside and the outside (Wolff, 1950). Simmel himself, like many other scholars of his time, experienced the obstacles entailed by his “otherness” as a Jew in German society (Calhoun, Gerteis, Moody, Pfaff & Virk, 2007: 278). A stranger of today can be a familiar character tomorrow. Simmel defines a stranger as “an individual who is a member of a system but who is not strongly attached to the system” (Rogers, 1999: 58). The attributes of that stranger are his differences of time and place of his origin, his socially not belonging to the host society and also his independence in moving, staying and in his way of behaviour compared to the rest of the society which he enters. If we communicate with strangers we have - at the same time – the impression of being close to someone from a distance and of being far away from someone who is in our immediate environment. While wandering, the stranger moves from outside the society towards the inside.

In *The Stranger* (1944), sociologist Alfred Schütz studies the particular context which arises when the stranger enters into new social surroundings, which is the case, for instance, for an immigrant seeking to integrate and assimilate into society. In such unaccustomed situations, Schütz states, the stranger interprets and exploits the cultural patterns of others in order to orient himself (Schütz, 2002: 219). From the perspective of the individual, Schütz seeks to understand the immediate experiences of the stranger and how he goes about maintaining and managing social information. Through his scope, we can consider all social actors as strangers that seek membership in a new group. The main concern in *The Stranger* is with the immigrant: a position which all social actors have the potential to take, given the fitting social circumstances. Diverting to a more inward-looking perspective, Schütz defines

the stranger as an individual trying to attain permanent acceptance or tolerance by the group which he is approaching (Schütz, 1944: 499).

Similar to this stance are the premises of Robert E. Park's concept of the *Marginal Man* (Park, 1928). Marginal Man refers to the experience of the migrant trying to find his place in a new culture. Referring to the situation of Jews, as well as other ethnic groups, in pre-modern American society, Park examines the task of migrants to maintain two cultures at once, and as a result, the "marginal man" remains on the edge of two different cultures (Park, 1928: 892). Until the point of assimilation into one culture, and eluding from the other, he remains a stranger in both (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999: 45). This viewpoint, along with other previous works that are applicable here, for example the concept of *Double Consciousness* (Du Bois, 1968), suggests an ongoing ambivalence or ambiguity, whether he finds himself in a foreign culture or not, to establish his identity.

For many of my informants, the 'oscillation' between cultures (Clifford, 1988: 17) is a part of the daily routines. Moving between Danish and Faroese settings on a daily basis, Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen often switch between the role of the stranger and an ethnic group member.

3. Previous research

In this chapter, I will give an overview of my research perspective which supports and guides my study. By introducing a number of central concepts and relevant previous research, the aim of this section is to give the reader an indication of the relevance of this study.

By studying the everyday life of members of the Faroese community in Copenhagen, this study attempts to give a broader understanding of how members of ethnic minorities negotiate identity in a foreign culture.

3.1 Communicating ethnicity

Since the 1980s and 1990s, ethnicity has grown to become a common term in the English language both in the social sciences and in popular writing. As opposed to race, which refers to physical differences between social groups, ethnicity refers to shared culture. This is not a new field of study. In the Social Anthropological tradition, ethnicity has been a central focus point for research since the 1960s (Eriksen, 1993a: 1). Whereas the classical social anthropology famously focused on isolated “tribal” societies, after the Second World War, many of the groups studied came into contact with each other, for instance due to migration from the colonies to Europe and USA, social groups have started being regarded as ethnic minorities. Much of the academic interest in ethnicity stems from the eventual visibility of ethnic groups in many societies (Ibid.: 3).

Prior to, and after, this, much social research focusing on ethnicity has sought to understand the ways in which ethnic relations are perceived. That is to say, how people perceive their own group compared to other groups, and experience their ethnic identity. The insight into ethnic relations that has become attainable through previous field research allows for a more nuanced and detailed image of ethnicity (Ibid.: 3). It is relevant for this study to sketch a complex image of the ethnicity-aspect of Faroese culture in Copenhagen, both in terms of self-image and how Faroe Islanders are perceived by others.

3.2 Ethnic identities in foreign cultures

In this study, everyday interaction of members of the Faroese community in Copenhagen is depicted to give an understanding of how identity is managed and negotiated when the social actor regularly takes part in more than one set of cultural patterns. Intercultural communication is, in sociological and anthropological theory, often linked to how the unfamiliar is perceived and negotiated by other members of society.

In the case of the Faroe Islander who moves to Denmark, the extent to which he has to settle in a new cultural environment is diminished by the cultural connection that exists between the Faroe Islands and Denmark. The Faroe Islander is used to reflecting on “danishness”, sometimes as an opposite, and sometimes, in a global context, as a counterpart of Faroese culture. In other words, there exists a cultural, and ethnic, proximity between Faroe Islanders and Danes, which, as I will show, is inconspicuous at times. These particular circumstances of the Faroese community in Denmark may well differ from other ethnic groups.

Many instances in which social actors try to pass or cover their identities to “fit in”, research suggests, can disrupt the self-image of the individual, for example in respect of class. In his ethnographic study *Making It by Faking It*, Robert Granfield (1991) explores the strategies used by law students to hide their class background in a law school in which they experience class stigma. The stigma attached to their working-class backgrounds of the students creates role identity problems. To solve these problems, the students “fake it”, taking on new roles in the new elite environment, adopting the behaviours displayed by the other group members. This in turn leads to the experience of identity ambivalence (Granfield, 1991).

Another way of negotiating identity in a situation so as to enhance the social position of the individual is to intentionally express shared social and cultural attributes. In a study of social behaviour within Jewish communities in USA, social actors communicate their shared values through ‘ethnic signalling’ (Plotnicov & Silverman, 1978: 407). Ethnic signalling is an example of *team behaviour* in which two or more individuals seek to reveal their shared cultural elements which create a social unit. The resulting shared identity effectively distinguishes the individuals from their normal interaction (Ibid.). As a result, distance is created between the members of the social unit and the outsiders.

Ethnic boundaries, as patterns of social interaction, enable group members to self-identify as well as identify outsiders (Sanders, 2002). Rather than seeing ethnic boundaries as territorial demarcations, it is helpful to look at ethnic boundaries as a social construction, which insiders and outsiders mutually acknowledge differences in cultural beliefs and practices (Ibid.:

327).

Sometimes group identity is apparent to all observers as the ethnic and cultural criteria are interpreted as such by both insiders and outsiders. Other times, ethnic identity is not recognised by the insider, yet outsiders may interpret, say, traces of dialect as ethnic traits. In a study of how ethnic identity is manifested, these dynamics of recognising ethnic group categorisations in social situations prove to depend on intangible factors (Coggeshall, 1986: 180). In certain social contexts in which two group members do not initially identify each other, specific behaviours or beliefs are deliberately accentuated. Such conscious manipulation of ethnic identity is an example of how ethnic group identity is overcommunicated. Importantly, the strategy of the group member can also be to downplay the shared group categorisations in order to avoid being identified as an ethnic group member.

In terms of “discrete” ethnic groups (Horowitz, 1985), the perceived image of ethnic groups can be quite inconsistent. In a study on ‘white Irish’ identity in England, Willis (2017) reports an ambiguity of the ethnic identity of Irish ethnicity in the United Kingdom. Physical characteristics, such as skin colour, are often used by outsiders to define ethnicity. In this sense, there are significant differences in the general perception of ethnic groups. For instance, the physical characteristics of Faroe Islanders and Danes is often inconspicuous, and even falls under the same “Nordic” umbrella to some outsiders. Willis reports on the differences in perception of her own ethnicity as a social researcher. Drawing on interviews and fieldnotes from two previous research projects, she argues that, because her ethnic identity was sometimes acknowledged and sometimes not, her white Irish identity is fragile (Ibid.: 1681). Whereas she acknowledges her own ethnic group, some of her interview participants did not recognise any cultural traits, such as her accent, and thus her ethnic identity went unnoticed. Her ethnic identity was deconstructed during her interaction. Ethnicity must, firstly, be performed, and secondly be acknowledged by others (Ibid.).

A study on the presentation of self amongst Eastern European immigrants in Italy (Cvajner, 2012) focuses on the management of a social stigma attached ethnic identity. Often perceived as “poor mothers with questionable morals” (Ibid.: 186), immigrant women in Italy actively try to present themselves in ways that can be seen as decent and worthy and restore their social status. The women feel that their low status in society has been forced upon them, as they had to migrate following the collapse of the USSR and feel humiliated due to this stigma. Whereas research often perceives social networks as rationalistic and mostly instrumental, Cvajner argues, personal networks play an important part in terms of both supporting and preserving the sense of self-worth of the members (Ibid.: 187). As many of my

informants are often in social contexts in which their ethnic identity is not initially revealed, these research findings link to the strategies behind the negotiation of identity. The inconspicuousness of Faroese identity in Copenhagen often allows for deliberate downplaying or emphasised as they negotiate their identity.

4. Method and data

This study is based on 50 to 60 hours of ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Copenhagen and Malmö, and in between the two cities, over the course of two months in the Autumn of 2017. A large majority of the data derives from participant observation of the daily activities of members of the Faroese community in Copenhagen. A smaller part of my data is collected from field-based interviews and go-alongs, which have been arranged opportunistically during the course of my field research in the same setting.

In this section, I will, firstly, explain my motivations as a Faroe Islander to undergo this study, and give an indication of my own relations to the setting. Secondly, I will offer a brief discussion of the advantages and limitations of ethnographic research in relation to my particular setting. Finally, this chapter will explain the ethical considerations that relate to this study.

4.1 Relations to the field as a spur to study

Having decided to study everyday life in the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen, I soon decided to apply an observation-based approach in collecting empirical data, which entails making observations and obtaining first-hand experiences in the field as the participants. To this end, the decision to undergo ethnographic field research seemed natural. However, the grounds for conducting such fieldwork was, initially to me, not standard compared to my knowledge of ethnographic research. Contrary to traditional ethnographic research as I saw it, the setting of this study seemed one to which I as the researcher have pre-existing relations, which I have opted to use to my advantage in collecting the data. Therefore, in the context of my empirical material, it is noteworthy to outline the extent of my relations to the setting of this study, as well as my personal motivation to study social interaction amongst Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen.

I have a fairly substantial social network in Denmark, which consists of family, friends and other acquaintances. Although I have not lived in Denmark, I have frequently travelled to Copenhagen during holiday periods, either to spend free time there or intermediately before continuing my journey from abroad to the Faroe Islands. As I have observed and interviewed people whom I know personally, my role as a researcher has, to a large extent, been perceived as that of an insider. I argue, however, that my position in the setting, at the same time, has

been perceived as outside in that my informants are not used to spending time with me in Copenhagen, particularly in circumstances other than social events, and in that most of my informants are aware that I have not been part of the Faroese community in Copenhagen.

During the course of my fieldwork, I have actively sought to distinguish between my role as a researcher on one hand, and as a visitor in Copenhagen on the other. In this way, I have tried to reinvent my social proximity to the daily activities of the people in the setting using an ethnographic methodology. Although I had ongoing relations with some of the participants beforehand, with an ethnography-frame of mind, I have attempted to “immerse” in the worlds of my participants in a systematic way so as to better grasp what they experience as important and meaningful in their daily routines. Many authors have stated that immersing can open many windows of opportunity, for example, by enhancing the fieldworker’s sensitivity to everyday interaction and social process (Emerson, Fretz & Shaw, 1995: 2). This may give the researcher the ability to observe how other people respond to social activity and, at the same time, himself experience these events and the circumstances that cause them (Ibid.). As Goffman elaborates, immersing entails

subjecting yourself, your own body and your own personality, and your own social situation, to the set of contingencies that play upon a set of individuals, so that you can physically and ecologically penetrate their circle of response to their social situation, or their work situation, of their ethnic situation (Goffman, 1989: 125).

My fieldwork, then, has produced insight knowledge which I had not been able to observe without the tools of ethnographic fieldwork.

What triggered my interest in studying social interaction of Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen was a curiosity that dates back to 2011. After I had moved to the United Kingdom, and many of my childhood friends had moved to Denmark, I became aware of the changes of presentation of self between myself and my friends in Denmark. Whilst I was a lone representative of Faroese culture in my environment, and attempted to subsume in British culture, my childhood friends instead settled into a well-established Faroese community in Denmark. Although the reasons for moving abroad were, as they are today, mostly educational, a large part of my personal motivation was also to experience a new culture. After my first semester in university, I became aware of the differences between living in an environment in which you are a stranger, compared to one in which you have pre-existing relations. I was most

of all intrigued by the way in which *Faroese* interaction continued to prevail in Copenhagen, whilst I, in the United Kingdom, was culturally isolated.

4.2 Being there

My fieldwork was conducted in Central Copenhagen, Malmö and in areas in between the two cities during the Autumn of 2017. Between 50 and 60 hours were spent in the field altogether, a small part of which was spent in Malmö. The fieldwork is mostly based on participant observation, though I will classify approximately one fourth of my material as interviewing and go-alongs. Much of the material has come about somewhat opportunistically, as is typical in ethnographic research, considering that I did not plan ahead my days in the field. At the outset, I did plan to solely go to social events, which took place within my timeframe of conducting fieldwork. However, as it turned out, a fair part of my fieldwork came about in situations which I had not foreseen. For example, I snowball-sampled my way to arranging several meetings or get-togethers.

Drawing on my pre-existing social network in Copenhagen so as to more easily get into contact with informants, during the first few weeks I was able to take part in social gatherings, parties and spontaneous get-togethers. Then, as time went by, I turned my focus away from spending time with acquaintances to systematically searching for participants randomly. This was possible mainly due to my knowledge of certain places in Copenhagen in which many Faroe Islanders spend their free time.

Part of the interviews was audio-recorded with the consent of the informants. During shorter interviews that were not planned beforehand, I took notes with pen and paper and subsequently revisiting the notes to write them up in a more comprehensible way. Similarly, as I conducted participant observation and did go-alongs, I mostly retracted myself in order to give myself time to scribbled down notes. In doing so, I tried as much as possible not to behave unusually to the social situation. In order to fit into the everyday interaction, as the researcher, it is important that you participate small talk and follow the otherwise implicit social rules that apply to the group of individuals (Fangen & Nordli, 2005: 141).

In terms of my methodological approach, I could have studied my field using other methods, for example group interviews. What made me decide on an ethnographic approach was the personal conclusion that it was the best way to immerse in the daily activities of my informants, and not influence their activities so much so that they became insecure because of

my presence. Whilst it is impossible for the researcher not to influence the setting which he is studying, it is possible to take measures, such as that of the “partly participating observer” (Ibid.:) so as to get close to the informants without “going native” (Geertz, 1973: 14).

4.3 The setting

Whilst I have conducted my fieldwork in different places in Copenhagen and Malmö, some areas in Copenhagen play more important parts than others in terms of my data collection, as well as for the Faroese community. The two main ones are seen as gathering places for Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen in general, and, for that reason, much of my fieldwork has taken place in these two environments.

4.3.1 Øresundskollegiet

In the Faroese community in Copenhagen, a few locations have a long history of bringing Faroe Islanders together. The area in Denmark in which most Faroe Islanders live is the dormitory area, Øresundskollegiet, on the island of Amager. I decided to focus on this area for the purpose of getting into contact with relevant participants. Øresundskollegiet is the largest dormitory in all of the Nordic countries. It is often said that out of all the residents, 70 per cent are from the Faroe Islands. Many of the Faroe Islanders that move to Copenhagen take residence in Øresundskollegiet, for longer or shorter periods. In many cases, childhood friends who grew up in the same neighbourhood, end up living in the same building block. Those who take up residence in Øresundskollegiet today are, in fact, part of a long-standing tradition of Faroe Islanders maintaining their childhood bonds in Denmark. I have myself visited many of my childhood friends in Øresundskollegiet, additionally as part of my research. In terms of my fieldwork, my pre-existing network in Øresundskollegiet served as an advantage to make contact with potential informants. I would, for example, ‘snowball’ sample (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 34) once I was already there.

4.3.2 The Culture House ('Føroyahúsið')

Føroyahúsið (meaning the Faroe house) is a Faroese culture house located on Vesterbrogade, a few hundred meters from Copenhagen central station. Føroyahúsið houses an array of events, ranging from late night parties and Faroese feasts to political and religious events. It is a public institution funded mainly by the Faroese government, but also partly by donations. It is, as its website states, a hub for Faroese culture, and a gathering place for people who are interested in Faroese culture and spiritual life (Føroyahúsið, 2018). During my fieldwork, I spent several days in the café of the culture house talking to other café-goers and conducting spontaneous recorded interview.

4.4 Ethical considerations and limitations

It is the responsibility of the researcher to be sensitive to the well-being of the participants, and to avoid causing any harm to the participants. Neither I as the researcher or the participants were put in any danger during the course of my research. Furthermore, I have taken certain measures to ensure the anonymity of the participants, for example by given them aliases, and not referring to their real names. Depending on the participants asking for information, I shared a varied amount of information about my project. As a minimum, however, I explained that my presence in the field was due to a research project, to which the participants were relevant, and that I might reiterate some of their remark. I ensured all of my participants that their identity would not be revealed. When in the field, the ethnographic researcher should try to signal transparency so as to avoid deception of the participants. False accountability affects the results of the researcher, and have implications for the individual participant.

It is important that I as the researcher allow the readers to make their own construction of my analysis and try to let it speak for itself (Bourdieu, Accardo & Balazs, 1999: 623). This falls under the ethical principles of the Swedish Research Council for humanistic and social scientific research, for example in terms of confidentiality (Swedish Research Council's Codex 2017). Furthermore, the level of trust between myself and the participants is a noteworthy consideration. My pre-existing relations to the field have allowed for a good dynamic in that sense. My study, however, does not claim to produce total truths, but instead give indications and advance information (Cohen, 1991: 15).

5. Analysis

In the following section I will attempt to answer the research questions with the help of theoretical concepts and previous research. I will, respectively, examine in detail how ethnic community and diasporic boundaries are reproduced by community-members, how social circles are separated and what role ethnicity plays herein, how different role performances are managed, and examine the significance of the so-called “moral hangover”.

5.1 Deep diasporic roots: reproducing ethnic community

The fact that people from the same background tend to live in the same place abroad is often said to be a natural tendency. In ethnic communities, there are several practical advantages to be gained from sticking to the community to which you feel affiliated. Like most other ethnic groups in foreign cultures, Faroese Islanders tend to support each other in their everyday lives. As a Faroese Islander myself, I have often benefited from the network of Faroese Islanders abroad, for example in terms of visiting in Copenhagen. When moving to a foreign culture, an individual may feel estranged, for example to the new rules of interaction (Goffman, 1967). In effect, the stranger may be unsure of how to present himself; of which role he is to display according to the rules of interaction that are at hand, and which are important to know for a social situation to flow smoothly (Scott, 2015: 31). Here, the Faroese diaspora can play a central role for the ability of Faroese Islanders to settle in their new surroundings. As described by one of my informants, Faroese newcomers in Copenhagen essentially “have an opportunity to experience a version of home” (Jacob).

Some manifestation of the Faroese community in Copenhagen are a range of dormitory complexes in which many young Faroese Islanders take up residence during their studies. The largest of these, Øresundskollegiet, is a known example of an environment in which Faroese Islanders can live the Faroese way and feel “safe” from foreign culture. Dominated by Faroese residents (it is said that about 70 per cent of the residents are Faroese), Øresundskollegiet serves as a centre in the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen. Because of the large network of Faroese Islanders that has been established in the area, it is often a natural process that leads to insiders taking up residence as they move to Denmark to start their studies. With this, ethnic identity plays a part in the way in which Faroese Islanders join the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen. As partly exclusive to Faroese Islanders, Øresundskollegiet in itself serves as a reproduction centre

of Faroese ethnicity, and has done so for many decades. Whereas contact used to be made by word of mouth, today, the internet makes it a much simpler task for members to look for accommodation. There are Facebook groups for Faroe Islanders living in Copenhagen, and for those living in Øresundskollegiet. These are digital ways in which Faroe Islanders produce their exile community. The most common example from my fieldwork is the case of one individual occupying the flat of an acquaintance for a limited period of time, which serves the interest of both the newcomer and the one looking for someone to sublet their flat:

The day before I boarded the plane to Denmark, a friend of mine wrote to me and said that he had a friend who needed someone to live in his flat whilst he went abroad. I just said yes please, and just like that, I had a place to stay for like five months (Egil).

I wanted to stay at Øresundskollegiet because that's where my friends were, and so I asked around on the Facebook group. I had no luck at first and ended up sleeping on my friend's floor during the first couple of months of my studies, which was a bit of a pain for both myself and my friend. But then, after two months, there was finally a free room at Øresund, and in the end, I stayed there for more than a year (Jógvan).

In some cases, young Faroe Islanders living in Øresundskollegiet are the second generation of their family to have lived there, having been preceded by their either their parents, uncles or aunts. Others have a network of family members at the dormitory. Harley, who lives near Øresundskollegiet, reports:

I have about 24 cousins and every one of them has lived there at some point!
(Harley)

In another of the main gathering place for Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen is the culture house, named Føroyahúsið ('The Faroe House'). Its location on Vesterbrogade in central Copenhagen is ideal for Faroe Islanders to drop in or to attend events. With both a café and a bar, it hosts events spanning from social and political events to religious gatherings. The core of the Faroe House is its café, which is open several workdays in the week. Faroe Islanders are also used to stop by to buy traditional Faroese food, read the Faroese newspapers, or to have a coffee or a Faroese beverage. As the following excerpt details, there are several social traits and symbols

of Faroese culture in the culture house, which reproduce the experience of the Faroese community:

The two or three times I had been there beforehand were both late-night festive occasions during which the lights were dimmed, and so it seemed like a new space to me altogether. Hanging on the wall behind the bar were traditional whaling tools from the Faroe Islands (whaling is seen as an important symbol of Faroese culture): ropes, gaffs, spears and knives. And above the door frame, nailed to a wooden board, hanged the horns of a Faroese a ram.



*Figure 1:
Traditional
Faroese
whaling tools.*

These symbols of Faroese culture stood as strong signifiers of Faroese culture in a space that otherwise seemed like a standard café in Copenhagen. A woman in her sixties walked through the door, calling one of the bartenders loudly in Faroese as she entered: “I’m here for the beer!”. One of the the bartenders greeted her with a smile. He shouted “Hi!” to me on his way over to the woman (we knew of each other but hadn’t met for a long time). The woman explained to the bartender that she wanted Black Sheep and Veðr (two varieties of Faroese beer). The bartender disappeared behind the counter and returned two minutes later with a case of beer and placed on the table where the woman was sitting. He went into the back again and returned with a plate of Faroese sandwiches and a Faroese beer, serving it to a man who was reading a Faroese newspaper. They

were out of *skinsakjót* (cooked fresh lamb meat), he said to the man who nodded and asked jokingly if the ryebread was Danish. “What’s the difference?”, the bartender replied. They both laughed. “That’s alright”, the man replied, adding that he wanted his fish brought out when he was done eating (he had also ordered 3 kilos of Faroese cod to bring with him home). Having asked specifically about my project, the bartender sat down next to me, and we discussed sociological theory that could relate to social behaviour. “It’s funny, in the Faroe Islands you can spot Faroese people who live abroad in an instant. They are more dressed up when your out”, he said. He explained that people at home care less about appearance because everyone knows each other anyway. And so having lived abroad, people adopted the more international culture of trying to make a good impression.

(Fieldnote labelled *Spending time in Føroyahúsið 1*)



Figure 2:
A menu showing Faroese food for sale.

5.2 Diasporic boundaries: moving between inside to outside

As is the case for most all ethnic groups in foreign cultures, Faroe Islanders who have moved to Copenhagen experience a transformation of their surroundings and experience a period of settling into their new environment. Quite particular for the experiences of Faroe Islanders is the transition from a condensed and homogeneous society, with social restriction and lack of anonymity, to a diverse and urban city characterised by individualism. To draw a clearer and more nuanced picture of the circumstances of members of the Faroese community in Copenhagen, it is suitable to give an indication of the importance of the pre-existing Faroese community that many of my informants have joined. The presence of the pre-existing community has such an effect that leads to a dichotomising dynamic between the inside and outside of the diaspora.

An example of this initial process of joining the community is finding preliminary accommodation. With some luck, this can be sorted out through the social network of Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen. This, one informant explains, was a big advantage in that it allowed for a less stressful initial period of settling in Copenhagen. However, she says, this had other implications for the way in which she formed her new social network in that she quickly became attached to the Faroese environment. Therefore, today, she feels somewhat unattached to the environment outside:

Before I knew it, I had everything I needed right there at Øresundskollegiet, and naturally I didn't need to be all that social at university (Rakul, recorded interview).

Rakul suggests that she is comfortable in her daily life in the Faroese environment in which she lives. There is an indication of a comfort of living in an area such as Øresundskollegiet, which, in turn, diminishes the need to build a new social network. In the Faroese community, members are able to draw on interaction orders (Goffman, 1983), which exclusively stem from their home environment. This tendency is apparent in how most of my informants describe their relationship to Danish culture. Even though Danish culture is not unfamiliar to them, some of my informants indicate that they do not feel Danish in the slightest, and actively keep a distance to Danish culture in their everyday. For example, having lived in Copenhagen for four years, Rasmus admittedly continues to be hesitant with adopting the Danish language. As a student, he attends university in his everyday alongside fellow Danish students, yet he spends the majority of his time amongst Faroe Islanders in the dormitory area of Øresundskollegiet:

I am social like everyone else, and we do Friday bars together and everything, but I prefer speaking Faroese. Danish is not me. So, I do not spend more time than necessary at school. (Rasmus, recorded interview).

Rasmus does not have a lack of understanding the Danish language. Rather, he does not feel comfortable speaking Danish. Saying Danish is “not him”, he implies that he does not want to speak his second language notwithstanding that it is the first language of his country of residence. He explains that he moved to Copenhagen in order to get a degree, and that the plan from the beginning has been to move back to the Faroe Islands to work as soon as he finishes studying. His distance to the Danish language and hesitation to socialise with his Danish classmates thus comes from his motivation.

Other informants who express a similar distance to the Danish language describe their relationship with the language as more ambiguous. Although expressing a reluctance to speak Danish, the nature of the reluctance stems from an issue with how they are perceived by the bystander, more so than a lack of interest. As Ragnar explains:

I feel like it singles me out as the only foreigner in the conversation, and it probably reminds them of just that every time I jump in.

(fieldnote labelled *Spending time in Føroyahúsið*).

To Ragnar, his accent serves as a label of the outsider. When amongst Danes, he is self-conscious about his ethnic identity, and aware that it may become relevant to the interaction and his presentation of self. In Goffman’s terms (1963), a known strategy of identity management is covering associations with certain aspects of identity. In Ragnar’s case, his accent hinders his ability to cover his ethnic identity, which passes social information about his identity, and thus disrupts his role performance (Goffman, 1959).

In this way, some Faroe Islanders may find themselves in the position of the stranger (Schütz, 1944), feeling excluded from the common grounds of insight knowledge. In effect, they may be unsure of which role to play and of the rules of interaction that are at hand, and which are important to know for the situation to flow smoothly (Scott, 2015: 31). Conversely, returning home to the Faroese environment after classes have finished means leaving a foreign environment, in which they are the stranger, and re-entering one in which they are the insider. The Faroe Islanders in Copenhagen, it seems, are constantly shaping their behaviour with

reference to the symbolic boundaries between being inside and outside, which demand different performances.

In the eyes of the outsider, Faroese communities are not easily detected at first-hand compared to other ethnic groups in the Scandinavian societies. Ethnically, Faroe Islanders share the Nordic roots of their Scandinavian neighbours, and, in effect, the manifestations of Faroese culture are often not tangible in the public sphere. One aspect of this perhaps their tendency to develop a good command of the local language. A study from 2016 of the abilities of Nordic citizens to communicate in other Scandinavian languages suggests that Faroe Islanders are most prone to adopt the local language of their country of residence in their everyday life (Brink, 2016). Faroe Islanders learn Danish from an early stage of primary school, and in some cases, those that have lived in Denmark for several years reach the point where they are rid of their Faroese accent. For others, however, despite good language skills, and links between Faroese and Danish culture, ethnic identity consistently plays a part in the way in which they manage their presentation of self outside the Faroese diaspora.

The Faroe Islands, similar to Iceland, have a long-standing history of being under Denmark². They thus share Nordic cultural traits with Denmark. This is evident in for example food habits. In general, the clothes that Faroe Islanders wear are also often bought from the same clothing chains as Danish people do. However, it is far from unusual to see Faroe Islanders wear different styles of traditional pieces of clothes, such as sweaters that have been knitted in the Faroe Islands, which are part of modern Faroese fashion. Clothes, then, can also give implications of how ethnic identity is being negotiated.

5.3 “It’s two separate worlds”: maintaining separate identities

The distinct interaction orders that dominate inside and outside the diaspora. For example, on the same floor as Tommy’s apartment, six out of eight residents were Faroe Islanders, mostly students, with whom he was friends. For many Faroe Islanders, these comfortable circumstances play a significant part of the incentive to live in Copenhagen. Moreover, when the circumstances change, it disrupts the level of comfort. As Frida explains: “So many of my

² Iceland, for example, shared the Danish monarchy until the Second World War. Although Iceland was recognised as an independent state in 1918, the republic of Iceland was formed in 1944.

friends have moved home that there's almost no one left here (at Øresundskollegiet). It has all changed so quickly". Many of Tommy's neighbours who had moved back home to the Faroe Islands had finished their studies and returned to pursue their careers. Their intentions were from the beginning only temporarily to live abroad.

During my fieldwork in Øresundskollegiet and other areas in Copenhagen where many Faroese Islanders live, many informants described the hardship they had experienced in intertwining their Faroese and Danish social circles. In Goffman's terms (1959), there are clear distinctions made between a Faroese audience and other audiences for the given performances. Furthermore, several of my informants have kept their Faroese and Danish social circles separate, rarely intertwining them. As separate groups of Faroese and Danish friends are likely to encompass different rules of interaction, keeping groups of friends separated, is a way of avoiding the risk of breaking the rules of interaction. As Tommy, who has lived in Øresundskollegiet for several years, explains, he and his partner Frida have never made friends with Danes because they have never felt the need:

Faroese people in Copenhagen see their way of life as different from the Danish way of life. When you move to Copenhagen your friend list immediately fills up to capacity. You automatically have so many Faroese friends that there is no room for Danish friends, and you simply have no interest in broadening your circle any further. (Fieldnote labelled *Breakfast at Frida and Tommy's at Øresundskollegiet*).

Here, Tommy accounts for his distance towards Danes in terms of finding oneself "at home" within a diaspora. He also implies that he has not adopted the Danish way of life mainly because the Faroese cultural milieu in which he lives is sufficient for his comfort. He is, in a sense, able to uphold the attachment to the community in which he grew up in the diaspora. The socialisation that takes place after moving to Øresundskollegiet is not an entirely new one but rather a change of an old setting, which, as he says, "automatically" takes shape. There are certain occasions during the daily routines in which these boundaries are perhaps necessarily broken. For example, as Layla explains, regardless of her relationship with her respective Faroese and Danish friends, she mainly socialises with each group separately, and maintains her friendships in that way. In the following excerpt, Layla and I are discussing her relationship with a Danish couple that lives in the neighbourhood, and with whom she had

become friendly, and the negative consequences that had come out of her mixing both sets of friends during a social evening:

Layla lit her cigarett, sighed again and explained, “I invited them to the party the other day because it felt like the right thing to do. I shouldn’t have done that”. We both laughed. “I struggled so much with it during the party that I sort of ended up minding the Faroese friends whilst John (Layla’s partner) entertained the Danes. The room was divided into two halves. What a disaster”. I asked how come the guests didn’t mix. Layla leaned in towards me and said quietly, “she won’t stop talking”. She slapped her flatpalm on the balcony table: “I couldn’t manage Faroese and Danish friends at the same time. They are too different. It’s two separate worlds.”. I asked if that was a general feeling, and Layla leaned back into her chair and said “Well, I always thought things would be more down-to-earth with my Faroese friends in Denmark but it’s actually the opposite. Like with the mothers’ group here for example, it’s a much more casual arrangement. They appreciate that as a new mother you don’t have the energy to make everything look perfect. Danes are easier to be around because they tell it like it is. As long as you respect their calendar. Danes will say straight away whether they can make it to something or not, whereas Faroe Islanders will go great lengths rather than tell it like it is, they will overdraw their bank account before they’re being honest”.

(Fieldnote labelled *Meet-up with Layla*).

Despite her best efforts to include her Danish neighbours in her party, Layla admits with regret that her party became divided into two groups rather than an event in which different social circles would connect. The struggle that she describes with intertwining her Faroese and Danish in the same social context reflect a crisis of identity performance. We can say that two different representations of self are put into play at once result in a conflict of roles (Goffman, 1961). In *On-Face Work* (1955), Goffman upholds, the *face* encompasses the verbal and non-verbal actions that represent the individual’s point of view in social situations. In situations such as Layla’s, an attempt to portray multiple faces at once can either pay off or result in chaos (Ibid.: 339). Layla’s struggle to maintain more than one face at once had a negative outcome, even to the extent that she lost her face.

From the perspective of an outsider, the special ties that bind Faroe Islanders abroad together can have an isolating effect. Given that the Faroe Islander reserves his social life

mostly to other Faroe Islanders, social activities may unintentionally appear to be exclusive. This can, for example, mean that they as team members have a shared role performance, which they accustomed to displaying. During a social event in Copenhagen, Chris, a Danish acquaintance of several Faroe Islanders present, explains that it can be difficult to become a part of a social group which consists mainly of Faroe Islanders. Whilst he eventually came to spend time with Faroese friends on a daily basis, he says, he felt like an outsider in the beginning:

The Faroese circle is pretty hard to break into. There is a lot of inside knowledge that seems unattainable, and it takes time before you feel you are fully included in the group. I don't think it is intentional, though. None of my Faroese friends have ever rejected me, it is just a cultural thing (Chris).

What labels Chris an outsider can be interpreted as 'dramaturgical loyalty' (Goffman, 1959: 135) between his Faroese friends, which refers to insight knowledge that includes team members and excludes outsiders. There is a moral obligation between team members not to reveal their backstage behaviour, and the trust required to get such insight knowledge is, according to Chris, hard earned. The Faroese friends are likely to have known each other for longer than Chris has known them, and from their fellow background 'traffic rules' (Goffman, 1967: 12) have been established, which acts as a barrier between their pre-existing interaction order and outsiders. In several other cases in my fieldwork, the same dimensions of frontstage and backstage regions of their presentation of self are discussed, and it seems they are an indicator of a Faroese interaction order (Goffman, 1983), which represents a distinct domain of social interaction within the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen. Dramaturgical loyalty, as a team strategy of impression management, reproduces ethnic identity in everyday life, when outsiders are present. This relates to Plotnicov & Silverman's (1978) findings on ethnic presentation of self in Jewish communities in USA, which report cases of ethnic signalling in team behaviour, in which team members actively seek to reveal their shared cultural elements. This puts them in the light of a social unit with shared identities, and distinguishes the team members from the line of interaction between them and the outsiders. Ethnic signalling is a way of overcommunicating group membership (Goffman, 1959) ethnic identity to make it relevant, and create distance between them and the outsider.

5.4 Ethnic distancing

The ways in which Faroe Islanders become part of the Faroese community do not always come as naturally as I have demonstrated above. As mentioned, many Faroe Islanders move to Denmark anticipating the cultural diaspora that they are going to join, and welcome the practical advantages that come from it. In turn, other informants are prone to expand their social network beyond their Faroese circle. According to my informants, the diaspora can in these cases hinder the socialisation in Copenhagen, for example by spending much social time in Øresundskollegiet around Faroe Islanders instead of spending time with Danish friends. Particularly important for the process of making friends is the initial period in which you settle in Copenhagen. Harley, who has lived in Copenhagen for at least five years, says he appreciated the fact that he found accommodation in an area that is not particularly common for Faroe Islanders to be in. He explains that she spent the first few years in Denmark living in a corridor with Danish and other international people, which had a positive effect on him:

“I had spent those first years coming home from university to a dormitory and a kitchen filled with Danish and interactional people, and people from elsewhere in the world, who were my friends. It was an inspirational environment, and we were doing all kinds of different courses and were on different levels academically, which was good. We would discuss a new topic almost every day, and agree and disagree, you know?”

(Fieldnote labelled *meetup with Harley*)

The diversity of Harley’s social environment away from the Faroese diaspora was a somewhat educational factor in his everyday life. He indicates that the difference in backgrounds of the people in her dormitory gave her everyday an element of inspiration. We can see this as a contrast to the homogeneity of Faroese backgrounds in other dormitories that are within the diasporic boundaries. In being amongst people from international backgrounds, Harley’s ethnicity has been less relevant as other outsiders have been present much of the time in their dormitory. According to Harley, this took a naturally-caused change as he moved to a new place in Copenhagen:

“As I moved closer to Amager (the island where Øresundskollegiet is), I slowly became one of the Øresunds-people. I remember it well, it was like I was dragged into the old soup, you know? And I kind of lost that spark that I had. I went from being *the*Faroe

Islander to being one of the many Faroese Islanders in the Ghetto (Øresundskollegiet) who do not get into contact with Danes. It was like I was trapped in the orbit of the planet of Øresund, its gravity” (Ibid.)

This suggests a frustration towards the way in which the Faroese community “cuts off” one’s social performances. In a sense, other Faroese Islanders make her feel controlled and prehibit her socialising. As Harley reports, there is a tendency of not making much contact with Danes when you live in Øresundskollegiet. Here, Harley refers to the before-mentioned consistent separation between Faroese and Danish contacts, and a disinterest towards socialising with Danes. The effects of living in the “ghetto”, Harley jokingly states, eventually take their toll on your appearance:

You can smell it on a person that they live in Øresundskollegiet because after a while you develop a sort of dim and grey complexion. And it’s no wonder why... as you stare out the window, your thoughts reflect off the concrete wall and straight back into your head (Ibid.).

In certain situations where Faroese Islanders are “isolated” from their community, they have a choice between which role performance they want to give. This is relative to the ability to speak Danish as a Dane. For instance, some informants report, overcommunicating (Goffman, 1959) ethnic identity can be an advantage if you want to intentionally stand out. The other side of the coin is when being Faroese is a disadvantage. As overcommunicating ethnic identity may only makes the others present focus more on that element of your presentation of self. For Harley, being the sole Faroese Islander in his environment, his ethnic identity has not surfaced and become relevant in the same way as it does when there are two or more ethnic members in the interaction.

Over- and undercommunicating ethnic identity is a way in which to manage the social information you are giving about yourself. The outsider-perceptions of Faroese identity in Denmark has changed over the years. Following an economic crash in the Faroe Islands in the early 1990s, many Faroese Islanders moved to Denmark. From this situation, a negative image of Faroese Islanders was portrayed in the Danish media. Faroese Islanders in Denmark, then, managed a stigma that was attached to their ethnic identity. The slogan: “Spar i skat, skyd en færøing” (save taxes, shoot a Faroese Islander), which was sometimes seen printed on flyers in

taxis cars in Copenhagen, epitomised to some extent the atmosphere of the period. Thomas, who lived in Copenhagen as a student in the 1990s, reports that during their everyday, some Faroese Islanders felt uneasy because of the media coverage: “We tried to avoid big crowds as people might shout something at us, and we often tried to appear Danish, you know?.”

As a way of managing his presentation of Faroese self, Thomas sought to control the social information he was giving about himself. Goffman (1963a) describes a similar strategy of presentation of self in terms of managing a stigma. An individual may seek to cover a discreditable stigma by passing as “normal”. Similarly, as Thomas attempted to hide his Faroese-ness, the strategy was to cover his ethnic identity in order to manage a discreditable stigma. The satirical cartoon below, printed in *Extrabladet* in 1994 as part of an advertisement to invite Faroese Islanders to move to apartment blocks in the suburb of Ishøj, portrays an exaggerated image of a Faroese man “getting by” in a concrete jungle in Copenhagen (*Sosialurin*, Faroese newspaper from april 1994).



*Figure 3:
Image printed
in Faroese
newspaper
'Sosialurin'
in april 1994.*

Ishøj Kommune annoncerer i den færøske dagspresse med, at den har store, gode lejligheder nær den danske hovedstad. Kommune vil hellere have forgældede færinger end andre indvandrere, som ser endnu mere fremmedartede ud. (Tegning: Claus Deleuran)

Mimicing a man descending down a cliff to catch bird eggs, the Faroese Islander is stealing eggs from his neighbour in his apartment block. The image depicts a stereotype of a Faroese Islander who continues living “the Faroese way” in Denmark.

5.5 At home and abroad: switching identities

Many of my informants report clear differences in how they behave in the Faroe Islands and in Denmark, mainly because, to them, the expectations of their social conduct differ significantly between being abroad and being in the Faroe Islands. My fieldwork has given me a strong impression that Faroe Islanders on a daily basis reflect on this need to adapt their presentation of self. Several informants report that the element of anonymity is important to this distinction. In the following excerpt, Tanja, who lives in Malmö, but often travels to Copenhagen in her free time, explains to me how she experiences the transition that follows when she goes back to the Faroe Islands for Christmas:

I came back to our table and sat down. Tanja then told me that she had decided to go home for Christmas (as most Faroese students living abroad do). Her tone struck me as unenthusiastic. I looked at her and asked, “Yeah?”. “Yeah”, she replied: “I don’t know, I feel I probably should (go home). I’m excited – sure - but there’s that need to live up to the expectations when I’m at home that annoys me. I suppose this is what you are studying?”. I said yes, laughed, and then asked, “I understand, but what makes you feel that way?”. Tanja laughed and said: “I don’t know... It’s always that process of getting into character when you get back home, you know? I mean, I come home and all of a sudden everyone knows about me and that affects my thinking. Compared to here (in Malmö) where I don’t have to think so much about it.

(Fieldnote labelled *Meet-up with Tanja in Malmö*).

Tanja clearly states that she feels the need to “get into character” when she travels to the Faroe Islands. Going from a large city in which she can go about her everyday life with a degree of anonymity to an environment in which she is recognised by every bystander, adds to the need to manage her impressions. This is an implication of added scrutiny which exists in the Faroe Islands, and which entails different rules of interaction. As Tanja describes it, the need to give a public performance emerges when she returns to the Faroe Islands. In this sense, when she is abroad she is backstage and not as concerned with role performing (Goffman, 1959). When abroad, her presentation of self, then, is more in line with what she perceives as her “true” self, and when she travels to the Faroe Islands, she switches to another identity.

Whilst most of my informants report a difference in role performance when they travel home, their perspectives vary. Some say they feel more scrutinised in the Faroe Islands, however,

others describe the same circumstances in a more positive way. In the following excerpt between four Faroe Islanders living in Copenhagen and myself gives an example of different stances on how going back home changes their presentation of self:

Dan: Going home is a real transition. It's tiring frankly because I lose the privilege of being anonymous in the city and instead everybody knows me (the others nodded). In Copenhagen I can go grocery shopping wearing a lazy day outfit. (Everyone at the table laughed). That's so the Faroese way of doing it!

Joan: Yup, definitely. But, but, but... I love going back to my home town exactly because everyone already knows me. And so when I go shopping I'm even more comfortable wearing lazy clothes than in Copenhagen. Then again, if I'm in the Torshavn (Faroese capital), I think more about my appearance and dress up more.

Shyla: I don't feel that way at all. That's just, no offense, because of the culture in your town.

Joan: I guess so. But it's not like people don't peek through their curtains to watch you when you're walking past their house or anything. It's just that everyone there has known me since I was a kid and so they've seen my worst sides anyway (laughter).

Shyla: God, I can't stand that crap! One time I had been out buying some everyday stuff, having not even looked in the mirror on my way out of the house. This was before I got my job... when I came back home, my mum told me that someone she knows had seen me buying snacks and looking like I had overslept on a Wednesday. I mean, come on!

(Fieldnote labelled *Hanna's birthday party in central Copenhagen*)

There are a some of interesting points to make about this excerpt, which relate to front and backstage performance. Whereas Dan describes the loss of anonymity as negative, and that in the Faroe Islands he feels the need to manage an audience, Joan has a somewhat opposite view: she is more comfortable wearing "lazy clothes" in her home town for the same reason that Dan does not. This shows a difference in how they experience front and backstage role performance (Goffman, 1959). The key for Joan is that she is in her backstage region when the audience already knows the most private versions of her self. In turn, if the people "peaking through the curtains" are strangers, that would make her performance public. Shyla, on the other hand, emphasises the negative affect of having an audience that are not strangers. For she did not live up to a certain character in that she did not look representable out in public.

“Oversleeping on a Wednesday” represents a Faroese interaction order (Goffman, 1983) in which you ought to look representable when out in public. The fact that the audience knew Shyla was what resulted in an issue with role performance. Similar to Tanja, who feels obligated to “get into character” in the Faroe Islands, Shyla expresses frustration with the expectations of her presentation of self, which she can avoid in Copenhagen. However, these boundaries are for Joan more related to how well the audience knows her; in the Faroese capital, her role performance is public, whilst in her home town, she feels relaxed. “The Faroese way” is often reflected on with humour as a contrast to the interaction order (Goffman, 1983) in Denmark. During my fieldwork, I noted many occasions in which Faroe Islanders highlighted the funny differences in behaviour between Faroe Islanders and Danes. For example, according to several participants, the way to present yourself as a Faroe Islander is simply by saying “hello”. In turn, in Denmark, if you enter a group interaction with people that you do not know personally:

You shake everyone’s hand, regardless of how many they are.

(Karin, recorded interview)

In the Faroese interaction order, shaking hand the hand of someone may, then, be taken as an odd gesture. We can say that these differences reflect the traffic rules of interaction (Goffman, 1967), which distinguish a Faroese and a Danish performance.

In a similar example, the way in which people boast about their accomplishments in their daily lives. Karin reports that she gets annoyed at her Danish friends when they boast about themselves. And if you haven’t done your homework, she says, her Danish friends confront it as a fault. On the other hand, if you do all of your homework, your Faroese friends will ask: Why on earth did you do all of it? (Karin, recorded interview).

The implication that doing all of the homework is not cool is resembles the Nordic code of Jante Law as an interaction ritual, which discourages boasting and encourages modest humility. In the Faroe Islands, it is nearly impossible to have celebrity culture due to the density of the population. Being famous is problematic because too many people already know who you are. And similarly, putting yourself on a pedestal and boasting about your own achievements can easily give the impression that you are selfish and have failed this code of interaction. In a study on politeness in the context of the Swedish Jante Law (Scott, 2016: 1), this interaction ritual represents a a form of collective face saving, which is practiced through

“polite forms of talk”. From Karin’s examples, we can say that Faroe Islanders reproduce such interaction rituals and their self-image.

5.6 Managing different roles

In and around the areas in Copenhagen in which many Faroe Islanders live, you are likely to hear Faroese murmur at any time in the halls or outside on the streets. Faroese residents are then used to encountering other Faroe Islanders in their everyday and can easily follow the ‘traffic rules’ of the interaction order (Goffman, 1967: 12). However, Faroe Islanders who live elsewhere may find themselves uncertain of what to expect from, or how to anticipate, the situation as they are about to walk past someone on the street without immediately recognising them. For the Faroe Islander, such a casual encounter entails a concern with interaction which is often specific to the Faroese ethnic identity. In the following excerpt, I found myself in such a situation as I arrived at Øresundskollegiet for my fieldwork:

As I arrived outside the block in Øresundskollegiet where Tommy and Frida live, I remembered that you need the entry code to open the door that leads to the flat corridor. The corridor had no walls, but the first floor of the building was as high as a first floor balcony, and so I couldn’t enter the building without using the main entrance. Tommy and I had agreed I would join the two of them for breakfast at 9 AM. It was now five minutes to, and so I messaged Tommy on Facebook and waited for his answer whilst standing on the street outside. The door next to their flat then opened and out came a woman of about my age. She saw me through the fence though I did not recognise her. She quickly slammed the door shut, locked it, and tiptoed her way along the corridor over to the door that led to the main entrance into the apartment block. She disappeared through the door and into the main entry room inside the building. I ran over towards the main entrance to try and catch the door as she would open it. When I made it over, I was surprised to see the woman was already holding the door for me. I leaped up the stairs and grabbed the door. “Thanks very much”, I said in Danish. “You’re welcome old boy”, she replied in Faroese and laughed before she got on her way.

(Fieldnote labelled *Breakfast with Tommy and Frida*).

The woman's reply strongly affects the situation on my behalf. Firstly, it discloses my Faroese identity, making it relevant for the situation. Secondly, she draws me into a line of interaction that is different from the one that I had started by speaking Danish to her. As the woman recognised me, and I not her, she was able to influence the situation in such a way that she could accomplish her preferred self-presentation. By responding to me in Faroese, the woman ethnifies our interaction, which activates my identity and highlights our ethnic identity. In other words, my Faroese identity is situationally accomplished in the response from the woman. This relates to the findings of anthropologist Moerman (1965), who sought to define the identity of the Lue as an ethnic group. Moerman reports that the question of *when* someone is Lue comes down to when a Lue validates his own Lueness. This validation takes place in the everyday life of the Lue, and relies on the individual's own experience of ethnicity. Ethnicity, then, is not constant, but rather is relative to the situation.

As relatively few people speak Faroese, Faroe Islanders abroad commonly find themselves in situations in which they can surmise, with relative certainty, that their conversations in Faroese will be inexplicable to those present. This feeling of anonymity may be acted upon, sometimes for amusement, and other times it is a free pass so as to express freely the impressions one gets from the people present without them knowing, avoiding conflict in doing so. There may be an audience, however, with the assumption that no one in it speaks Faroese and therefore shares their ethnic identity. In such a situation, the actor may not feel inclined to negotiate their identity. In turn, an encounter with other Faroe Islanders in such a situation is always somewhat unexpected and breaks down the ongoing performance, turning one's role from being anonymous to scrutinised, and rendering all acts subject to consequences. The following excerpt is between myself and a Faroese couple that have entered the train carriage and sat down a couple of rows ahead of me on a train from Sweden to Denmark:

The man who had been speaking loudly on the phone was sitting directly behind the Faroese couple. Right before the first stop in Denmark, he stood up, still on his phone, and the Faroese woman immediately said (in Faroese), "Finally... what a bloody pain he is. What even is that language?". Her partner replied, "Gibberish". The rude man got off the train. After 20 minutes, the voice in the speakers finally announced that the next stop was Copenhagen Airport, which was my stop. The Faroese couple stood up and exited our carriage, passing by me on the way without meeting my glance. I followed them a moment later and joined a row of five people waiting for the exit doors to open. In front of the row was the Faroese couple. And as the train finally stopped, and the

light on the doorknob turned from red to green, the Faroese woman forcefully pressed the button to open the door but it wasn't working. The beeping coming from the door continued, and the people waiting in the row were starting to show their concern with the situation, likely because they had a plane to catch. The Faroese man reached his hand over the button and started pressing continuously. Then, before anyone could step in, I said in Faroese: "I think you have to hold it for a second or two". The Faroese man instantly turned his head towards me looking confused. Forcefully working the doorknob, he turned his head away again without replying. The doors finally opened and the Faroese couple leaped out onto the platform, the row of people and I following them. I stepped onto the platform and to the right, straight into the direction of the Faroese couple, who were fumbling with their backpacks. Both of them had caught my glance as I was walking towards them, and so I stopped. They looked up at me, tittering, and said, "well... thanks for the help" before turning around and hustling through the crowd of people towards the escalator.

(Fieldnote labelled *Encounter with a Faroese couple*)

There are a couple of interesting aspects of this excerpt. Firstly, the Faroese couple are speaking Faroese to each other without knowing that there is a person present who can understand them (me). They are assuming that they can speak "freely". This is demonstrated, for example, in that the Faroese woman does not wait until the loud man had stepped out of the train, but rather expresses her opinion about his behaviour directly, presuming that he cannot understand her. The key point, nonetheless, is that she herself presumed that no one present understood her, and that she was not in risk of being judged by any outsider. Secondly, as I, an evidently native Faroese speaker, intervened, they realised I might have heard their entire conversation on the train. Hence, their performance collapsed in the same instant as I revealed my identity. In Goffman's terms, the Faroese couple had not, as they assumed, been in the *back* during their train journey. Rather, they unknowingly gave a *frontstage* performance with me as the audience – or the performance turned into a frontstage one when I started to talk. In effect, the realisation that they had revealed relatively vulnerable selves (ones that are not for outsiders to see), gave them a feeling of discomfort, especially as I confronted them once again as they stood baffled outside the train on the platform. As I was a different category of audience than the others on the train, a conflict between their roles occurred (Goffman, 1961). And whereas they would have normally assigned a specific role in the present of myself as a Faroe Islander, there was a discrepancy between what had been revealed and their rehearsed presentation of self.

One strategy of avoiding such incidents is having the ‘dramaturgical discipline’ (Goffman, 1959: 137) to carefully manage facial and verbal expressions, as well as bodily appearance to give the appropriate display without losing face. Odd encounters with other members of the same ethnic community can be “saved” by acting nonchalant so as to give the impression that no conflict of roles has occurred.

5.7 “The moral hangover”

As several of my informants report, the distinction between the Faroese and the non-Faroese is a present distinction in their everyday. Between these two dimensions often lie the boundaries between the public and the private. The above-mentioned examples of the backstage being related to Faroese audiences, and frontstage representing the public sphere, illustrate the different role performances that these two regions entail. As they ‘oscillate’ (Clifford, 1988: 17) between the outside and the inside of the diaspora in their everyday, so too does the presentation of self change. For my informants who live around many other Faroe Islanders, role performing can quickly be jeopardised, by what Goffman (1959: 132) refers to as ‘inopportune incidents’. As unexpected incidents occur, the performer is caught out of character. In effect, a conflict of roles (Goffman, 1961) can occur. The risk of this is heightened during Faroese social events, particularly when the occasion is festive and alcohol consumption is involved.

According to Jacob, who lives in Copenhagen, a moral hangover “causes more pain than a physical hangover”. This implies that the uncertainty of the presentation of self the night before is worse than headaches caused by drinking alcohol. In the Faroese audience, during such social events, are close friends and acquaintances. Typically, people are also present who often cross paths with each other during their everyday life, yet do not interact. Such relationships can be characterised as familiar strangers (Milgram, 1977). A familiar stranger in the Faroese diaspora is likely to know some of your friends or family members, yet is not familiar with your usual role image. Typically, one familiar stranger wants to avoid greeting the other if he does not greet back. In turn, they do not want to be rejecting by ignoring each other: giving such an impression may cause repercussions for one’s image in that word can spread. As the familiar strangers are likely to share parts of the same Faroese social network, we can say that the “familiar” is represented by the “Faroese” characteristic of their identity.

A moral hangover is the result of a discrepancy between the role that is normally presented and that which was presented the night before. During the days following the night out, the individual may feel discomfort about their performances as they may have showed an inconsistency in their everyday role performances. In areas such as Øresundskollegiet, the recognisability amongst the Faroe Islanders is equal to, if not higher than in the home country. The high recognisability is cause for a certain curiosity about neighbours and others who present themselves in the given environment. This is epitomised in the image of heads peeking through the window in order to see who is approaching. As Jacob, who lives in Øresundskollegiet, reports: “In the Faroe Islands, the flowerpots in the windows come to life” (Fieldnote labelled *spending time at Øresundskollegiet*). The environment Øresundskollegiet can, in this sense, be seen as an extension of the Faroe Islands where there is a high risk of “moral hangovers” in that backstage reflection upon whether one’s self presentation the day before made adequate impressions or not, and that one is likely to be confronted with the same bystander the following day. This scrutiny reinforces any stigma that might have derived from “unusual” presentation of self.

6. Conclusion

In this study, I have explored the identity work of members of the Faroese diaspora in Copenhagen from a sociological perspective. Using my own insight knowledge as a Faroe Islander, I have based much of my fieldwork on pre-existing knowledge about the setting. A large part of my data has materialised on behalf of my ongoing relations to the Faroese community in Copenhagen. Building on a symbolic interactionist understanding of social interaction, I have sought to achieve an understanding of the strategies of the presentation of self in terms of my informants.

As discussed in my analysis section, Faroe Islanders who live in Copenhagen establish a way of negotiating identity, which, to a large extent, differs from that which they practiced before moving to Denmark. I have presented examples of how going back home to the Faroe Islands demands a change of presentation of self, and that this experience often acts as a realisation of the changes of their own social behaviour adapts to the surroundings.

In what I have referred to as ‘situational ethnicity’, I have upheld the premise that ethnicity is produced and re-produced in social encounters, and that ethnicity surfaces and becomes relevant for the situation when two or more social actors participate in the same encounter.

Using excerpts from my fieldnotes, I have given examples of how Faroe Islanders continuously shape their presentation of self with reference to the symbolic boundaries between being inside and outside, which demand different role performances. Part of this distinction can be divided into a frontstage region - which, for many of my informants, represents role performing in the presence of other Faroe Islanders – and a backstage region, in which actors are more relaxed and prepare their role performing in the public region. This distinction can also be understood in terms of a stranger who moves in between known and unknown rules of interaction. When there are other Faroe Islanders in the audience, role management intensifies in order to manage the scrutiny that comes with the social information that audience members have already attained. A result of out-of-role behaviour amongst other Faroe Islanders can later result in a confrontation with a stigma, as word may spread in related social circles about unusual presentation of self. The term “moral hangover” represents the results of a discrepancy between roles after a softened role management has a conflicting alignment with one’s character.

Unexpected encounters with other Faroe Islanders break down an ongoing performance, turning the given role performance from anonymous to scrutinised, which

subsequently results in a conflict of roles between the backstage and frontstage regions. The consequences of which affect future impression management in the Faroese community. The dichotomy of the inside and outside of the Faroese diaspora reflects the social networks of many of my informants who keep their social circles of Faroese and Danish friends separated, and rarely intertwine them. In situations in which friends from both circles are present, a result can be a conflict of roles, which contradict each other.

One interesting trend in my results is the fact that many of my informants have moved to Denmark with little intention of expanding their social networks. Instead, the plan from the beginning is settling in the Faroese community. Moreover, maintaining a Faroese social network in Copenhagen, like when in the Faroe Islands, has in many cases been a priority for my informants. Although many of my informants have Danish friends, the Danish friends rarely achieve a relationship with my Faroese informants to an extent that is equal to relationships between members of the Faroese community. A future study could perhaps explore the issue of forming social relations in similar settings.

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