



“For daddy this is home”:
Negotiating fatherhood in the ethnic space of Reykjavík

Árdís Kristín Ingvarsdóttir

Lokaverkefni til MA-gráðu í mannfræði

Félagsvísindasvið



HÁSKÓLI ÍSLANDS

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Leiðbeinandi: Gísli Pálsson

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Acknowledgements

The quote in the title of this thesis, “For daddy this is home”, is from Sam, one of my interviewees. It demonstrates how the men in my research choose to stay in Iceland because that is where their children live. My interviewees shared personal aspects of their lives with me. First and foremost I want to extend my gratitude to them. Further I wish to thank the people who were a part of my participant observation. Their insights were invaluable. So was the advice I received from my colleagues and teachers and I thank them sincerely. I would like to offer my special thanks to Dr. Alik Angelidou who read over the theoretical part of this thesis and to Gísli Pálsson my advisor for his professional guidance and valuable support. Finally, I wish to thank my friends and family for their assistance and encouragement throughout my study. Special thanks go to my son.

Útdráttur

Undanfarin ár hefur það aukist nokkuð að Íslendingar stofni til sambands við fólk af öðru þjóðerni. Þetta er algengara á meðal íslenskra karla en á þó einnig við um konur. Í þessari rannsókn er upplifun erlendra karla sem eiga börn með íslenskum maka og ala upp börn sín í íslensku samfélagi í brennidepli. Sérstaklega er skoðað hvernig þeir takast á við föðurhlutverkið, samskipti þeirra við íslenskar fjölskyldur og hvernig þeir skapa sér rými innan samfélagsins.

Rannsóknin sýnir fram á hvernig kyngervi karla tekur breytingum eftir aðstæðum. Þar hefur þverþjóðleg reynsla mikil áhrif auk þeirra samfélagsnorma sem eru áberandi í íslensku samfélagi. Karlarnir nýta bæði karlkyns og kvenkynsfyrirmyndir í uppeldi á sínum börnum og leggja oft áherslu á kynjajafnrétti. Ákveðin þversögn kemur fram þar sem mennirnir dást að eldri körlum sem vinna mikið en leitast sjálfir við að eyða meiri tíma með eign börnum og vera meira tilfinningalega tengdir þeim. Þeir eiga oftast í góðum samskiptum við tengdafaður sína en síður við tengdamæður, sem efast oft um hæfni þeirra til að sjá fyrir fjölskyldu. Ennfremur einkennast viðhorf gagnvart þeim, innan samfélagsins, af staðalmyndum og samkeppni við íslenska karla er algeng. Hjúskapastaða hefur mikil áhrif á félagslega stöðu þeirra og átök við fyrverandi maka eru algeng, en ekki algild. Þeir sækjast frekar eftir að tilheyra vinahópum sem innihalda margvísileg þjóðerni, þar á meðal íslensk. Þá upplifa þeir líkamlega vellíðan á svæðum þar sem þeir eru lausir undan karlægri samkeppni og fordæmandi augnarráði.

Rannsóknin byggir á ethnografískum aðferðum þar sem djúp viðtöl voru tekin við fjórtán aðila auk þáttökuathugunnar á árunum 2011-2012.

Abstract

In recent years there has been a slight increase in inter-ethnic relationships in Iceland. This thesis focuses on the experience of men who are raising children from inter-ethnic relationships, in an ethnic space that belongs to the mother of the child.

This research explores how men's gender changes according to their circumstances. Their own transnational lives as well as the current social surroundings have an impact on how they raise their children. They emphasize gender equality and use both male and female role models as parental guides. Some complexities were revealed. The men admired the sacrifices older generation of men made by working long hours but at the same time they want to have more time with their own children and be emotionally closer to them. They were more often on good terms with their fathers-in-law than with their mothers-in-law, who often questioned their capability as providers. Furthermore, their marital status has an impact on their social status. They seek friendships in transnational groups that include Icelanders as well. Further, they experience the feeling of physical ease in spaces that are not connected to masculinity, and where they are relieved from the social male gaze, and do not feel their difference as much.

The research was conducted in Reykjavík and nearby towns in 2011 - 2012. It is based on ethnographic methods and in-depth interviews with fourteen interviewees, as well as participant observation.

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Introduction

...because one changes unbelievably when becoming a father.

I missed her so much. So, it was like after six years that she asked, "Dad, will you come back home?" And I just replied, "Know what, child and life are what matter the most." I could not stay abroad so I just came back to Iceland.

My brother takes the role of being a father very seriously. In a quiet conversation he told me the first quote of this essay. In a different conversation an American friend of mine told me how he missed his daughter so much that he came back to Iceland to be with her. He has two children raised in Iceland and his sharing became the focus of my research. What are the many complications men face when they are raising children from inter-ethnic relationships in an ethnic social space that belongs to the mother of the child?

In my BA studies I visited women practicing Islam in Reykjavík where they told me how the men they used to know from back home had changed upon coming to Iceland. They felt they did not recognize the men anymore. Considering this I realized how studies in migration have often focused on women, as if only women are presumed to have a gender that is molded by culture and perceptible to change. It is still vital to study the everyday life of migrated woman. However, not all men are rulers and hierarchy is differently structured in each place and time. I believe that by doing more research on how men's gender is culturally and socially constructed there can be a more productive way of influencing a change in the direction of equality.

As this idea for research was forming in my mind I realized that many of my Icelandic friends were or had been involved with men of different ethnicities. In my twenties I lived in North-America and was in a relationship with a Persian man. My family did not approve. Part of their resentment was big media coverage of a custody battle between an Icelandic woman and a Turkish man. She was portrayed as the ultimate suffering mother and he as the incarnation of evil, taking away their girls to be raised in a foreign culture. As more time passed this was revealed to be not that black and white. It appears that the fear of women being in relationships with foreign men revolves around what might happen to the children. Yet as this research will show there are other factors that come into play, such as whether they are considered to be good providers, adjustable fathers or if they threaten the social status of the Icelandic male.

Situated in Iceland

Cultural exogamy in Iceland

Inter-ethnic couples consisting of Icelandic women and foreign men have been uncommon in Iceland. There have been exceptions, mainly as women married American soldiers or men from the neighboring countries such as from Scandinavia and Britain. Iceland has been rather isolated through the centuries and the population is currently around three hundred and twenty five thousand. Migration to Iceland has been minimal through the centuries, except in the Second World War when around six thousand army personnel arrived in the country, mainly from the USA (Hallsson, 1990). In the last two decades, traveling and communication have become easier. Mobilization of people is not a new phenomenon but in the era of globalization it is thought to have intensified. The largest migration to Iceland so far occurred in recent years, with the number of workers entering the country soaring during the economic boom in the late 90's. Despite the ensuing financial crises it has not ceased but it has slowed down (Statistics Iceland, 2013, March 19). Icelanders have increasingly been mobilizing out of Iceland, temporarily and permanently.

Lately inter-ethnic couples in Iceland have been increasing as a query of mine to the Icelandic Statistic showed. Similar to the other Nordic countries it is more common for Icelandic women to choose a partner from other Nordic or Western countries but the men will more often choose a partner from Asian or outside of Western countries than women do ("Sex prósent", 2013; Flemmen and Lotherington, 2008). However, this may change with increased migration.

The father's role in Icelandic society

Fatherhood has gone through some radical changes in Iceland in the last decade and the country is considered by the Global Gender Gap Report to have the most gender equality in the world for the last five years (Hausmann, etc., 2013). One aspect of the equality formation has been the right of fathers. Iceland was the first country that designated parental leave especially for the father, a three month exclusive paternity leave.(Gíslason and Eydal, 2008). In the year 2000 the parental leave was divided between the parents in the following way: three months each to the father and mother and three months that they can divide as they see fit. In 2012 the government passed a regulation that will change the leave further, giving each parent five months exclusively in 2015 as well as a joint entitlement for two additional

months. The paternity leave will then increase from nine months total to twelve months total (Lög um fæðingar- og foreldraorlof, nr.95/2000). If either parent does not utilize their exclusive leave it becomes void. The exclusively designated paternity leave has influenced fathers' participation in child care. According to sociologist Ingólfur V. Gíslason (2008), the fact that fathers are allocated a specific time with their children that is not transferrable to the mother has made a difference as the fathers seem to feel better about taking their paternity leave on those terms. Before, parental leave was considered a mother's right and duty but this arrangement seems to have made men feel equally entitled to spend time with their children and take on the role of primary caretaker. The high percentage of fathers using the paternity leave indicates that they are more than willing to take on this role and that society supports them. Therefore, Iceland is an interesting site to study gender in migration from the masculine point of view.

Masculinities in a global context

Since the beginning of capitalism the leading role of men in families has been the role of the breadwinner (Connell, 2005) and this has influenced images of masculinities around the world. Men in migration are often dealing with the premise that being a real man is proving that you can provide for your family even though it is in a faraway place (Wolseth, 2008; Amid and Dyck, 2011; Ramirez, 2011). Yet work is often hard to come by, especially in the recent economic crisis and the men are often doing low paid jobs, their education is disvalued and they lack cultural capital, which prevents their advancement in the workplace.

It still seems to be the norm for a man in Iceland to build a house and provide for a family (Björnsdóttir, 2011) but it may be changing as men, for example, are increasingly using the joint entitlements of the parental leave (Gíslason, 2010). Of course no changes are going on without debate and men are using different ways to make sense of their identities in a new world. Into this changing social space migrating men are also trying to negotiate their identities and remaking a home for themselves.

Theories of culture, power, gender, migration and being in the world

Ethnic social space

Theories of places and spaces have been going through some ideological changes and this is largely due to the influence of Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997). They suggested the need to look more closely at how a social space is sometimes connected to a place but can also have a diverse existence outside of place. Yet the image of a space and the identity of a place can still have influence over each other. Therefore, Gupta and Ferguson thought it important to keep in mind how social spaces are constructed through history and power.

The Icelandic man is constructed through images of nationality and influences from historical events and power structures. The dominant ideology about an egalitarian and homogenic society hides class division. It is seen as a personal trait when men become successful instead of a social construction (Durrenberger, 1996; Pálsson and Helgason, 1996). The same can be said if a man is deviant towards the poor or if he misbehaves (Gurdin, 1996). There is some indication that migrant men are seen as being inferior and occupy lower paid jobs (Skaptadóttir and Sigurgeirsdóttir, 2011). When the word ethnic is used it usually refers to minority groups bounded by cultural traits, traditions, and customs and are traced to an origin of a different country. In western public discourse the norm for an ethnic group is one of a different skin color than white. Nationality on the other hand refers to the power of belonging to a space, more right to a place so to speak. It often hides the inequality within the group of nationals, as noted with the Icelandic ones. Being mindful of the power of the written word I will use the word *ethnic social space* instead of *national social space*.

The suggestions of George Marcus (1994) on how changes in places and concepts can demonstrate the flow of globalization was insightful as well as the theories of Arjun Appadurai (2000/2008) on how certain ideas are transferred through *scapes*. Further, Nirmal Puwar's (2004) theories on how a multitude of bodies with different characteristics than what is considered the norm cause a disturbance. Discourse, a term drawn from Michel Foucault (1975/1977), reflects how norms in societies are produced, maintained or changed. Edward Said (1998) pointed out that discourses of 'Others' not only produce simple stereotypes but also show how people who use or read them reflect themselves. Media reflections often had an impact on the lives of my interviewees, both in a negative and a positive way as they were seen as the 'Others' but also how they came to know Iceland and Icelanders as the 'Others'.

Migration and gender

I found Floya Anthias (2002) theory on *translocational positionality* very useful as it describes how one person can have many identities to negotiate life depending on place, space and time. Her theory resonates well with Tim Ingold's (2000) theories on how a person is in a constant state of becoming that is embedded in their social surroundings. I chose the theories of Raywin Connell (2005) to reflect better the social masculine structure of the Icelandic society. Her concept of *Hegemonic masculinity* is insightful in order to see how one type of masculinity is normalized above other types and how it is used to promote a certain hierarchy over women and other men, for example migrant men (Bartolomei, 2010).

Further, I found that the marital status of men was of great importance to the social position, making the theories of Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vourella (2002) on *Relativizing* which indicate that relativity can differ among family members in migration families, very insightful. In interviews people are often telling their life history and often it reflects how they find a way to belong while at the same time comparing it to the life they used to know. This is what Steven Vertovec (2004) calls *bifocality* and I noticed especially how the men were comparing gender roles, fatherhood and the feeling of home.

The feeling of home reconstructed

Michael Jackson (2005) theorized that the body is usually on guard in a place where a person does not feel they fit in but the bodily expression will change when they find or make a place where they feel more comfortable. I found that escaping a gendered social gaze (see Bartky, 2003) was of considerable importance when it came to feeling more at ease in the body as well as in certain social interactions.

Ingold's (2000) theories of a *dwelling place* indicate how people make a home in situations available to them in a dialogue with the environment. When focusing on social relations I will keep in mind biosocial relations, in line with Gísli Pálsson's (2013) observation that the biological is always entwined with the social aspects of everyday life and vice versa.

Methodology

My interviewees come from various positions and ethnicities and are of different ages. They all live in Reykjavik or neighboring towns. The scarcity of inter-ethnic relationships where the women are Icelandic influenced this sample. There are several reasons for this. One is that in the beginning of the recent migration flow women were in the majority, mainly from Poland, the Philippines and Thailand. Some married Icelandic men (Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008; Skaptadóttir, 2010). Later, during the construction boom, the Polish men that immigrated were mostly married (Þórarinsdóttir, 2011) or thought that the Icelandic woman was not good wife material (Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008). Further, a negative discourse has in some cases influenced the couples to move (Björnsdóttir, 1989). Or as Julie E. Gurdin (1996) says: “Women’s moral duty was to bear Icelandic children, endowing them with Icelandic language and culture.”(p. 132). My research indicates that Icelandic women are increasingly traveling abroad, forming relationships there or beginning one on the return to Iceland which may point towards women counteracting this hegemonic discourse. However, it was hard to find samples from one ethnic group of men. I therefore chose to find a mixture of snowball and purposive samples that had different ethnicities, class, age and sexuality. This method is not focused on reliably but to gain insight on how men are negotiating fatherhood within the social space.

George Marcus (1994) claimed that in a rapidly changing world anthropologist need to adjust their approach to studies without losing the quality of ethnographic research. A good example of this is a study done by Paul Kennedy (2010) who studied people from various European countries living in Manchester to see how they were using niches in the British society to make space for themselves. He used in-depth interviews and visited sites where they liked to gather seemingly without any cultural preferences. I have chosen a similar method in my research.

In my last year as a post-graduate student I went as an Erasmus student to Athens, mainly because so many of our ideas of gender are traced back to ancient Greece. Working with migrants from various cultures in Athens I noticed how certain social spaces influenced gendered behavior. In addition, my own mobilization helped me to emphasize and understand my interviewees better.

The main focus and concepts

I used open ended questions that were directed towards my main theme of fatherhood, the feeling of home and negotiations with the social environment. In the beginning I asked them to describe themselves and then move to their travel story. In order to look at the role of the father I asked them to describe their relationship with their child/children and how they were experiencing being fathers in Iceland. Finally, I asked in what kind of environment they felt most comfortable in and what kind of situations brought forth this feeling of ease. When possible I asked them to take me to this place or participated in the activities.

I will use the word identities in the Foucaultian sense that is: “Understood as the evanescent product of multiple and competing discourses; identity is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary “self”.” (Cooper and Brubaker, 2005: 65). For even though it may be problematic in that it rejects the idea of sameness, I believe it describes well how the social self is constructed through the changing environment.

Another concept I will use is *environment* for it takes into the consideration the whole aspect of human surroundings. Social space is meant to refer to the social aspects of human life but as Ingold (2000) noted, persons are always a part of their whole surroundings.

The word *diaspora* originally meant a group of people that were forced to move out of their homeland and could not return. Today it is still used to refer to how they use their own ethnic ties to be bounded or for political reasons. However, Aisha Ong (2003/2008) points out that:

...Diaspora sentiments may linger but it may be more analytically exact to use the term ‘transnationalism’ to describe the process of disembedding from a set of localized relation in the homeland nation and re-embedding in new overlapping networks that cut across borders. (pp. 171).

I believe the term *transnational* describes the lives of my interviewees.

The dissertation will be divided as follows: First there is the theoretical approach, secondly the historical overview of the Icelandic social space, thirdly the methodology used, fourthly the results produced and lastly some discussion.

I argue that when the gender of men is brought to light the way in which they are changing their own identities becomes evident and that their marital status is one of the major

variables in this process. Further, I argue that they are not just continuing the fatherhood they learned in their youth but changing it in a dialogue with their own emotional expectations, with the social space and their own transnational experiences.

1. Theoretical approach

1.1 Theories on culture, power and space

Anthropologists have long been associated with the research of marginalized groups. Living among them for a long time, taking part in everyday life and festivals along with the use of notes in a systematic way to try to enquire into what is happening and compare with other communities. This approach has helped scientists achieve the depth which is sometimes lacking in sociological studies. This method, along with their writings, is called ethnography (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). This method, however, has been criticized for various reasons, such as omitting the effect the anthropologist him/herself has on the study with his or her presence, attitudes and interpretation. It has also been criticized how anthropology has tended to target groups that were studied as the 'Other' (see Kristín Lofsdóttir, 2008). Globalization has brought with it the increasingly frequent transfer of people, goods and capital. 'Others' are in many ways moving closer to 'us'. Increased technology makes transport easier and communication over long distances has become far better. In Europe, the fall of the Berlin Wall lifted several restrictions which made migration easier. Today many countries are starting to close again (Bryceson and Vourela, 2002) and migrants are all too familiar with the recent "Fortress of Europe" (Ponzanesi, 2002).

Migration is not a new phenomenon. European companies that were working on projects in the colonies often took the workforce with them (Guilianotti and Robertson, 2007) or moved workers from one colony to another (Vourela, 2002). Moving to another country to obtain a better livelihood is also an old story. Some Icelanders did this in the 17th century by moving to Canada and Brazil (Pálsson, 2003). Many anthropologists point out that culture has never been the still image that is so often portrayed in the media or in older ethnographies (Bauman, 1999; Marcus, 1995; Gupta and Fergusson, 1997). However, there is a reluctance to part with the concept of culture as a form that affects the making of identity and how a person interacts with others (Bennett 1998) and the term is often used today without being defined as constrained.

The theories of Pierre Bourdieu are often cited in research that is looking at how people deal with going from one region to another. Bourdieu (1977/2006) believed that what people experience in childhood has the most influence over how they will deal with experiences later in life and that in every community there is an elite that decides what norms should be performed in order to be a good person. He further thought that every individual is

in a dialogue with their environment which is also influenced by outside events (ibid.). Some research shows that people move to get away from norms they find unfair or depressing (see for example Kennedy, 2010; Skaptadóttir and Wojtynska, 2008). Bourdieu (1977/2006) believes that people who move between places try to adjust to the norm of the new place, especially if adjusting serves a purpose. Kennedy (2010) found out, for example, that people will study English if it is good for their resume but consider themselves more international than English or their country of origin. Belonging to a group of internationals seems to give them more pliancy in being different. In many recent studies this negotiation with environment and remaking of identities has been brought to light and may be a sign of the agency Bourdieu talks about. This discourse of the habitus of youth being a determinate factor in molding identities may influence the use of stereotypes. People are not thought to be able to change much beyond that.

Marcus (1994) suggested that instead of studying presumably closed culture zones one should focus on the viewing process. The shaping culture can reveal who is pushed into marginal groups, who has the authority at any given time and how it is enforced. This further reflects how people are connected to multiple roles that affect the dialogues and agency of each person. Mykkel Rytter's (2008) research, for example, shows that Denmark is becoming stricter on couples from working class immigrants who are applying for citizenship. If a Danish citizen wants to obtain a Danish citizenship for his/her partner who is from a different nationality they have to take a subjective loyalty test where both have to show equal amount of loyalty before citizenship is granted. Marianne Gullenstad (2007) has pointed out that European states are increasingly closing their borders in a way to protect their image as a pure nation and that not all those borders are visible (see also Vertovec, 2004). Yet, as Rytter (2008) remarks, people will try to find a way. One couple in this research had failed the test once. For a time they lived in Skane in Sweden, close to Denmark. While the one with the Danish citizenship would go to work in Copenhagen every day, the other would make an effort to learn the language and customs of Denmark and hope that the next time they would have a chance of passing.

Arjun Appadurai (2000/2008) drawing on the theories of Benedict Anderson about *imagined communities*, suggests that there are certain *scapes* that can be examined (p. 51). They are: *ethnoscapes* which describe how diverse the flow of people can be and how that affects the environment; *technoscapes* that follow the increased speed of communication and transport which are increasingly independent of national boundaries; *financescapes* that

illustrate how easily the flow of money can affect communities in diverse ways ; *mediascapes* that have made it easier to effect people around the world and create a certain image, especially of ‘us’ and ‘other’ but also of how people make sense of the media information received, and finally *ideoscapes* that encompass how images are used for political purposes. He further explains that while it is possible to focus on one *scape* in a research it should be taken into consideration that they always affect each other, but how much can vary over time and a specific place. Many social scientists have followed this idea of *scape* and broadened them further. Nicole Constable has noted in *Cultural Logic of Desire* that certain images about cultural gender attributes are influential when people are seeking a partner from a different culture zone (see Flemmen and Lotherington, 2008). They are often misleading. Anne Britt Flemmen and Ann Therese Lotherington (2008) note that there can be multiple reasons for people from different ethnicities becoming a couple and that people often work out different expatiations and cultural habits. Their research also shows that various *scapes* are involved when people are engaged in making multicultural families. Sometimes it is by making a home in various places. Ulla Vourela (2008) points out that a family can be spread out all over world and they keep their connection through memories, pictures and stories instead of places or nations. Families in this study have sometimes been moving between countries, intend to move later when the children are bigger or are living some months in Reykjavík and some months elsewhere. This suggests that the image of a family connected to one nation may be changing though it may still be the dominant one.

Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1997) point out how certain cultural groups may be distributed across many borders and how within many boundaries there can be all kinds of cultures. The impact of colonialism has affected this and therefore it is vital to see how a person can belong to several places. In particular, they noted that it is important to consider how social changes have occurred and how they are made because of a dialogue with other groups. A social space may not be the same as a place but they influence each other. Ideas associated with the image are spread that way. This affects how cultures in one place will change and how people strive to migrate to places where they will both influence and be influenced by images. People’s stories have an effect and therefore memory, which is connected to people, places and social communication. National memory also entails how some things are easier to forget and other things are made more important in public discourse. Therefore, Gupta and Ferguson (1997) believe it is important to bear in mind how spaces are estimated, who has the power to define areas within spaces and places, who will object and

what is at stake for all parties concerned. Often there is a call for entitlement to space/place and the elite of the social group is usually the one who decides what image is important to uphold, who will belong to that image and how that affects who's rights will be protected. In many ways Gupta and Ferguson's theories are about power and they stress the importance of historical context, whether it is in personal storytelling, communication or policy organizations. In this respect it is also interesting to look at the flow of people that may come to a place and how both the elite and the commons respond to that flow.

Nirmal Puwar (2004) who studied the British parliament pointed out that places are often defined by a certain bodily norm and when a body of different characteristics than the norm enters the place it causes disturbance and fear. This somatic norm is usually the middle-class white male and with the invisibility of the norm there comes a certain amount of power. Those who fall outside of this norm have to endure closer observation for it is feared that they will not measure up to expectation and at the same time that they will question what the norm really is and those who belong to the norm will doubt their authority to certain privileges of behavior and rights (ibid.). Puwar (2008) remarks that it is important to look at how many bodies with certain amount of 'Otherness' enter at a particular time. When the U.S. Army came to Iceland the fear that they would contaminate Icelandic society was so great that a wire fence was erected around the base to try to keep the army personnel apart from the locals. It was especially important to keep the U.S men away from the Icelandic women (Einarsdóttir and Eydal, 2008). In this it can be seen that there is a historical national preference to the Icelandic man as a norm in Iceland. If men of different characteristics arrive in large quantities it causes fear and disturbance.

This leads to theories of gender and how hierarchy of gender norms becomes apparent when gender roles are set as the focus of research.

1.2 Theories on gender

Sherry B. Ortner (1974/2008) is one of the most cited anthropologists when it comes to gender research. She submitted the theory that women were usually connected to nature but men to culture and therefore to civilization which is meant to control nature for the benefit of mankind. Women were connected to nature because of their ability to have and nurture children that supposedly gave them the attributes of sensitivity and caring. Therefore, inner space is thought to belong mostly to women and outer space mostly to men. This theory has

been criticized by many but can be a good model to use in order to see the interaction between spaces, how gender roles are different in each society, how they are changing and how they strive to continue. Ernestine Friedl (1986) thought that appearances about power may be misleading since women can have a lot of power in the inner space which will influence the behavior of the man in the outer space, especially if she has a good dowry. She also noted that what gives men and women power can change over time and in different dwelling places. Thus, education and connections in a city can be seen as an asset when the other partner is from an urban area. Studying migration Ortner's model can therefore be of great use when examining how gender roles are changing. In addition, it becomes necessary to acknowledge the influence of feminist writings on the subject, an approach that can be of further benefit when looking at gender roles and their development.

As more women became scholars, their focus was felt within the academic world. Some of the influences feminism brought into the academic world include the fact that more emphasis was put on seeing the world from women's point of view (Abu-Lughod, 1991), giving their voices more volume (Moore, 1988) as well as focusing on the gender role as a performative act that can be un/re-done (Butler, 1990). The rise of feminism also brought forth how the roles of women are multiple and diverse. One of the heavy criticisms of feminism was the normalization of the white middle class woman and stereotyping the victimization of the third world woman in their writings (Mohanty, 1991). This has led to contestation between agency and vulnerability of women in many studies, for example when women's migration is studied.

In the beginning of colonialism and capitalism it became more common for a man would go out in the world to seek better work opportunities and often take his family with him or sending for a wife from his former home later on. With the rise of globalization it has become more common for women to be the majority of migration. They usually present cheaper labor and with new technology their slim fingers are thought to be valuable. In some ways it has given them more power but at the same time it could be said that they have been exploited. Only recently has the focus been put on how men's gender is affected by migration and globalization.

1.2.1 The gender of men

With feminism entering the academic world, gender became an important topic in social studies, yet it was mainly focused on the gender of women who had until the 70's been largely invisible in academia. Still feminism influenced many studies of minority groups, gay studies for one, which in return brought into light how the gender of men is socially constructed (Connell, 2005). Today it is widely accepted that one does not talk about masculinity but masculinities for they may be diverse and changing. Similar to identities, a person can have many gender roles to deal with in their daily life. In feminism this multiple of variables has been called *intersectionality* (see Kristín Loftsdóttir, 2009). Raewyn Connell (2005) has pointed out that masculinities are culturally defined and created by multiple social connections (p. 76).

Many social studies tend to focus on western individualism in gender studies. The anthropologist Marilyn Strathern uses the concept of *dividual* to describe how social relations can be seen to mold identities differently in societies (see Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). The anthropologist Peter Loizos (1994) has pointed out that there can be many ideas going on in the same area at the same time about what it means to be a 'real' man and that can change with each person as their circumstances change. It is therefore worth noting how the norm of masculinity is produced in each circumstance to be better able to recognize the negotiations that men are having with their environment. Connell (2005) working with other scholars, has produced a model that can be helpful in this regard. She theorized that one can find *hegemonic masculinities* that are:

...defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women. (pp. 77).

She further notes that it is not necessarily men with real power that are the role model of this masculinity but that this norm is used to define what is masculine and what will be degraded as feminine and homosexual behavior. This can be a good model to use to see how hierarchies are in the making, for power symbols often go through remaking without losing their power effect (see for example, Gill, 2008). Even though not all men feel that they are in this norm it is accepted by society as something men should strive towards and therefore this norm will continue to put masculine behavior above feminine. This can therefore be reflected in Foucaultian theories of the gaze.

In his theories Michel Foucault (1975/1977) drew on the image of a tower in the middle of prison that shines into the cells of inmates so they will always feel its gaze to promote optimal behavior. The light will prevent them from seeing inside the tower as to whom or whether someone is watching. Subverting this to other social spaces he said that in modern times people are subjected to a social gaze to normalize their behavior. Sandra Bartky (2003) theorized that the social gaze is based on a masculine perspective and some research shows, for example, that men are more concerned with what other men will think of them, than with what women think (Ely and Masterson, 2010) but this may be culturally situated.

Maria Rita Bartolomei (2010) is among the few who have studied the interaction between men from different groups in migration and she has noted that:

The continuity and reaffirmation of hegemonic masculinities, in fact, is still rooted in the subordination and exploitation of both women and other groups of men who have few cultural or economic resources: nowadays migrant men. (p. 105).

She concludes this because in her study migrant men who took work as helpers, nannies, cooks or caretakers inside the houses of local families were considered 'little' men by their male employers and therefore not a threat to their women. At the same time the migrants thought themselves still very masculine because they were doing paid work providing for their family. The workers sometimes preferred working for a white woman because they had some distance from their own culture (ibid.) but on the other hand men from Puerto Rico in East-Harlem felt that white women harassed them more and degraded them (Bourgois, 2002). Being so reminded of the fact that they were working under a woman or doing feminine work may in some ways reflect this hierarchy of masculinity in migration and how cultural images are a part of that. Another research of Liora Gvion (2011) on Palestinian males running a restaurant in Israel, showed that even though they were involved in making food which they considered a woman's work, they negotiated their identity as promoters of their cultural food, an act that is carried out in the outer space of society which is not a place for women. Loizos (1994) points out that the attitude common in Greece about men who are dominated by other men is that of a degradingly feminized person because they are usually referred to as being penetrated. Penelope Papailios (2010) has shown that many Albanians who have immigrated to Greece feel that they are violated by their employers in this way and resist this by reclaiming their masculinity in songs of heroism. Handicapped men are also often feminized as they are not thought of as 'real' men but they can also be desexualized, and thus seen as not having a gender or sex (see Björnsdóttir and Óskarsdóttir, 2005). People who

change their sex or gender roles have also noted how society tries to teach them the right behavior according to their preferred sex as Kathrine Connell's (2010) research on transgender in the workplace has shown. She noted that women who became men found out they gained power, while men who changed into women felt that they lost power. Reflecting back to the inner sphere of societies, research on inter-ethnic couples in Israel done by Edna Lomsky-Feder and Tali Leibovitz (2010) indicates that grandmothers who had more 'whiteness' and more prestige regarding cultural civilization had more power influencing the childcare in their family. The husbands have more power in connection to religion, they concluded. Katharine Charsley (2005) researched Pakistanis who married British citizens of Pakistani descent. They moved to Britain because of the better economic environment there but were often unhappy as their education was not valued and they mostly got low paid, low skilled work. Pakistani culture has been more patrilocal so this move was strange for many of the men. Nevertheless, the Pakistani fathers in Britain felt more comfortable being close to their daughters and were mostly friendly towards their sons-in-law.

Historical research demonstrates how ideas of masculinities have been acted out between different ethnicities. Being more white has long been thought of as one of the invisible forms of power, yet men have felt the need to protect that image of power as Radhika Mohanram (2007) has noted in her study on British colonialism in India. She pointed out how hegemonic masculinities were acted out by British men who wanted to educate Indian men but at the same time they did not want them to think too independently, wanted to operate a free market with them but at the same time they used monopoly, wanted them to recreate themselves but at the same time have power over the creation. This was not just in India but also at home where workers were considered more 'black' than other white middle class citizens. This can be seen in sports as well, for as Hans Bode (2003) noted, before capitalism the higher classes thought it was degrading to connect the body to movement. This changed when the body became an icon connected to speed and competition, abilities that were thought to be admirable attributes in the time of capitalism. Still, strength was more connected to working class sports and later group sports like football. In modern times sports seem to have a great influence on images of masculinities but at the same time the most powerful men in the world are not football players.

Thus, there are many variables in the hierarchy of masculinities such as ethnicity, sexuality, handicap, economics, culture, time, spaces and places. It has been suggested in the rise of globalization that the successful business man will become the hegemonic masculine

image in the world but this has been criticized. Christine Beasley (2008) suggests that it is better to look into what the powerful actually do; how supra- and sub-masculinities can support or dismantle the hegemonic norm; and how local ideas of masculinities are contested, subverted or mixed with international ideas. Jeff Hearn (2004) who in many ways is in harmony with Beasley, wants to reduce the use of the concept of masculinity in direct connection to men as a whole because the term puts too much importance on the dualism between the sexes and does not expect enough complexity. He would rather look at the behavior of men, their attitudes and assigned characteristics. Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson (2004) remarks that this may be of little influence as long as the discourse of the public still supports the idea of separate behavior in connection to gender roles.

There have been several schools going on since masculinity became a topic in social studies and they mostly differ as to whether there is something natural about characteristics connected to the sexes or whether they are culturally situated. Much effort has been put into proving the gender difference in the brain but so far no conclusive evidence has been found (Fine, 2011). The things that have been seen as natural gender traits may be of a more biosocial nature. Connell (2005) remarked that what people are connecting with physical desires and emotions is intertwined with what is happening in societies and personal experiences with other people. Another example is how the flow of testosterone, cortisol, and estradiol hormones changes in men who are present when their babies are born and become active in their daily upbringing (Berg and Wynne-Edwards, 2001). Gísli Pálsson (2012) has also pointed out that societies have their own way of dealing and making sense of scientific research on genomics by connecting the results to their own experiences of what it means to belong to one tribe or another or a family of genes. I therefore conclude that even though there may be some physical differences this can vary greatly between individuals and traits connected to gender roles are culturally performed and situated.

It seems that governmental policies can influence gender equality by focusing more on the gender of men as the parental leave in Iceland has done, but the ideology of commercial companies can have a further impact. The research of Robin Ely and Debra E. Meyerson (2010) on men working on oil platforms also pointed out how companies can influence change in attitudes towards the gender roles of men. They noted how western ideas of masculinities are often connected to attributes that show assertiveness, aggression, competition, autonomy, strength, decisiveness, agency, rationality, a faculty with tools and technology as well as emotional detachment. Sometimes these attributes can be beneficial, but

they can become harmful if men will strive so much to measure up to them that they will hurt themselves or others. This has been called harmful masculinity or the price of masculinity. Ely and Meyerson (2010) found out that when the company implemented policy that was more focused on security, safety and social caring, the men changed their attitudes and behavior very quickly for they felt that the company now cared more for them than the profits. Actually profits for the company rose as the behavior of the men changed. There were less costly accidents and the men were better workers when they felt more secure. In addition, the attitude of the men also changed towards other aspects of life, like how they looked at themselves, at others and society as a whole for they thought this policy allowed them to grow as persons. Thus, their research shows that the ideas of hegemonic masculinities are not always what men want to be but rather what society is asking them to be and at the same time can give them more social status over people who do not portray attributes connected to masculinities in each situation in itself.

So the question arises of how the Icelandic state, companies and institutions give foreign men space to adjust to changing masculinities, as well as the social relations of family and friends.

1.3 Theories of the social position in migration

Many anthropologist have criticized how much emphasis has been put on researching the influence of social institutions and states on migration but fail to research the everyday life of migrant people, family influences, social connections and how transnational people also influence the culture they are dwelling in (Bryceson and Vuorela, 2002; Levitt, DeWind and Vertovec, 2003; Anthias, 2002). Gerd Bauman (1999) has pointed out that culture is constantly in the making. In the discourse of culture groups, gender roles are very often assumed to be in a constant status quo instead of being seen as changing (Anthias, 2002). Words concerning migration used in the media and by institutions are often filled with meaning without saying what the meaning is (Grillo, 2007). People are told to adjust but not how and even when they are trying they have to deal with all kinds of social fences that keep them out of the social sphere (Gullestad, 2002). This rhymes with Frederik Barth's (2000) observation on how groups create social boundaries to define their identities and that it is important to look at how and when social boundaries are made. Ralph Grillo (2007) has noted

that sometimes it does not matter how much migrants try to adjust, they will never be accepted fully.

Floya Anthias (2002) has pointed out that it is important to try to find *dialogical moments* where all people are respected while at the same time there is an effort made to find a mutual ground for a dialogue. She believes that it is possible to condemn acts that go against basic human rights without condemning a whole ethnic group and that is important to try to avoid that only the group's elites is making all the decisions on policies and practices. She further remarks that elites do not just define the norm to follow but that those norms are molded by gender roles as well. Often there is a tendency to look past the multiple roles people have in their daily activities and Anthias suggest that researchers should try to look beyond the western ideas of binary gender norms and focus more on multiple social positions affecting people's roles. The social position of every individual is always in a flux, being made and remade, and it varies based on who it is compared to. In light of this, Anthias proposes that researchers use what she calls a *translocational positionality*, a concept that takes into consideration that a person can have many identities to negotiate in their life depending on place, space and time.

In many ways this is not so far from what Deborah Bryceson and Ulla Vourela (2002) postulate but their focus is on families in migration. They point out that relativity can differ among family members in transnational families which refer to how power is maintained and how the concept of family is socialized in a variety of situations. This is what they call *relativizing*. They also stress the term *frontiering families*, pointing out how migrant families are now making space and roles to play in a new environment, just as white families used to do in colonial times. One of the reasons white men still publicly invade or discipline other civilizations is the concept of saving women from evil brown men (Abu-Lughod, 2002). It is interesting to see that when needing a workforce foreign men are welcome but at the same time efforts are made to prevent them from having relationships with local women. When immigration laws were changed in Great Britain so that there was no gender connected to the idea of a partner immigrating into the country to be with their loved ones, there were considerable worries that foreign men would be using this to their advantage (Charlsley, 2005). Women who marry into a new ethnic group to better their situations have to deal with some social stigma (Flemmen and Lotherington, 2008) but in the hierarchy of masculinity this seems to be an unthinkable evil or to be unmanly for men.

When discussing my research with a colleague at the University of Iceland, she told me that a Filipino man who married into her family had to deal with this kind of prejudice as his wife's family and friends could not believe love was involved if economic advantage was included in the marriage. However, as Flemmen and Lotherington (2008) have pointed out in their research on Russian women married to Norwegian men, economic situations do not exclude love.

Patricia Pessar and Sarah Mahler (2003) have gathered together six ways that might be used in that kind of research. They suggest looking at *geographical scales* which is a term that describes how the image of gender roles moves along with people, changes and has multiple impacts; *social location* which tells of how the social position that a person is born into influences her ability to migrate and how she will act in a new environment at the same time that this position can change with time and space; and *power geometrics*, a term taken from Doreen Massay, which describes the agency of each individual in each place in question and how it can have impact from one place to another, for example with the sending of money. These three are somewhat in line with the theories cited above but they also add to how the *individual* and *cognitive process* of every person can have influence on their story of migration. Every unique story reflects this at the same time they show how people are negotiating the social norm.

Many anthropologists in migration studies point out how important storytelling is and how through storytelling people find a way to belong (Anthias, 2002; Vertovec, 2004; Jackson, 2005). Anthony B. Cohen (2000) has pointed out that we need to look at what people are saying about themselves, what they are not saying and how identity is in the making by their comparison to others that are thought to be different. Steven Vertovec (2004) reminds us how increased flow of people in migration often brings up fear from the locals for they will doubt which group they now belong to and what attributes are attached to that group. He further thinks it is very important to look at how boundaries are made and one aspect of looking at this creation includes expectations of behavior. He believes that life stories are a way for people to find out where they belong but in those stories one often finds what Vertovec calls *bifocality* which describes how people compare one situation to another, often comparing their new place to the one of upbringing. *Bifocality* can be used in various ways depending on who is using it and in what situation. In some ways it may be used to negotiate belonging in a specific place or to a specific group. In this study I have found that people do not just compare one place to another but sometimes to multiple places which may be a sign

of increased mobility since people are not just living in one or two places anymore. Some even make home in three countries at same time and many have lived in several countries before coming to Iceland or Greece. Many of my subjects did not just want to belong to one group but several, which is a sign of the intersectionality spoken of before.

1.4 Theories of being at home

„When I stepped out of the car the atmosphere suddenly surrounded me and I felt like I had just woken to life again. I drank in the smell of fish from the boats, the sound of the waves gently crashing on the rocks and felt the wind blowing in my face. All around me there was wide open space. I waded into the sea with my bare feet and laughed like I had not done in a long time. I felt like home.”

This quote is from personal experience and I often used it in dialogue with my interviewees to focus more on the bodily experience of belonging. Scholars often talk about belonging as a part of social relations, yet the body is embedded in its environment in multiple ways. Therefore, I will go into some existentialist theories that revolve around being at home in the world.

Marcel Merleau-Ponty is considered to be one of the pioneers of existentialism. He thought that by looking closer at how the body senses the environment and contextualizes it, we can discern what knowledge is being normalized in societies (1945/1962). He argued that sensing and emotion had no limits but were in constant flux with the environment and that individual senses changed in response to time, memories and the positioning of the body. It is therefore possible to assume that the body and the brain are entangled in the whole of perception and cannot be a divided phenomenon. On the other hand, by being able to communicate with others a certain determination of objects and symbols is established. Merleau-Ponty has been criticized for focusing too much on the conception of the individual conception, as conceptions may also be implemented between individuals and groups (see Feld, 1996/2005). Nonetheless, his impact has been great as researchers look into experiences more, rather than at some assumed truth that needs to be uncovered.

Tim Ingold (2000), like Merleau-Ponty, criticizes the binary thinking that has been hegemonic in anthropology on the both sides of the Atlantic. Binary thinking encourages the assumption that it is possible to be able to stand outside of life and the lived experience. He believes we must take a step to notice how the human body is a part of the lived-in world and claims that:

...we now recognize that such processes as thinking, perceiving, remembering and learning have to be studied within the ecological contexts of people's interrelations with their environments. We recognize, too, that the mind and its properties are not given in advance of the individual entry into the social world, but are rather fashioned through a lifelong history of involvement in relationships with others. And we know that it is through activities of the embodied mind (or enminded body) that the social relationships are formed and reformed. (pp. 171).

What we sense as a place of ease or home is therefore connected to the lived experiences and relations to others. Ingold further points out that a person chooses a dwelling by the context of their entire environment, whether it is social, cultural, biological or historical. He suggests that scholars turn away from examining houses and look at *dwelling*s instead as they are formed by the daily needs of persons and in relation to the environment. Home is therefore not necessarily a house but a place where a person feels at home and that is a process that involves various aspects of the lived life.

Michael Jackson (2005) remarked that a person will be more guarded when she is not familiar with her surroundings, that she will be absorbed by reading what norms are hegemonic through symbols and communications to learn the 'right' behavior. He believes that people try to create a place where they feel more sense of belonging or seek out such places. As an example, he describes the experience of an aboriginal in Australia when she finds a place in nature that she feels she knows:

This habitus gave her a sense of being someone, of having presence. ... Mabel was in her element... . She seemed rejuvenated and energized... . This habitus was in her body, as she moved easily... ..it was as we had passed through a looking-glass. (pp. 25-26).

Jackson (1983/2006) finds that there is a tendency to bypass the bodily expression in research, even if all life experiences go through the body. Some things can only be expressed with our body. He also points out that bodily expression will be in the context of social relations but warns scholars to use conceived ideas about how to interpret body language. Daily rituals are mostly performed without being consciously controlled and are rather entangled in the environment that is a part of a person's daily life or, as he quotes the vision of Bourdieu; "...collective representations such as those of gender and class are always correlated with patterns of body use generated within the habitus." (pp. 327). As societies are in constant formation and Jackson believes that people will try out new behavior to gain new experience that can be helpful in their life later on. Thus, one can conclude that if bodily behavior is examined in relation to the senses and integrated with a social and cultural

context, it is possible to observe how people experience themselves 'at home' in a new place. This may be related to bodily behavior connected to gender roles.

With the increased flow of people and ideas between boundaries, social roles can be affected and the bodily experiences with it. Gyða Margret Pétursdóttir (2005) observes that in accordance with the changes that have occurred in Iceland in connection with the upbringing of children and housework, it would be preferable to talk about *mothering* and *fathering* as the sex is no longer dominant to the social role in the inner sphere of the societies. Therefore, it may be concluded that it is the activity and the sense that comes with it that is relevant instead of the sex. In other words, there is nothing 'natural' connecting the mother to the sensation of motherhood, it can be felt and acted on by the father as well.

Sarah Pink (2004) is one of the scholars who have researched how people experience changes in gender roles. This she did by looking at how self-images are formed and reformed through the act of domestic work in connection with the sensory experiences of their daily routine, both in England and in Spain. People would tell her that they kept their houses clean according to their world view and that reflected what was important to them. Both men and women were reluctant to connect their roles to the one of a housewife even if they would seek advice from someone they would consider one. They preferred to use their own perception and senses to make the home so they would feel comfortable in it. The sensory perception was therefore entangled in their daily tasks at home and intertwined so that the knowledge was generated in the body. Her research further showed that even though there were many similarities in the ways people attended to their homes, there were some cultural differences. Even if there were similarities, the use of the act varied. For example, routine was thought to be important for women in both cultures, but while women in England would allow how they felt each day to control what they did in the house, the women in Spain would rather let the routine of what had to be done help them feel better.

Routine is only one aspect of what can matter when the sensory act is changing. Circumstances, health and different phases in a person's life can also be influential as research done by Robert Desjarlais (1997/2005) and Hans-Göran Ekman (2000/2005) has shown. David Howes (2005) further argues that the senses must be looked at from their own cultural grounding for one sense may become more dominant over another in connection to the environment and it is important not be blinded by the hierarchy of the western senses where sight is dominant. Pink (2009) agrees that culture zones are important but leans more towards

the theories of Ingold which claim that it is the process that each individual is going through and where he is situated that matter more.

Thus it can be concluded that the process that each individual is situated in is always entangled to his live-in world. It is further useful to keep in mind how changes in culture zones, age, health, sex, class, sexuality and various other variables can be influential to the bodily sensory behavior and formation of identities. What a person is going through can change the feelings of a home; new senses may become more dominant and/or be entwined with others in a new way. This research will show how men are finding and remaking the feeling of ease through various ways that are connected to people, memories and places. Their environment changed dramatically by having a child and they are fashioning their gendered behavior both through role models, emotions and personal experiences as transnationals.

2. Historical overview of the Icelandic social space

The image of Iceland has been one of purity and egalitarianism. As Gísli Pálsson and Agnar Helgason (1996), point out, this forging of an image started during the fight for independence from Denmark in the early 1900's and is reflected in the emphasis on the correct use of the language. This image has been contested in recent years.

For a long time it was taught in history books that Iceland was first inhabited by Norwegian Vikings. Icelandic scholars in the 19th century were influenced by German schools that emphasized the superiority of the white race (Pálsson and Guðbjörnsson, 2011) and this was reflected in history books and public discourse. Later it has been revealed that Icelanders are of more mixed ethnicities. Currently it is thought likely that even if there were some families coming to Iceland, the Vikings were mostly single men who enslaved women from North Scotland and Ireland and took them to Iceland where they reproduced (Helgason, 2001).

The Icelandic sagas (*Islendingasögur*), which are seen as a national treasure, have been the source of many hero tales with which men and women identify. Mostly the powerful women in those stories were of Scandinavian decent. They were most likely written in the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries by various authors, almost three hundred years after they are supposed to have occurred. They are thought to reveal more the literary thought of the time they were written in rather than an actual truth but still in public discourse they are treated as being about real events and persons. Helga Kress (1993), a literary specialist, has suggested that they indicate what group of people became more the hidden folks and how the elite of men molded the official gender social norms. Therefore, she believes they tell how strong women were silenced by the Icelandic elite and how lesser men are referred to as dwarfs in the folklore. Ólafía Einarsdóttir (1984), archeologist, believes that even if their gender roles were divided in the Icelandic Commonwealth period, the women had more legal power than in later centuries. Pálsson (1991) points out that during the end of this period, more power was gathering in the hands of fewer men, what became known as *goðar* and *þjóðhöfðingjar*, and they became the elite of Iceland. Women of lesser means got lost in this struggle for power. He further points out that men slaves were released earlier from their bondage because they were expensive to keep in the house the whole year when most of their work was only needed during the summer.

The Commonwealth period ended around 1264 when Icelanders agreed to take on the Norwegian king as their own. Later when Norway came under the rule of Denmark, Iceland became a Danish colony. During the years toward modernization there is little to indicate that the women held much power. There are some stories of powerful women but nothing more than occurred in most other cultures. However, during the witch-hunt in Europe in the 17th century, only one woman was executed in Iceland while twenty one men were burned. There are indications that many women knew how to read and write. Einarisdóttir (1984) believes that the distance from the Catholic church in Rome made it easier for the Icelandic government to follow their own rules but Kress (2001) argues that Christianity did have its effect on silencing women and minorities more. The situation might be a mixture of both.

The industrial revolution in Iceland started around 1870 and the main aspect of it revolved around the decked vessels that made it possible to be longer at sea and bring in more fish as fishing became the main income of the nation. People started to move out of the rural areas and towards the fishing villages around the country. The capital grew extensively and is still growing. Women started to participate in the paid labor force but mainly their role was to take care of the house. The hegemonic power of the masculinities moved from the landed owner towards the skippers. Those who were successful skippers were thought to have special personal traits that made them surpass others bringing in large amounts of fish without seeing the social aspect of it (Pálsson and Durrenberger, 1983). Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir (1996), who studied gender roles in a fishing village in Iceland in the years 1989 to 1990, argued that women's position in the society was marked by what their husbands were doing. They often participated in working in the fish factories, creating wealth for the nation, but it was the sailors who got the esteem for bringing home the wealth and sailing the dangerous seas to do it. While men were away at sea many of the women took on the roles of the man and were in charge of the financial aspects of the home. Men would often complain about them spending the money but the women would argue that the men did not realize what it took to run a house.

During this period when fishing was the main income in Icelandic history there were multiple songs about life on sea, the adventures of the sailors and the women they loved. It was thought to be good for the sailors to have a wife waiting for them and taking care of the house. If a man was married to a woman who was thought to be controlling, the other men would pity him, as is seen in the song about *Tóta* (ibid.). Women working in the fish factories were often looked down upon. The labor in the fishing villages was very gender divided and

in the factory the only men working in the fish factories were young or very old. When men came of age they were expected to go out to sea and they were not thought to be real men unless they had ‘pissed in the salty sea’ as the saying goes (Pálsson and Durrenberger, 1983). It was a rite of passage. Another rite of passage is to have worked on a farm as a young man. This can in a way still be seen among the age group of Icelanders that compare to the ones in this study but it may be changing. For example, men in Reykjavík are currently more preoccupied with heading an independent company than with being skippers.

As the fish quota system was implemented in Iceland the power started to shift back to land. In the beginning the quota was divided between small and big ship owners but soon the people owning large ships and fishing companies were buying or renting up most of the quota. They became the quota kings (Pálsson and Helgason, 1996).

Around 1970 women in Iceland started to be more visible in Icelandic politics as the organization of the Redsocks movement (*rauðsokkur*) was established and from there the Women’s list (*Kvennalistinn*) was formed to participate in the national election of 1983. Iceland voted the first woman president in the world, *Vigdís Finnbogadóttir*, in 1980 and after the ‘Kitchenware Revolution’ in 2008 both men and women participated in relatively equal numbers. In the same year Icelanders voted the first lesbian prime minister *Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir* to office. In the last 5 years Iceland has been at the top of the Gender Gap Report as the place with the least gender inequality in the world (Hausmann, etc., 2013). The public discourse has therefore been that gender equality has been reached. Contrary to popular belief, Þorgerður Einarsson (2011) has pointed out that even if the public discourse was that women took over as CEOs of most of the Icelandic companies after the crash, their numbers increased very little. In the last years of Icelandic history there have been many contested gender roles and images even if women are still mostly identified by their roles as mothers and men pushed into the role of the provider. After the financial crash in 2008 the identities of Icelanders are thought to have undergone some radical changes and much of that involves gender image.

2.1 The social space of the Icelandic man

As masculinities researches have shown, images of what it is to be a real man is often contested and diverse. It is changing in a dialogue with others, both women and other men.

Therefore, it is not possible to claim one hegemonic masculinity in Iceland even if some may be more prevailing than others as some research has shown.

Þorgerður Einarsdóttir and Gyða Margrét Pálsdóttir, gender specialists, have argued that as neo-liberalism was taking hold in Iceland and the economy was starting to boom, a new form of hegemonic masculinity emerged in the form of the Commerce-Vikings (*Útrásarvíkingar*) as they were seen to be conquering the business world, like the heroes of the old Icelandic Sagas (see Einarsdóttir, 2010). Kristín Loftsdóttir has further shown that Icelanders liked to reflect their image in a globalized world so that their ‘unique’ traits thought to be inherited through genes and further chiseled through surviving in the north, would be seen as instrumental to why they should have more space and power. This can be seen in media coverage of politicians, musicians, sport players and the new business men.

Currently, five years after the financial crash, it is possible to discern a more humorous self-image emerging. Perhaps under the influence of the popular mayor of Reykjavík, who likes to dress up in costumes for various occasions. However, the PhD research done by Helga Þórey Björnsdóttir (2012) on men in the Icelandic Peace Corps, has shown that this indifference to rules with a touch of recklessness is indeed a part of the Icelandic masculine identity. Her research revealed that Icelandic men were trying to distance themselves from this idea of the Commerce-Viking, a concept that had brought shame on Iceland. Her research was done shortly after the crash and she sought to find ‘ordinary’ everyday man in her research. They were middle aged, with an average income and their education was mostly industrial. They believed that what constituted a ‘real man’ was to be able to build their own house and to provide for their family. They often invoked the image of their father in that sense but at the same time were reluctant to spend as many working hours away from the family as their fathers had done. They wanted equal pay for women, especially for their daughters, but did not see how gender attitudes could influence such changes. They reminisced with longing about old times when the mother was more at home and thought that it was a better time for society. Having a good relationship with their partners was thought to be important and all the men talked about needing their approval before taking on the Peace Corps assignments abroad.

In November 2011 I did in-depth interviews with eight Icelandic men who had various occupations and lived in Reykjavík. Most were middle age but one was 18 and one 79. Mostly they confirmed the conclusions of Björnsdóttir, regarding the attitudes and identities but with

some exceptions. The tendency seemed to be that if men had a higher education in social sciences or/and were homosexuals, they thought attitudes had to change in order to reach more gender equality. As in Björnsdóttir's research many described their fathers or grandfathers as role models but not media stars, yet they acknowledged the influence of media coverage as they were worried over the influence of the media on younger men and boys. When asked about whether women had been influential as role models, they were quick to recite the personal traits of their mothers or grandmothers as resourceful, strong and tolerant but only the homosexual man brought it up of his own accord. The sociologist, Ingólfur V. Gíslason (2010) suggests that men increasingly want to be a part of their children's lives and upbringing but so far it is thought to be the role of the women to experience openly the feelings involved in childrearing. A large part of the ideology behind a good woman in Iceland is being an attentive mother and they face social stigma if they return to their jobs early after a child's birth (Gíslason, 2008). Therefore, mothers are still dominant in childrearing as well as the household, and take more of the parental leave marked for both parents (Gíslason, 2010). There is some indication that this is changing and men are becoming more openly involved with the everyday activities of their children, such as participating in school activities and communications with teachers. The school system is heavily involved in childrearing in Iceland at an early age which has influenced women participating heavily in the paid labor market. That seems to have less negative impact on the mother image than the father stepping in. There is still one activity that men are not allowed to participate in and that is the laundry. Both the research of Björnsdóttir (2012) and Gíslason (2010) confirm that even if men knew how to use the laundry machine, often used it at work or before they started a relationship, their women thought they did not know how to do the laundry properly and the men allowed them to keep that part of the housework for themselves. This is further confirmed by my research, being of different ethnicity does not influence the control women in Iceland have over the laundry.

To sum up, the everyday man in Iceland seems to see his part in the world as being a good provider, building a house and being involved with his children's lives. It is thought to be good to be respectful of your wife but it is thought to be negative if she is perceived as being bossy. The gender roles are changing but at slower rate inside the house than outside. Partly because of the negative impact to the mother image but there may also be other reasons involved. One reason is that it is seen as negative for men if they are not the main providers and if they show feminine feelings. This is changing between generations, class and groups

but at different rate. The gender roles are still divided as men seem to look mainly to their fathers for admirable traits but at the same time wish to acknowledge the mother traits more. To the outer world Icelanders of all sexes want to be seen as big men but they resist rules and blame by humor and careless indifference. Further, they do not acknowledge the influence of media over themselves but are concerned with its power over younger generations.

Research done by James Gentry and Robert Harrison (2010) showed that men in American advertisements were often shown as simple minded when it came to housework or children's upbringing. Many fathers thought this portrayal to be offensive and demeaning. Research done by Katrín Anna Guðmundsdóttir and Þorgerður Einarsdóttir (2011) showed that adults decided the provocative catch for the young generations, without taking into consideration various research on the subject of gender images. Individuals can further be promoted as a media image and used to advertise, as Ásta Jóhannsdóttir and Kristín Anna Hjálmarsdóttir (2011) showed in their research of the media character Gillz and a book he wrote on manners. The image of Gillz is of the metro-man, he is tanned, muscled and moves forward in the world using his wits. He writes of women as if they are toys to be sexually used, of education as being of no real importance and of dark skinned men as lazy. This is done under the pretext of humor but Jóhannsdóttir and Hjálmarsdóttir show that the line between the fictional character of Gillz and the man behind him is blurred and that this kind of image can be harmful if the individual is hailed by the media as having attitudes that are normalized in society, hidden under the disguise of humor. When I did my interviews with the Icelandic men they were very keen on distancing themselves from this image, as the individual behind the character had recently been charged with rape. Some of them admitted that at times they had thought he was funny but claimed never to have taken him seriously as a role model. Even so they were worried about his influence on younger 'unhardened' boys. Research done by Berglind Rós Magnúsdóttir (2003) showed that some of the traits Gillz stood for are indeed influential among younger generations. Her research showed the tendency of promoting boys more than girls, on account of their 'natural' genius, as boys were seen going forward in the world without the need to study but the girls seen as nerdy if they tended their studies well. In the economic boom it was not uncommon for young men to get well paid jobs without finishing higher education, and before that sailors often made good money without education so this normalization is not so farfetched. How the financial crises will change this is not quite clear yet. The media is further influential in how foreign people are seen.

Jón Gunnar Ólafsson (2008) diagnosed media coverage of foreigners in Iceland in the year 2007 and came to the conclusion that foreign men were mainly shown under three stereotypes: as the foreign rapists; the foreign fighters and the foreign organized criminals. In all cases the negative impact of the 'Others' was exaggerated so that the behaviors of Icelanders seemed good in comparison. Another research on the other hand shows that most media coverage of foreigners in the years 2006-2007, mostly had positive note in them but less so if they were about foreign labor (Creditinfo). A recent report done by the teamwork of Unnur Dís Skaptadóttir, Anja Wojtynska and Helga Ólafs (2011), shows that media coverage of foreign people has dropped considerably since the financial crisis even if they were more negative in the first years as foreign people were seen as living off the state. It is therefore of note to see how time, place, gender roles and situations influence media coverage. Further, the multitudes of different bodies in certain places always seem to cause a stir.

When the U.S Army had a base in the south peninsula of Reykjanes, they had at one point almost six thousand people stationed there (Hallsson, 1990). Majority of them were men and many of them were unmarried. The Icelandic government was so concerned with the association of Icelandic girls with American soldiers that it created a special committee to investigate the matter (Melsteð and Helgason, 1998; Björnsdóttir, 1989) and a fence was built around the base to limit the communication of soldiers with the Icelandic social sphere (Einarsdóttir and Gústafsdóttir, 2008). Racism was thought to be so high in Iceland that the American government issued a special brochure to their soldiers on how to avoid dangers in Iceland. Friðrik Haukur Hallsson (1990), who studied the social impact of the army base in Reykjanes, believes it was common among Icelanders to base stereotypes of American men on the lowest rank of soldiers and those who caused most havoc when drinking and fighting. Icelanders tended to avoid close contact even if the social and financial capital of the Americans was alluring in the beginning. Hallsson further remarks that if an American was a part of an Icelandic family, he was not mentioned in the interviews unless directly asked and when an occasional American was close to Icelanders, he/they were thought to be somewhat different from the rest of the Army and having more in common with Icelanders.

Two former soldiers were included in my research, both were retired, dark skinned and living in Reykjanes. Both experienced more prejudice in Reykjanes than in other places in Iceland. One came to know his wife while stationed in Iceland but the other met his former wife in America after he retired. The mobilization of women has increased since the beginning of globalization and my research seems to indicate that Icelandic women are

spending more time abroad seeking education, work or travelling for an extended period of time, where in some cases they meet their future partners. Both men and women have been moving to Iceland in the last three decades but the gender aspect of it seems to come in separate waves.

The Army, first the British and then replaced by the Americans, came suddenly to Iceland during World War II with large amount of different bodies, in the manner of space invaders that Puwar (2004) described. Icelanders did not know such invasion again until the economic boom. In the 1990's it began with women coming to Iceland through marriage or to work in the fish factories, mainly in the Westfjords. They were mostly from Poland, the Philippines and Thailand. As the economy grew, more men, mainly from Poland, came to work in construction which was commonly centered in Reykjavík. Hallfríður Þórarinsdóttir (2011) has pointed out that at the height of the economic boom there were over twelve thousand Polish immigrants in Iceland which is a considerable impact compared to the overall population. The social power position of the Polish men was considerably different from that of the Americans. Research done by Álfrún Sigurgeirsdóttir and Unnur Dís Skapadóttir (2011) on male construction workers in Reykjavík, indicates that even if the Icelandic bosses were paying the Polish men low salaries, they thought they were being kind to them as the Polish men would not get this kind of salaries in Poland. Further, they suspected the Polish to lie about their education and complained about their lack of will to learn Icelandic. This in a way reflects how Icelanders are positioning Icelandic masculinities above Polish masculinities, in a way that they were not able to do to the Americans who had higher financial and political power in world politics.

Skaptadóttir and Wotjynska (2008) have shown that there is a tendency to see foreign women in inter-ethnic relationships in Iceland as victims and their Icelandic men as pathetic men, violent or incapable of being in a relationship with strong Icelandic women. They do not believe such a simple image prevails when the roles are reversed. My research seems to indicate that both men and women in inter-ethnic relationships do feel the negative stigma from society but it varies over time, class and the ethnicity of the men. Relationships between Polish men and Icelandic women have been rare though it may be increasing ("Sex prósent", 2013), partly because they were already married (Þórarinsdóttir, 2011) and partly because they felt Icelandic women were too independent to become good wives (Skaptadóttir and Wotjynska, 2008). My research seems to indicate that many foreign men do think this of the Icelandic women but it differs between being seen as positive or a negative trait. Often there

is fear of divorce, as it is quite common in Iceland, and then the men are often left without family support, facing discrimination and fighting legal battles to see their children on a regular basis. This research indicates strongly that their social position is very much determined by their marital and class status in Icelandic society.

3. Methodology

This research is based on theories from migration, gender and critical anthropology. It uses methodology that is based on qualitative methods focusing on the voices of the interviewees as well as participant observation. Pierre Bourdieu (1977/2006) taught us it is important to look at how agency is interacting with the social structure. Vered Amit and Noel Dyck (2012) further argue that it is necessary to look deeper into the connection of ideas of masculinities and at the same time look at to what extent the agency of individuals can be in negotiation with the social environment. My focus is on how men are negotiating gender roles in comparison to their own upbringing, individual choices and changing environment. I also look at my research from a pro-feminist point of view which focuses on how male roles can be changed, what is influencing these changes and how can they be directed into a more equal society (Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannesson, 2004).

George E. Marcus (1994) was among the first anthropologists to point out that the position of the researcher is influential in the whole process of research. I will therefore shed light on my social and cultural background. I come from a working class family and was raised in a fishing village by parents who support gender equality. I have two brothers and too many cousins, nephews and nieces to count. I have one son which I raised as a single mother. For twenty years, before studying anthropology, I was a kindergarten teacher working in different parts of Iceland. This experience has given me a perspective on how fathers are increasingly interacting with the school system. Moreover, during my time as a kindergarten teacher I saw how the number of immigrant children of various ethnicities increased at all school levels. Finally, having lived abroad on three separate occasions has also rendered me with invaluable experience. I lived in Boston, USA for a year around 1989; for three months in Aalborg, Denmark in 1993 and in Athens, Greece for eight months in 2012. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) has noted that it can be helpful for an anthropologist to have experiences from different worlds as to understand the people in the research better. I believe my encounter with other cultures has helped me identify with my subjects and they, in return, have helped me reevaluate my past.

3.1 Goal of the research, samples and the main questions

Marcus (1995) suggested that instead of just studying cultures presumably as closed zones, the focus of the anthropologist/researcher should be on the viewing culture as a *process*. He

further noted that specific locations have many external influences and within each society there are many social groups. External effects can be taken into consideration without obscuring the process which is currently being examined in each case. Thus symbols are no longer viewed as developed and maintained in the still image to be translated from one culture to another, but as a process of dialogue with the milieu in question. Marcus further notes that it is important to look at the historical background, to try to understand the habits, movements and language for example, but the process itself has more weight in the research than the projection of the still image. This research is therefore focused on the process of changing the gender roles of men who have migrated to Reykjavik and nearby areas where there have been some structural changes going on regarding the role of the father.

Edward Said (1998) pointed out that what the western discourse on what is considered the ‘Others’ has more to do with how western people like to see themselves than what people are experiencing. James Clifford (2004), among others, has argued that it is important to hear different voices where people of different culture zones come together and not just the voices of the elites. On a similar note Floya Anthias (2002) has suggested that *dialogical moments* may be found where voices from people who hold various positions in ethnic groups are heard so it may be possible to lay aside the western binary way of thinking and try to find more common ground. The research presented here aims at giving voices to the ‘Other’ men to reflect on how they see Icelandic society today and their roles in it.

The voices of fathers in migration have been relatively silent, both in the media and in scholarly articles. They may have more power as men in a patriarchal sense but their ethnicities, class, education, age, residence and sexuality contributes to how they are marginalized. This research will further show that their marital status can be a discriminating factor. As they do not form a group of sorts where ethnicity and fatherhood is combined, I had to search for alternative methods to use and how to choose samples.

Using Puwar’s (2004) terms of invasion of bodies one could say that the invasion of foreign manly bodies has been rare in Icelandic history. The American soldiers were known to have children with Icelandic women (Björnsdóttir, 1989) but the Polish men much less (Statistics Iceland, 2013, 19th of March). It should be noted that the American soldiers were seen as men with economic and cultural capital as well as being mostly unmarried (Hallsson, 1990). This research indicates that even if men are thought to be different they are more socially acceptable as partners if they possess this capital. However, the men in this research

rarely came to Iceland as a part of a group. Rayja Muttarak and Anthony Heath (2010) noted that there seems to be a difference between ethnic groups in how much they intermingle with the locals and other groups and this affected the samples in my research.

I sent Statistics Iceland a query about the multitude of inter-ethnic couples and the following is based on their reply (see Table 1). In 2012 as many as 1196 first generation male immigrants were living with an Icelandic partner, thereof 602 of them had children of their own or almost half of them. Over the years the number of children has slowly increased, rising from 910 children in 2002 to 1059 in 2007. The economic crisis in Iceland does not seem to have affected this demography. As I found out in my research men were not always raised in the country of their citizenship but if their ethnicity is traced to the country of their birth they can be divided in the following way:

Table 1.

Number of men who are first generation immigrants and live with an Icelandic partner on the 1st of January according to years and country of birth.

Country of birth	Year 2012		Year 2007		Year 2002
United Kingdom	158	Denmark	131	Denmark	128
United States of America	124	United Kingdom	120	United Kingdom	105
Denmark	121	United States of America	113	United States of America	96
Germany	84	Germany	78	Germany	61
Sweden	43	Norway	46	Norway	53
Other	666	Other	571	Other	467

These numbers are not exclusive to married heterosexual couples but include cohabitation and a few homosexual relationships. When Icelandic women are forming inter-ethnic relationships the men they choose are mostly from Northern Europe and North America which is a similar to what is happening in Norway (Flemmen and Lotherington, 2008). As is often done in anthropological research I could have followed up on one of the ethnic groups, but I was interested in knowing how their ethnicity was affecting their roles and experiences. Further I found out that the foreign men here are more inclined to be a part of international groups than ethnic groups.

Ethnographers use more open ended questions with emphasis on the flow of the interview so the experience and perspective of the interviewee is brought forth with active listening (Hammerslay and Atkinson, 2007; O'Reilly, 2005; Loftland, 1971). Nonetheless, it is beneficial to have some kind of guidelines written down that will sharpen the focus of the

interview (Loftland, 1971) and some questions are intended to gather more basic facts (O'Reilly, 2005). I requested some basic information but then divided my interviews into three themes, their travel story and social interaction, parenthood, and the feeling of home and used this frame:

Negotiations with the social and cultural space in Iceland:

What is your travel story, where did you grow up and where have you lived?

Why did you come to Iceland?

How did you meet your partner?

How would you describe your relationship with others in Iceland?

Who is it that you have the most contact with?

What are your relations with your parents, siblings or friends abroad?

Experience of being a father in Iceland:

To what extent do you participate in your child's/children's life?

What is your experience of being a father in Iceland?

How have you interacted with governmental institutions, such as a child's school?

The feeling of ease in your body?

In what kind of environment do you feel like your body relaxes like it is at home in Iceland?
Do you create this atmosphere or do you find it?

Is it something that you associate with the former home?

What makes you feel comfortable in such an environment?

3.2 Implementation of methods

Anthropologists most often use ethnographic methods in their research which is mainly based on guidelines set by Bronislaw Malinowski in the 1920s. Today Marty Hammersley and Paul Atkinson (2007) describe it in the following way:

...ethnography usually involves the researcher participating ... in people's daily lives for an extended period of time, watching what happens, listening to what is said, and/or asking questions through informal and formal interviews, collecting documents and artifacts – in fact gathering whatever data available to throw light on the issues that are emerging focus of inquiry. (p. 3).

One of the advantages of ethnography is believed to be an attempt of the researcher to see the world from the perspective of the interviewee. Nina Glick-Stiller (2003) believes this method gives much deeper impression to the existence that transnational people are living with. Ethnography draws heavily on qualitative methods where the field work slowly leads the researcher to draw in theories rather than deductive ways that start the research to verify certain theories (Neuman, 2006). Karen O'Reilly (2005) believes it is hard to define ethnography thoroughly today but that it can be divided into two different but related approaches. On one hand it is what has been called traditional ethnography where the researcher goes deep into the field and stays there for a long time. On the other hand ethnography may contain a mixture of many kinds of methods that draw together certain information.

To have some sort of guidelines I used some of the methods in research done by Paul Kennedy (2010) who researched young people who had moved to Manchester in Britain more or less on their own from various countries in Europe. He found places that had intermixed ethnicities and through deep interviews he looked at how they were making space for themselves in the new culture, how they were intermixing with others and how law, regulations and the global structure were influencing their choices. Further I relied on research done by Robin J. Ely and Debra E. Meyerson (2010) and Maria Rita Bartholomei (2010) for they focus on masculinity concepts and the hierarchy of men.

My field was at home but yet it was not. The man is still the invisible norm in Iceland and the complexity of men's gender is rarely in the public discourse. So even if I was at home doing my study I felt in the beginning that I was studying the 'exotic' other. Douglas J. Faren (2008) remarked that gender is just one of the many fences that anthropologists go through. He even experienced women in Benin telling him things that they would not trust to other Benin women or men. This may have some merit, for the men in my research often felt contested by Icelandic men and yet they trusted me, for they considered me manly enough to laugh at their jokes. It seems they trusted me for being in some kind of an in-between space. To help me look at the world of men from a different perspective I also choose a male professor to be my advisor, Gísli Pálsson. Among his many studies he has conducted research the on role of seamanship in Iceland, how class division is apparent in the language and more recently how Icelanders are negotiating with new genealogical research done in Iceland to form their own identities. In my opinion his research offers both insights into masculine identities and how family structure is formulated.

As noted before I mainly built my research on semi-structured interviews but I also relied on participant observation where I merged into ‘the field’ so to speak, but at the same time tried to keep up constant reflexivity in the manner that Bourdieu (2003) suggests. In two instances, while doing this research, while traveling abroad I stayed with inter-ethnic couples where the woman was Icelandic and I took some notes. Both couples had experience of living in Iceland. Further, I participated in weddings, birthdays, and funerals where inter-ethnic couples or single foreign fathers were present. I went to seminars regarding my subject; kept up with changes regarding immigration laws, custodial laws and human rights laws, such as regarding gay marriages; reviewed Icelandic movies since 1940 as well as song texts; followed theatrical performances regarding masculinity; and expanded my gaze towards public discourses in the media and on social networking. In this process I did three radio shows where I constructed deep interviews with eight Icelandic men of the ages between 25-75; two with an 18 year old boy and a girl who grew up in Iceland with a foreign father and an Icelandic mother; and a group interview with young Icelandic men regarding their ideas about becoming fathers. I contacted Icelandic institutions such as the Directorate of Immigration (*Útlendingastofnun*), the Intercultural Center (*Alþjóðasetur*) and the Multicultural Center (*Fjölmenningasetur*). The Directorate of Immigration kept referring my request for interview to someone else and in the end I got no answers. At the Intercultural Center I was given an interview with the managing director and a phone call with a lawyer that does volunteer work for the organization. Many of the lawyer’s cases dealt with custody battles and providing residency permits for women so they could be closer to their children in case they lost custody. The lawyer informed me that he was increasingly becoming aware of foreign men being in the same position as these women even if he knew of only one man seeking residency on the grounds of family reunion. The Multicultural Center had become aware of this as well and it was part of the reason they were working on a report on how custody of children had been handled in the Icelandic judicial system and comparing them to where the couples were of different ethnicities. I will cite this report later on.

A part of my studies included me being an exchange student in Athens for eight months in 2012. When I arrived there my knowledge of traditions and gender related customs was confined to what I had read, but no firsthand experience. As my focus was on the gender roles I was very aware of seeking it out and this helped me tremendously in connecting to the experiences of my interviewees. It is not always the bigger cultural issues that are hard to overcome but the little hurdles in the practices of everyday life that one trips over while

negotiating your own space in relations to others. Therefore, understanding the normative gender roles can be influential in how a person succeeds in this endeavor.

3.3 Collection of data

My research started in the fall of 2010 and lasted until the fall of 2013. Most of the interviews were conducted in the summer of 2012 but in total I interviewed fourteen men, thereof four of them twice. I used a mixture of snowball and purposive sampling where people are sought out who have particular experiences and are symbolic for a group that is difficult to locate (Neuman, 2006). The criteria for sampling were that the men had children with an Icelandic partner; that they lived in proximity of or in Reykjavík and that they had lived there for over a year. In two cases they were living both in Iceland and another country but increasingly staying more in Iceland. I sought to have a man in a homosexual relationship in my research and in my participant observation got acquainted with some but was not able to conduct an interview. In the field sometimes friendship are formed and one of the first men that I interviewed became my good friend. He recently came out as homosexual and has given me permission on citing his view regarding how that changed his gendered parent role.

I used a notebook to write down thoughts and observations from the field. For recording interviews I used an Olympus LS-3 recorder. Twice the recording went badly because of spent batteries and a wrong level of input but in both cases I wrote the interview down as soon as I got home. After each interview I recorded my own contemplation where I noted the construction of the field, the body posture, eye contact, trust formation and other issues I thought might be relevant. As Gísli Pálsson (1993) states words in deep interviews do not always reflect actions and therefore I paid attention to the social and physical soundings, like how they were acting towards their children when they were present. In some cases I used a camera in the interviews but always with permission. I also took many pictures of contemporary Reykjavík where I would observe family roles being performed, especially regarding fathers with their children. Sarah Pink (2011) has noted that it is of importance to be respectful when publishing photos from the field and therefore I will not publish any faces in relation to this research, only obscured photos without indicating where they come from.

I went to coffee houses where an international group of people meets and I also attended a couple of rugby games where the players are men from various parts of the world,

including Icelandic. Originally I meant to visit more fields that are considered belonging to the masculine sphere, yet it soon became apparent that it was rarely a place where the men felt at ease. Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out that letting the interviewee choose the location can be productive as long as the location is good for recording and provides a good atmosphere. I therefore decided to let the men choose the sites which proved to be insightful for they thought more on why this particular place gave them comfort. The interviews were therefore conducted in various different sites, such as parks, pubs, restaurants and in cars but mostly in the interviewees own homes. I was often in contact with the men some days before and after the interviews and, in some cases there were two interviews. This gave the men time to reflect on the subject and they would give me further notes on the matter later on, which is thought to give deeper insight (Neuman, 2006). This coincides with feministic approaches as well as doing collaborative ethnography like Luke Eric Lassiter recommends even if it takes more time.

Informed consent where the interviewee has been informed of the purpose of the research and what it entails is today thought to be the right ethical procedure (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). An announcement was sent to the Data Protection Authority (*Persónuvernd*) and permission sought from the National Bioethics Committee (*Vísindasiðanefnd*) but they did not think my research needed one. All my interviewees received an information letter regarding the research and were given time to reflect on it. In two instances men withdrew their participation after reading the letter as they considered the research going into areas that were too personal. These withdrawals make some deficiencies to the study as one of them was Danish and was the only one presenting a Scandinavian father. There were also others that dropped out of the study because the time frame did not fit or they were moving out of the country.

The interviews were conducted in both Icelandic and English and on one occasion an interpreter was used. In many cases the men were not talking in their native language which can be detected in their quoting, but in the translations I tried to stay as true to their original words as possible. This thesis is written in English so that more of my interviewees can read it, yet some of them have better knowledge of Icelandic than English. Since this research touches on masculinities in migration which is a relatively new field of study, I consider it more useful to write it in English. Therein lies an academic reason but as Lassiter (2005) remarked it will always affect researches no matter how collaborative with the interviewees one strives to be.

Gatekeepers are persons that hold certain power positions and knowledge that can both hinder and help the researcher (Neuman, 2006). In this research it was often the partners that held this position but as Hammersley and Atkinson (2007) point out the partners can have various effects. On many occasions I first came in contact with the partners of the men and they would ask their men to participate. On other occasions I made an effort to get to know the partner a little and introduce the research to her, for as Hammersley and Atkinson further recommend it must be taken into consideration that the research is not harmful to the closest relatives. I further made my position clear to children as much as I could for sometimes partners and/or children were present during the interview. The partners would often move to another room after saying that they wanted the men to be freely able to convey their own perspectives. The men would sometimes glance towards their partners before making statements but most often it was done in a joking manner. Occasionally they would touch on a subject that they would not want their partners to hear, specifically regarding their attitudes towards Icelanders but most often their behavior would change very little whether their partners heard them or not. In some cases the partners brought up some aspects that the men had not touched upon so their participation gave deeper insight.

Lejla Voloder (2008) remarked that close social relations can be an asset as it gives the researcher deeper insight and extensive knowledge but it can also be a fault as the researcher is marked by one's own social role which influences the communications. In a city as small as Reykjavík it was hard to avoid knowing some of my interviewees. My acquaintance with some of them was actually one of the reasons I was able to contact them. My social relations have undoubtedly had some affect but most often I felt my interviewees relaxed as the interview progressed as I emphasized confidentiality and related to them my own experiences.

Some of my interviewees were single men and I had to make some lines clear even if I was being friendly. Dressing to moderately cover my body and keeping a respectful social distance was part of that. O'Reilly (2005) has thus indicated that who the researcher is interviewing is of importance regarding conduct. My interviewees came from various social backgrounds and class positions so my experience was very much like anthropologists Sherry B. Ortner (2010) and Ulf Hannerz (2006) describe as studying up, down and sideways, even all in one interview.

There were occasions where I had to make an effort to put my own gendered perspective aside, especially when they talked about the body forms and financial needs of

women. In this process it became apparent how important it is to listen to various voices for better understanding, without condemnation. By respecting personal experiences it is possible to open up a new space towards more human dignity and serenity.

I was therefore not only situated in my research but also changing as a person. The anthropologists, Sarah Pink (2009) phrases this process well as she describes *ethnographic places*:

If place is central to our way of being in the world and that we are thus always participating in places, the task of the reflexive ethnographer would be to consider how she or he is emplaced, or entangled, and her or his role in the constitution of that place. (pp. 40).

I will always be indebted to the people who contributed to my study but as Catherine Sanders (2012) wrote a debt is not always paid back with money, sometimes it is by coming back, being there and letting other know their stories. In the words of the anthropologists, Erik Luke Lassiter: “We keep what we have by giving it away. ...We might lose what we have by keeping to ourselves.”(2005: 19-20). This I will try to do with an open mind.

My emphasis influences what theme is thought relevant and I choose little stories that reflect that. There I follow Clifford Geertz’s (1973) *thick description* where little stories get a large written space so their meaning may come through. Yet one must quit at some point for as Pálsson (1993) remarked sometimes research feels like a buffet constantly being filled and there comes a time where the stomach is full even if not all the food was tasted.

3.4 Analyzing the data

Analyzing is involved in the whole process of qualitative studies (Neuman 2006; O’Reilly, 2005; Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). The researcher is always taking notes, finding themes, reflecting them, cross checking and being keenly aware of the studied environment. Lassiter (2005) further recommends discussing contemplations with people who can give you a new perspective. This I did as well as listening keenly three to four times to each interview do detect irony, silence, humor, the intensity of emotion showing by the volume of the voice and so forth. After that I discerned some themes but new aspects came to light by writing the interviews down and reanalyzing them. This is done according to the theme analyzing that O’Reilly recommends (2005). Further, I used discourse analyzing for as Ingólfur Ásgeir Jóhannson (2004) describes discourse can reveal how:

We are the creators of ideas and activities at the same time we absorb words, ideas and actions (discursive theme), for instance, those attitudes towards boys and girls that are normative at each milieu. Consciously and unconsciously we condition which ideas and ethics are recognized. (p. 61). [own translation].

Therefore, it is important to note how discursive themes appear in the interview and how that reflects the forming of identities. For example, the word *hunter* was repeated several times in one interview and the man was using it to identify himself in reflection to his father and his role in society. Discursive theme can also reflect worldview as was often done by downplaying negative aspects and emphasizing making the best of things. Further it needs to be noted how memory and learned senses can also influence storytelling. For instance, it usually took the men some time to recognize what gave them this feeling of ease in the body. Andreas Huyssen (2001) has reflected on how memory can be selective and in the analyzing I had to be conscious of that myself. Then it helped me to have the notes, the contemplations, the interviews and the pictures together to put things in better context.

Amit and Dyck (2012) who edited the book *Young Men in Uncertain Times*, warn that it can be misleading to look only at statistical numbers and quantitative research without looking at the insight that qualitative research has brought forth. In the report on custody cases of people of foreign origin in Iceland it is mentioned that the men may need further information or cultural knowledge to know how to proceed in such legal battles (Jónsson, 2012). This research supports this but further shows how men are facing such difficulties and how it affects their lives. Therefore, different methodologies can be productive in various ways, be it to contradict, support or shed new light on the subject. I hope this research can be further used to give grounds for others.

3.5 Ethical discussion

In this chapter I have touched on ethics several times. I believe that a researcher should be reflective of ethics throughout the process of the research. One of the biggest issues I had to deal with was whether I as a single white Scandinavian mother of a blond and blue eyed boy should do this kind of research. Being a mother is only a part of my intersectional experience and I have had many others who have helped me identify with my interviewees. In recent times most scholars are aware that a researcher is always in some ways entangled in the

research itself even if it varies greatly how this situated position is dealt with. I tried as much as possible to be aware of how I was situated, shedding preconceived ideas as much as possible and made my position clear so that both readers and participants can value this research on their own terms.

The smallness of Icelandic society is another implication. It made it easier for me to find people no matter what social position they were in but at the same time my social relations to the interviewees may have affected the research. As changes in fatherhood among men who are migrating has little been researched before I see this study as the opening of a new space of discussion and hope that some of the aspects that come to light in it will be for the benefit of equality.

The smallness of Icelandic society complicates matters further, as it might make it difficult to keep the identities of my interviewees from being recognized. I used pseudonyms for them all, as well as for their partners when they were quoted and tried to conceal their identities without compromising the research. As this thesis will be made available to the public at the National and University Library of Iceland, some delicate aspects of the interviews are not made public. As Jackson (2005) reminded us, there is some suffering that must be respected by silence. In some cases we can show our empathy by silence even if later on when people are ready it can be brought to light. One of the most important ethics of anthropology is to try to prevent research from bringing harm to the participants or people closely connected to them (Einarsdóttir, 2006). I always offered my interviewees to contact me if they felt ill at ease with something that they had revealed so I could retract it. I further had a well-respected male psychologist at hand to refer them to should it be necessary. Fortunately, the feedback I received was of a positive experience, yet writing this down I always try to be respectful.

4. Results

4.1 Reflection in the water: Introducing the interviewees

The fourteen individuals that I interviewed came from various social positions in life. My analysis is based on their position at the time of the interview but I will make note of all changes that I am aware of. They were all biological fathers of their children raised in Iceland and have their children with an Icelandic spouse. None of them had other children abroad. They had between one and three children but most had two. Three of them went into a relationship with a woman who was already raising other children. Three of them also had children with more than one Icelandic woman. Their children were between zero and eighteen years of age. The youngest child that constitutes the zero in the age range was born shortly after one of the interviews. One of my interviewees suggested that we do the second interview while he took a walk with his son for he thought it would be good for the boy to be out of the house while his wife was going into labor. He was relatively calm during the interview until his wife called. After the short call he looked at me and said: “The water broke! Hahahaha... Now I am stressed!” We quickly walked to his car. The next day I received a message from him saying that another boy had been born and that everything went well.

The age of my interviewees was between twenty nine to forty nine years, and ten of them were in a relationship, of which four were married while four of them were single. The four individuals who were married were all with their first partner and the longest relationship had lasted nineteen years. Six of them were living in cohabitation but one of those got married later on and another one broke off his relationship. One came out during the research period as he finally came to terms with his homosexuality. Three of those who were in cohabitation were in their first relationship, which had lasted from three to ten years. Two are in their second cohabitation but one had had a long term relationship before with a non-Icelander in his home country. One was in his third relationship with an Icelandic spouse. Three of those who were single had been in one long term relationship before but one had been in two. One of these four is now in another relationship.

Their relationship status had an effect on the research, as men would sometimes have different attitudes towards society depending on whether they were in their first relationship, second, third or if they were single. Divorce rates in Iceland are 36% on the average but it is a cultural trait for couples to live together for a long time before getting married. Marriage is not always considered a necessary step as it is possible to obtain legal status as cohabiting

partners that gives people similar rights to being married. Cohabitation tends to last shorter than marriages in Iceland (Statistics Iceland, 2010). Therefore, it seems that divorces between foreign men and Icelandic partners are not more common than between two Icelanders, but as will be revealed they experience themselves very alone when it comes to struggles in their relationships and in the case of divorce. They have no family to seek help from but some have found a group of friends that is supportive to them. Such social support usually only happens after a long stay in Iceland. They usually learn Icelandic through their work but rarely find friends there. Their work was very diverse, from being managers, teaching, carpentry, cooking, catering, working with the handicapped, practicing alternative medicine, starting an innovation company or doing financial work in the banking system. Some were working in line with their education but others were doing something different than what they were educated to do. This disparity between education and occupation seemed to stem either from personal choice or a combination of that and a difficulty in getting their educational credentials accepted and valued.

All my interviewers have a unique story to tell, full of travel, struggles, joy and unforgettable moments. All their stories deserve to be told, but in this research I must draw together common themes and the diversity that comes to light. To give readers some perspective on the backgrounds of the men, some descriptions of their lives will be offered. They have often lived in more than one country or large areas; some have moved away from Iceland to return again and most traveled alone. Most of the men have various locations to compare their situations with, which have shaped them and their identities. Or as one of them said:

The problem with foreign men in Iceland, if they are coming here they are very independent. They learned how to take care of themselves very fast.

Many of my interviewees were familiar with being stereotyped by their ethnicity. One way they noticed this was when the conversational tone would change when it came apparent that they were foreigners, furthermore the tone would change depending on where they were thought to be from and what work they were doing in Iceland:

When I meet new men there is a certain amount of wow..what do you do? Well, I am a teacher. Ahh, ok. And then they look at me and they hear my accent and they see me and they put me in a slot and I watch it. And I become a foreigner.

... I see a lot of this with Polish people. When Icelanders ask Polish people and they say Poland, the tone changes. You feel it certain way, you sense it.

I would therefore ask readers to take into account that the classification is not strictly formulated below. In fact it points out how borders are socially interpreted, both by individuals and local societies.

4.1.1 Males from Europe

Seven of the interviewees came from Europe. They were from: Poland, Ireland, Great Britain, Germany, France and Portugal. In-between and inside these countries there can be considerable cultural differences. One of my interviewees preferred to identify himself with North Germany and the northwest coast of mainland Europe rather than Southern Germany, for example. Sometimes the men did not want to identify themselves with one country or continent but somewhere in between:

Q: If people would ask you where you are from where would you say it would be?

A: Aahh, United States.

Q: Why?

A: It's where I grew up. I was born there, raised. So I think it's a, guides the way I think. So when you are in other places they consider you not from there. ... in that sense I don't consider myself raised in Greece but I consider myself Greek. When I am in Greece I am really not Greek.

Another one grew up in several places around the Middle-East but felt most at home in Ireland with his grandparents, a place where people would not look at him as a foreigner. Some did not even want to identify themselves with any country:

I don't have roots in a specific country. I am in some ways French but I think of myself as an Earthling. I am not really French or Spanish. This is a little bit special, you see.

Therefore, one should bear in mind that the descriptions of the interviewees is based on how they are human beings that are still molding themselves and being molded by their surroundings.

Pierre describes himself as shy though in his childhood years he learned to play the role of the clown to get people to like him better. His father died when he was seven and he grew up with his mother and his maternal half-siblings in a ghetto in France. The mother worked as a daycare provider. He started using marijuana at an early age, and his first attempt to get straight was by self willingly joining the military. In the military he was exposed to even

more use of mind altering substances, and found his experience of the military boring. He also found their ways of inauguration ceremonies amusing. He studied welding but it did not catch his interest. After moving to Iceland he worked in construction for a long time, but then felt burnt out a few years ago, and wanted to change his lifestyle. At the time of the interview he was working as a daycare assistant and was studying to become a fully licensed daycare provider. He is now divorced and has visitations with his children every other week. He has systematically been working towards bettering himself to become a better father.

Karl really enjoys examining the society he lives in and contemplating life in general. To a certain extent he considers himself a little aloof and uses his height in some ways to keep people away from him. He was brought up in a home with his parents, where the mother worked at home, and the father as a banker. He felt connected to his grandfather on his mother's side since the grandfather had time to play games with him. He became educated, graduating with a degree in engineering. He tutors part time at a university abroad as well as running a company with some Icelanders. He has travelled a lot in connection with his company and education, but wants to maintain a home base in one place. He has been back and forth between Iceland and overseas for the past two years as his partner is here, and now after the birth of his son he is looking to establish his roots here. After his experience with siblings and students he contemplates whether children need the carrot approach to achieve goals or whether it is better to give them the freedom to make their own choices in life. He is also very concerned with doing what will be best for his son.

Mikita finds it hard to describe himself, but considers himself shy, and that has affected his ability to study. He grew up with both parents in a small village in very poor living conditions. He joined the military at the age of seventeen and is not eager to discuss that period of his life. He came to Iceland to work, and to look for better qualities in his life. Today he is working as a general labor worker. He is pleased with Iceland, but shrugs his shoulders to various difficulties and says "that's just life" as if some things are of such a nature that you just need to adjust to them. At the age of twenty five he became involved with an Icelandic woman who was already a mother of four children, and he took over the role of father to them. Sometimes he finds that the children in the Icelandic community need more discipline, but he makes an effort to learn new ways in bringing up his children and converse with them some more. He and his wife now have twins, and the first thing he does when he comes home for lunch is to go and tend to them.

Edgar describes himself as an independent thinker first and foremost. He has always been against being defined into the boxes that society tends to put people in, and his opinion is that even if something is considered to be the norm by society, that in and of itself does not make it the right thing. He grew up in a fishing town where there was much violence and drinking and strong family traditions. Boys were expected to become the same as their fathers. His mother had him when she was very young, and after the father deserted them he basically grew up with his grandparents, and great grandparents. His belief is that the best education is being active in life, believing in oneself and not let fear hold you back from trying something that has not been done before. Early in life he was fascinated by the image of Iceland, and came here to work in a fish factory where he met his first partner. He has worked various jobs but is formally practicing alternative medicine. After divorcing his spouse he has been employed abroad, but has always returned to Iceland, for the most part because of his two sons, who he has not been allowed to bring out of the country.

Laurent smiled a lot and laughed during the interviews. He has much interest in contributing to society and letting his experiences be a benefit to others. He grew up with his family which moved around quite a lot since his father worked as a shipbuilder all around the globe, for the longest period of time in Abu-Dhabi. During the summers he would often visit his grandparents in Ireland where he felt less as a foreigner. After acquiring a degree in business management he worked in Dubai for a long time where he did his share of partying. He met his partner there, decided he wanted to change his lifestyle and moved with her to Iceland. Today they are the parents of two children. He finds it important to realize that living in an unrealistic dream world does not solve problems and that you need to be able to handle everyday ordinary things. He feels that today he is able to take on more responsibility, whereas before he was more into challenging society's rules and living in the fast lane.

Tasos describes himself as a cheerful and amusing fellow but also stubborn and full of ambition. He has the vision in life to smile through difficulties and learn how to work himself through situations but he finds it hard to forget if someone steps on his turf. He was brought up with both parents in a large group of siblings where he was the second youngest. He grew up in a city near the ocean where his father was a sailor on a small boat. His youth is connected to memories of the beach and hanging out with friends. He was young when he met his partner in his country of origin and accompanied her to Iceland where she quickly became pregnant. He has lived here for nineteen years and presently runs his own company. He was buying a house with his second partner by whom he has another child. They have thought

about moving back to his homeland but at the moment it is not a feasible option due to the restrictions in the foreign currency exchange market in Iceland.

Marino asks himself many questions about life and his place in it. He finds himself in search of a purpose where his previous ideas about being a good man, working for a home, wife and child have been shattered. He has gone to great lengths in trying to understand what is expected from the different genders in Iceland and considers himself to have learned much from staying on the outside of it all. He was brought up in a home by both parents. His father was employed as a police dog trainer and his mother owned a restaurant. His memories are that in spite of not always getting everything he wanted, he got what he needed and could always bring many friends to dinner at his mother's. He came to Iceland after getting an education in Denmark and met his first partner here with whom he has a daughter. He separated, had another relationship in which he had a son and is now separated from that partner. The relationship with his first partner is very good, but not so good with the second partner who prevents him from being with his son. It is a heavy burden for him to bear, not to be able to have contact with both his children.

4.1.2 Males from North-America

In my search for subjects for my study I had a very small selection of males from South-America and no one that would qualify for the limitation. Therefore, my subjects are only from North- America, three from the United States and one from Canada. It needs to be considered that North-America includes many different ethnic groups. It is quite common that U.S. citizens claim more than one nationality, for example African-American or Greek-American, although it is not a reflection on the community as a whole.

John describes himself as a dual personality, in one case he is quiet, and goes with the flow, and is careful to keep his communications professional, on the other hand he shows his other side with his close friends. In his circle of friends he can let his black humor out, and even if he does not have a big group of friends. He chooses friends that he can allow close to him, and have similar life experiences and views as himself. After the age of six he grew up among a large group of siblings at his grandmother's house on his father's side. His father worked much and therefore he got very close to his grandmother. He never experienced a lack of anything since his father was a good provider, but it was not considered tasteful to make it apparent that they were well off. He was successful in school but joined the military to

challenge himself, and met his partner while stationed here in Iceland. They have three children that are all born in different countries. He feels very conflicted about whether he should bring his children up here where they are provided with a secure environment, but at the same time worries that they will not learn how dangerous the world can be.

Sam looks at himself as half Icelandic after living here for many years, but also talks about being a father, husband, teacher and his father's son. He can relate very much to the image of being a hunter, and even further a provider because for him it is what defines a good man even though other things also matter. He is brought up in a forest area with both his parents, did much hunting with his father and learned to respect his surroundings. How you treat your catch says a lot about who you are as a person according to Sam. This is what he was taught when he was young. He was offered a scholarship to study Nordic literature in Iceland but lost his father shortly after arriving in Iceland. In his mind he became a man here. He met his partner during his studies in Iceland and they are the parents of two sons. He finds that he greatly benefits from teaching his students, and that is also relevant for his two sons. To maintain a good image as a person and a father along with spending quality time with his boys is very important to him.

Charles is in search of a new definition of himself. His artwork is very dear to him, along with his interest in science fiction. He was brought up by both parents, at various places around the world where his father was stationed during his military service. His father made an effort to introduce them to the immediate cultural surroundings and shared with him various new technical advances. Charles himself joined the military, and did a lot of travelling. He met his first partner in the United States and after she got pregnant he joined her here in Iceland. After they divorced he went back to the United States but later returned to be able to be closer to his daughter. He has two children with two previous Icelandic spouses. His daughter is now grown up, and his son stays with him on regular basis. As a teacher for many years, he has noticed many changes in the gender roles in Iceland, and is happy to celebrate more liberties and freedom, although he finds the dating scene pretty limited.

Nemos has a calm personality and is even-tempered. He considers being brought up along with his sister by a single mother in the United States to have shaped him for life. His mother brought him up to be independent and introduced him to a different view of gender roles than was common in his father's family. They lived in a few different places in North-America and he met his partner while they were both pursuing their education in America.

Their wedding was performed in three different places, legally in the United States, a church wedding in Iceland and a wedding party on the island where his father resides in Greece. They lived in the United States for a long time where they owned and operated a restaurant but moved to Iceland before the birth of their daughter. Nemos has been drafted to serve in the military in his father's homeland but is in the process of negotiating a delay. That brings the family much uncertainty during their visits to Greece. The education of their daughter was very vital to them when they made their decision to reside here in Iceland, but during the summer they stay on an island in Greece. Recently they had another child, a son.

4.1.3 Males from Africa

When I worked as a kindergarten teacher some years back I got to know a few fathers with dark colored skin and among them was a man from Ghana who had an Icelandic partner. He had a degree in business management, but was not able to find work here that suited his degree. Shortly before I started my study, the family moved to Ireland where he had been offered to further his education. His spouse had told me that her family had always made him feel welcome in the family. I also got introduced to another man from Namibia through my research, which was going to participate in my study but then moved away. There were many things that he appreciated in Iceland, but he needed to get away at times to get his bearings. The only man I was able to interview from Africa also brought up this same subject.

Henry was born in Sierra Leone but his roots can also be traced to Jamaica. He has travelled much during his life, and one of his visions in life is to never give up, to get back in the saddle if the horse throws him off. He was brought up by both parents but they moved to Britain when he was young. He later moved to the United States and was captivated by Iceland during a flight stopover. He met his partner here, had two children with her before a divorce but one died during birth. Now he sees his son regularly. He shares his social life to a great extent with other men of African origin where they speak of each other as brothers and greet each other with the sentences like "How's your body". How good a human being you are is defined by how much you are willing to share food with others and he often shares food with his friends. Still, he is not yet ready to share the ownership of his native dish *Pasas* with the people of Gambia. He is worried that his son will only learn to take from others, similar to what he finds that many Westerners are doing, and wants to teach him the great gift of sharing with others, receiving and giving.

It would have deepened my study if I had had more subjects from Africa but if there will be an increase in their population here, it would be very interesting to make a comparison study between Danish fathers in Iceland and African fathers.

4.1.4 Males from Asia and Australia

As with the Polish men, it seems unusual for men from Asia to be single when they arrive in Iceland. Mostly they come here to work. I interviewed one man from Asia and he knew of only four or five Asian men partnered with an Icelandic woman. Further, there are few Australians living in Iceland and therefore I will describe the two men I interviewed from those two continents together.

Nassim describes himself by saying that he is a 50/50 man. He is very even-tempered according to his wife, but he also gets seriously angry if he is angered, and does not think highly of the shallow ways in which Icelanders express their anger. He was raised by both parents in a village in South-Asia, and has served the mandatory time in the military which is common for males in that area. He also had the option of becoming a monk. He came to Iceland through a connection with his aunt who was living here, came here for work, and met his partner at a party. She spoke his language which had a big impact in influencing the relationship they have today. They now have a nine year old daughter. She also had a son from a previous relationship. He enjoys food, for it is a custom in his homeland to greet people with the sentence, "Have you eaten?" How well you feel as a human is very dependent on how well you eat, and there is a strong emphasis on social gatherings where you can enjoy dining together. Therefore, he does find the traditional Icelandic cup of coffee without any food to consume with it very far from being hospitable. He and his partner both wonder why people in apartment buildings in Iceland do not know each other better.

Chris finds it hard to describe himself, but notes that he really enjoys working with his hands, being in close contact with nature whether it is out in the forest or sailing on the ocean. He is educated as a biologist but presently works as a carpenter. He was raised with both parents in a city suburb in close vicinity to the beach. There was much life on the streets and always something to keep him occupied, very good times. It was expected that males travelled and worked elsewhere which he did rather late, but has lived both in Great Britain and Ireland. Before returning back home he took a little trip around Europe and met his partner in Denmark. After she got pregnant he came to Iceland and now they have two boys together.

They lived in Akureyri for a long time but have recently relocated to Reykjavík. His boys have made a big change in his life and he thinks he would not be the same man if they had not entered his life.

4.1.5 Bringing it into context

It caught my attention that a few participants in my study spoke of a distant father and the influence of their mother or grandparents on their upbringing. With the implementation of capitalism it has been pointed out that fathers have been increasingly more absent from their children's lives because of work situations (Connell, 2005). This study indicates it is due to divorces or death of fathers as well.

In Iceland the kindergarten centers and schools are participating in childcare so both partners can be providers. Some of my interviewees decided to move to Iceland because of the good quality of the education for children. Regarding their own education there were four incidences where they considered themselves to be intelligent enough but had not pursued an education at a university level. They all spoke of wanting to become better educated to improve their current situation and one individual had already begun his studies. The ones who did have an education that was useful in pursuing a career were all individuals from North-America and Europe. This would be interesting to study further since economic and social status has a great influence in custody battles (Jónsson, 2012). Knowledge of the Icelandic language can further influence their social status. Nine of my interviewees spoke of having learned Icelandic through their place of employment. Currently it has become an increasing requirement for people to be fluent in Icelandic when seeking employment. The divorced men in this study often had the opportunity to get better paid employment in other countries but they chose to stay near their children.

It varies between cultures what is considered to be the event that makes a man out of a boy, often referred to as a rite of passage. Six of my interviewees have served in the military, and all experienced it in very different ways. Only one of them spoke of it as a positive influence in his life. Others spoke of travelling as such an inauguration. One thought he became a man after recently arriving in Iceland and claiming more responsibility over his own life. Immigrating and living in a different country can thus be seen as part of a rite of passage.

All of them spoke of how the experience of becoming a father had changed their lives, but the experience was multifaceted. All of them had changed their behavior after having a child and in many cases their own transnational life was influential in their parenting. Among foreign men who start relationships with an Icelandic partner there is a rumor going around that states that the relationship will not last more than two or three years. At the same time, eight men were in their first relationship in my study. It will come apparent that their marital status has a strong impact on their social status, living in or close to the capital of Iceland. Therefore, I will first write about their relationship with their partners.

4.2 “I met this Icelandic girl...”

In western societies, children are brought up on the stories of how their parents met though it is sometimes romanticized. My interviewees all wanted to tell this story, even if they were divorced. When a partner was present, she more often told the story, but as with the laundry, one wonders if this has more to do with the men stepping aside because they feel this is the area of the woman. The stories were mainly of three kinds:

... I met some Icелander in a bar in Ireland. ...I was going on a tour through Europe before returning home. ... Told him that the next stop was in Copenhagen and he said he knew a girl there and I could surely stay with her. Well, just some guy that I met in a bar so I didn't take this seriously. ...came that time that it was not so long until I would leave and so I went again to the bar and had a little much to drink and started to send Jóhanna messages. She said yes, yes.. .. you can stay. Then when we met it was just hhjjjuuuuu [made a sucking sound as he smacks his hands together].

She liked the look of me. ...a very good friend of hers was in the class with me [in Iceland] ...she said she overheard me say that I was going to Prikið that evening and she said ok we are going. ...then she came to me and said would you like a beer and schnapps, an apple schnapps, join me at my table and I joined her at the table and that was the end of it. We're connected from that. I actually sat and talked to her for a moment and then... ..that was my future wife. ... She lived in four different countries ...she traveled around with her family when she was young and she lived in Denmark on her own for four years. She is an Icелander. They all leave but they always come back.

Because there was a lot of foreigners there from all over the world... . And I meet people from South Africa, from Australia and New Zealand, and ... it was a lot of young Icelandic people from Reykjavik and we used to have some great parties, some great talks and Swedish people. And it was probably the best time of my life those five years. I met the mother of my children... . She was from Ísafjörður...

The majority of the women met their partners while they were abroad, either living or traveling, or they had returned home after staying for a long time in a foreign culture and met

their companions here. Only in two cases had the woman not become accustomed to another culture through traveling or living abroad, but they had lived in smaller societies in Iceland where more foreigners were staying. In three cases the men decided to come to Iceland because the woman had gotten pregnant, in two cases after a short romance abroad:

Rúna was on a vacation ...and we met and were planning to come to Iceland for vacation, then she got pregnant. Then I had to come for a few months and I am still here.

In some cases the couple decided it was time for a baby and thought Iceland was a family-friendly place to bring up children. Almost all of the men cited that the good school system was influential for them wanting to bring up a child in Iceland. Furthermore, they cited that it was important for them to be supportive of their spouses while they were having a baby and being near her family was seen as a part of this. Perhaps it is easier for them to give the woman the home ground for it is seen as a part of their self-image to be a supportive husband, but it must also be taken into question whether it is a cultural ideal for Icelandic women to travel but have children 'at home' when the time comes.

It was not always the matter of having children that brought the couples to Iceland though. Pierre cited that his partner was not feeling so good living in a ghetto in France and missed her family, but the main reason he decided to come here with her was to try to get away from drugs:

...she told me that she was from Iceland and I had never heard about Iceland and so I went to look for it on a map and saw a tiny little island and then it came back that if I go there I can quit drugs.

So in some cases there might be a wish to change their social surroundings, and taking care of the wishes of their partners provides them with an acceptable reason. There is a wish to change their situation and they are seeking an image, whether the image is all that it is expected to be or not.

You move here and you imagine that is going to be easy, very carefree Scandinavian lifestyle, that there is not going to be any fights here cause there is nothing bad here, there is nothing that is going to antagonize the relationship but then yeah, after being here for two months you are both back into the real life, someone has to make dinner and it yeah, that doesn't change. Moving here isn't solution for anything or it is change of venue where you are far away from your family.

4.2.1 The fear of being alone

After arrival, one of the things that threaten the image of a perfect family life in Iceland is the rumor that the relationship will not last. For example, it is common that older members of the Rugby team will ask the new ones why they came to Iceland and usually the answer is: “Well, I met this Icelandic girl... .” The others in the team are then quick to reply that it would be best not to expect it to last, and that the Icelandic woman always wants a divorce after two or three years. This comes from the experience of many members of the team. Most of them who had an Icelandic partner are with their second or third partner in Iceland. This seemed to happen on other sites as well, such as the Icelandic teaching lessons. All the men studying with Pierre had come to Iceland through an Icelandic partner but the few women who were there came on their own. He was the last of them to divorce after sixteen years of marriage. Charles and Edgar had a similar story to tell, and Edgar even went as far as to say: “I am looking for a future ex-wife! Let's face it, I live in Iceland.”

So this becomes a myth among the foreign men married to Icelandic women. Nevertheless, the men who were married in my study and others whom I came to know but could not interview were not so familiar with this myth. Stories of continuous relationships are not so prominent either. Even if as time goes by I hear of more and more of them. This myth seems to be due partly to the fear of the independence of Icelandic women, but also the fact that they have the advantage of support from the family and the culture should it come to a divorce. The men are alone and divorce influences whether and how they can be with their children. Furthermore, men in my research did not help other family members to come to Iceland and gain citizenship, only for short visits. So the fear of the woman leaving is also a fear of being stranded alone in a country far from one's social and economic support system. The men in my research were often highly aware of the importance of reading the cultural gender system. For example Karl noted:

...I have the feeling everybody has already, all the mothers a child from one, two or three fathers, and they are still on the search. Why did the fathers leave if they have a better chance to connect to the children?

Furthermore some were aware of this when divorces came through:

There is clearly something in the system that gives the mom so much power that it is enough for the mom to use some sentences which, when one is as smart as I, come to realize just immediately not to make a problem. At least until he becomes eighteen.

The mother-right is apparently very strong in Iceland and to some extent; men experience that as a threat to their existence in Iceland. Institutions reflect that as well, where there seems to be a common doubt that foreigners are economically, socially or/and culturally stable enough to support a woman in Iceland. In other words, they are not thought to be good enough. Furthermore, there still seems to be a fear that they will take the children away and that is the worst thing that could happen to the children. The most drastic sample of this in my research is where one man told me how he was taken by the police, tortured and threatened with being expelled from the country, never to see his son again. This happened shortly after his divorce where he came by to see his son. According to him, the mother of the child would not let him see his child and when he came to the house, she called the police and he was taken to a police station. The morning after, he was released, and some of his friends went to the police station to make charges, but then there were no files about the incident. He has battled the system for a long time to see his son but feels that there are always more obstacles put in his way, like the amount of money he has to pay for lawyers or at the municipally office, the amount of time he has to wait, and the discussions he is supposed to have with a woman that does not want to talk to him. All this without any time given to him to see his son. He is in this way always battling fences made mostly out of attitude, cost and time:

... it does not matter where you come from, everybody has the right. If I was a criminal, if I was smoking drugs, if I was drinking what you call alcohol, desperate every day and I was on the street drunk – I could understand why this happen to me but I am nothing of this! I was a guy working since 5 in the morning to 11 in the night every single day.

His example demonstrates the many barriers men have to face when they want to be closer to their children. At the time of the research Marino had quit trying through official procedures. He felt he was always paying money without any results.

4.2.2 The economic effect

The economic position of the men seems to have an effect in multiple ways, the way society sees men, in the making of their own identity and in communication with the significant other. There was a clear difference in how men would talk about the financial needs of the mother of the child depending on whether they were still in relationship with them or not. Men in relationships talked about how they made a good team or how it was good to share the responsibility of providing for a family, which they were not so accustomed to. Single men or men in their second relationships would be more verbal about the financial aspect:

And the thing about Icelandic mothers, with foreigners I hear it all the time, they think they are still married to them on payday. They just try to manipulate the hell out of them.

This observation was not just reflected on the women. When Pierre went through his divorce he talked to many Icelandic men to find out what was best to do and they would reply to him: *Borga bara meðlagið*.... meaning just pay the child support and see your child(ren) every other weekend. For him this was not acceptable, because even though in the beginning money was an issue, it became much more about being a constant part of his children's lives. He further noted that many divorced men he knew did not show much interest in being with their children, which he could not understand. This not only referred to Icelandic men but also foreign men who left the country, leaving their children behind.

Men who stay seem to do it mainly for their children, because they often had better employment opportunities elsewhere or would not have to work as much to survive in another country. Seeing yourself as a good person if you are divorced seems to include the fact that you stand by your child, regardless of the conflict which you might have with the society or former family members:

I am not saying it is human or reasonable that a woman goes with another man but for me it's like a ok. It is like this so I should do the same. ...I walk in the house and now there is another man. That used to be my woman before. To me it is a little strange but we talk together because we have a daughter together. ...we do what is best for the kid.

Some of the men had more than one ex-partner and would be on good terms with one but not the other. What was considered to be a good woman was often reflected in what the former partner or one of the former partners was not, for example being financially unstable and needing money, not being supportive enough and in some cases not keeping herself attractive for the man. Men in relationships implied that their partner gave them good advice and personal space to show different sides of themselves. Further, that she shared responsibility of providing for a home, taking care of the kids and helping with homework. Despite this, it was thought that providing was more men's responsibility, which came second or third for the women.

4.2.3 Cultural differences in the house

Different cultural customs between couples were often described as *the little stones in your path*. This phrase was even used in one of the weddings I attended. This could mean different

senses of humor, language barriers and differences related to food. Some couples thought this was the most challenging part of the relationship, but these stories often were in fact victory stories of how they overcame these differences. For example, Mikita didn't speak Icelandic and spoke hardly any English when he met his wife, but they found ways to translate through the internet, books and friends:

...like two weeks or something like that, we started to talk a little more and one of my friends helped me to send messages... And he just sent for me to her and that was kind of, yes, kind of funny. ... Yes, this was difficult in the beginning with the language. It just gets used to with life and the child.

Humor often became the topic of cultural differences. Charles thought it was one of the big reasons that he and his wife could not live together was because they could not understand each other's humor. Nasim and his wife, on the other hand, found a way to laugh together. Even if he does not understand the humor of Icelanders, they both like the British figure Mr. Bean.

Sometimes these cultural differences would be about spaces and food:

...I never understood it, it's like you have like a living room that is ... bigger than this... and it's like seven people bound into a small kitchen where people are just like sitting on the counters and I've never understood it.

Issues connected to food were very interesting and had many variations. Food often becomes a part of people's identities, how they see themselves and how they see others:

...and in a Nanonite home how well the family is doing, physically, spiritually, socially, emotionally is seen how well you can set a table. It's reflective. My wife is always shocked and surprised when we visit Canada and ... my aunt...sets a table with two kinds of meat, three kinds of potatoes, two kinds of bread, all kinds of vegetables, and it's just, you know, five people. She sets a massive table and she is always apologizing, is this ok? ... And my wife just can't imagine people eating that much.

The social aspect of food also needs to be taken into consideration. Many noted that they missed the gathering of family and friends over a meal in Iceland. For example, Nasim did not think much of the *kaffisopi* (*E. cup of coffee*) that is common to offer guests in Reykjavík today. Others noted how good it was that old Icelandic traditions of welcoming others in their home with lots of cakes and biscuits were not disappearing in their own culture. Still others mentioned how glad they were not to have to attend any more Icelandic big family gatherings after their divorces. Food is also connected to the national image. For example, when Henry found his traditional dish on the internet attributed to another country, he called

his friend where his voice became very agitated and loud: “Fred, why is it when I google it, why, like, Gambia! Like it’s their own?” He also thought that it was important to share your food as well as cultural customs and pointed out that western people could do more of this. He often makes *plasas* for his friends but when one of his African sisters is in Reykjavík, the role of cooking falls on her. This gender division of food making was of particular interest and a good focus point on changing roles. In Nasim's culture, it is a part of what makes a woman a good woman, but his Icelandic partner laughs this off and says she is simply not capable of this and he makes much better food even though she sometimes cannot eat what he prepares. This would sometimes be the case, that the man makes the food but the woman does not like it:

...for 3 months after my son was born, she did not have to do anything. I did all the cooking and cleaning... She told me couple years later: I am really grateful for that time but I swear to God I never touch your food again.

In other cases the man is thought to make better food but leaves the kitchen untidy:

John: We take turns doing dinner now, that’s how we do it. Her definition of cooking dinner is, oh, yeah...

Kristin [his partner]: Let’s just have sandwiches

One couple changed depending on what dish they were making:

... I cook regularly, I love to cook. I love it, my wife does as well. She makes my favorite food, my favorite food is the first food she ever cooked for me, it’s fantastic, it’s a chicken dish, wonderful! But she does not know how to make a really good hamburger like I do, I can make a soup that will curl your toes. And I am very proud of it.

In more cases the woman would do more of the cooking but the man would help, either with cutting side dishes or cleaning up. One couple said that when they are in Iceland, he cooks but when they are in his country of origin she cooks.

The preparation of food can therefore often be seen as a focal point of changing gender roles and as with raising children. It is worthwhile to note when males feel they have the right to step into those roles, when cooking becomes more important because the men are doing it, and how it reflects the image of the woman and how the cultural surroundings affect the possibility of changing gendered behavior.

Cleaning was not as important an issue as it was not mentioned when the men discussed how they divided household responsibilities with their partner, but then again, not

much was said about cars either. Men would, however, sometimes remark on the commute from home to work and vice versa, and sometimes this was connected to taking children to school. This issue of going between spaces may be of relevance and I will discuss it further later on. Laundry, on the other hand, was considered the woman's territory even though they were quite capable of doing it:

Of course, I know how to do my laundry. My mom taught me how to do my laundry. My father was I think the same way. He could do it, we can do the laundry, it's just we don't do it right. And we have been told that.

This could be seen as a part of the image of being a good man, being supportive of your partner is also seen as stepping back from spaces where she feels more knowledgeable.

It is of some interest that cultural conflict could lead to divorces, whether because of a difference in sense of humor, or different senses of what it means to be a good person or a supportive partner. One remarked on how his partner could not take his advice and rather saw it as a negative criticism, and another noted that Icelandic women seemed attracted to this image of exotic foreign men but in the long run found out that they have a different idea as to what they should strive to achieve in life:

...just more often it is only Icelandic girls that decide to divorce, think that lots of foreigners that are pretty but not much in the head, so to speak, you understand, and the women slowly realize that they do not have ambition. Not huge ambitions towards their views on how the ambition should be.

Many times it was not cultural differences that were cited as a reason but financial problems, alcoholism, or adultery, which could be seen as individual choices but one could also wonder about the cultural understanding of these phenomena.

What was common to all the men, whether they were single or in a relationship, was that they thought it was important to find joy even if they had different ideas about on what joy should be; to be good at reading the social environment, to find their own place in it at the same time as staying true to yourself, and be responsible even if being so had different meanings, especially after a divorce. One other theme was very apparent; being a good father was always of the utmost importance.

4.3 The measurements which you stand by

...in October I got phone call... ...because she was going into labor... . Because of the terrible weather, I phoned up the road service and they said you are not going to get over there, there is no way! I am going and I managed to get over there, it took me three hours with a shovel and everything...

It was fantastic in a way and also unbelievable but of course, also from the scientific view of it, it was also the fascination of it, pure biological fascinating thing. It was both. But I was also expecting being like more Aahhhhh. Like not being able to stand, like you hear in the story from others, but that was never the question of it, I would say. But I think this joy and everything came a little bit later.

They are my boys! They are the end of the day! I want to close the day by saying goodnight to my boys. I love them. I love them. They are my boys.

Becoming a father had a huge impact on the lives of all the men in my research but in various ways. Most of them described this impact of rushing feeling when the children were born or shortly afterwards but not all. The stories that go around about the rushing feeling of becoming a father may not be what all men experience, any more than it is for mothers. Most felt the social pressure of being more responsible as is indicated by the men who moved here after their girlfriends got pregnant but being close to their children was important to all of them.

The men in my research came from various upbringings which had effect on how they wanted to be influential in their own children's lives. In modern times there are many books on how to be a good parent but only recently books on how to be a good father have been published. What constitutes a good father can vary based on cultural understanding and different times. Men who are far away from their own families or friendship support group need to find their own way of defining their roles as fathers. It can be difficult for them in a changing cultural environment. One of my interviewees talked about how information on how the fathers' roles are changing is not reaching foreign fathers. Others were actively seeking information, but searching on line, learning through school or working with children. Some were seeking advice from their partners. Most of them, though, looked to the father figure that had a positive impact on their lives:

He was an example. He was the teacher I want to be. ... Yea he was the man. He is the image. If there was literature, film or some kinds of great epic story he would be what the boy tries to become, never can but tries. That is what I want to imprint on my children.

In two cases the biological father showed behavior they did not want to repeat. It could be their grandfather, their foster father or the mother or even their grandmother they looked up to

as a role figure to parenting. Then it could be the father at some point in their lives but the grandfather at other points:

My father was more important in my younger years but later on he became less important. I was taking my life more into my own hands. ... My grandfather on the mother side... ..he liked to play and being creative in a way with tools.

Two men were mostly brought up by their mother. One thought of his mother as a prominent role model that he tried to emulate but the other thought that even if he learned a lot from his mother, he did not agree on the cultural way she had brought up her children.

In most cases it was an intermix of influences where the main attributes were sought from the father figure but still some important things found in the mother figure as well. Marino, for example, loves to cook which he learned from his mother and it is something he wants to teach to his children. Coming with his friends to his mother's cooking in her restaurant where there would always be enough to eat is a feeling he wants his children to get from him. His father used to take him on all kinds of trips and teach him how to pick potatoes, how to train dogs, how to manage a fishing pole and how to build in the rain. When he is thinking about things he wants to do with his children he thinks about both outdoor and indoor activities like picking stones, fishing, making chili, eating good food, and picking blueberries, seeing a movie and so forth.

So it was the attributes that they could find positive and useful in their own lives that they wanted to measure up to for their own children. Comparing this to the interviews with Icelandic men, I found that most of the men talked more about attributes from their mother figure, even if the father figure was more prominent.

4.3.1 Fathering and mothering

It was evident that the men would be positive about their fathers being active in taking care of the house, even if it was to different degrees:

So my mother lay the table regularly very, very well but she was never alone in that. ... I don't know, there was not really not much NOT done by my father in the house.

At the same time most of them indicated that their fathers had a job and the mother stayed at home, so the main role of taking care of the children and the house was their

mother's role. Their fathers would often take them on short trips, play games with them and in some cases teach them to value different cultures:

In my case it was my father who had a passion for travel to see new places and experience different cultures. This passion is something that he shared with his family. Whenever we moved to a new state or country no matter how long or short my father used opportunity to explore and learn...

Many of them had learned to cook from their mothers or grandmothers, and some mentioned learning to do laundry and take care of the house from them as well. Only in one case was the father mentioned in the teaching how to cook and help out with the house but learning how to make do or make the best of things was also a common trait to be learned both from a mother and father figure.

As their fathers were mostly working away from home, they were often emotionally distant. Some of the men missed the emotional closeness which they wanted to give to their own children. They would often explain how their fathers came more emotional with age. Nasim talked about how his father would use his eyes to talk rather than words and now when they saw each other they would fill with tears. Sometimes the fathers were thought to be good teachers by not interfering too much in their upbringing and giving them freedom to find out for themselves what they wanted. Other stories revealed how the fathers were trying to toughen them up in this 'man's world'. John explained that he never lacked anything as a kid. Where he comes from the man is supposed to take care of his family first and then think about his needs second as his father apparently did. He further goes on to say:

...if I wanted anything that the average kid couldn't get I had to do work for it, like he always said that his job wasn't for him to be my friend, it was for him to teach me to be a man.

There was only one case mentioned where the mother figure was the disciplinarian and that was thought of as a very negative discipline, focusing on threat and punishment. This may reflect that it is the role of older men to teach young boys to be men, to behave and it is not considered as negative as when a mother is more dominant in this field. Fathers being absent, was not considered negative but at the same time the men in my research all wanted to be more involved with their children's upbringing.

4.3.2 Manhood

A test of manhood is common almost everywhere in the world but it not always the same ritual and it varies between cultures and times. Today it can consist of army service, going far away from home to study or work or hunting with your father. What was interesting here was that most the men did not think much of the army as a place that defined manhood. They would think it was silly to be forced to prove themselves in that way; they would shrug it off and not want to talk about it much or in one case laugh at it:

I think I have not found this yet to be a man. I'm still very little boy, you know, fun to play. ...I did not find anything special in the army except, you see, they try to break me down just to try to build individuals who do a lot of things but it did not really work for me ... I watched them and in my head I was just laughing.

There may be two exceptions to this though for John felt the need to join the army to prove himself for he felt that most people around him thought he was not the type for it. His father had been in the army and perhaps that was a model for him to look up to. Also Charles went into the army because he had been raised in army surroundings all his life and it was something most of his forefathers had done. Both of them quit the army when it was not considered relevant in their lives anymore and for Charles it was a definitive moment as a person but not so much as a man. Only one talked about a definitive moment of becoming a man which he connected to the death of his father:

I was living in student housing here. ... I had nothing. I did not know the language. I did not know anything and I had only been studying on scholarship for a little while and then I got the phone call, dad died. So I go home. And I could not get out of Canada fast enough... I was not ready! So effectively I guess I became a man here in Iceland. Bizarre!

Mostly it was thought to be a continuous journey to become a man and some even thought they would not achieve this or did not want to. Going away from home was by many of them thought to be a way of molding themselves as men. Being on your own to test the things you have learned from home and making your own way in the world. Getting away from the restrictions of home was also one of the ways they would see themselves making something out of themselves and in that way becoming more of a man:

...for example my father was a fisherman, I was supposed to be a fisherman, or your father was a postman you were supposed to be a postman, all these kinds of things. And get drunk every weekend going to the bar every night. And that was just how men were back in my hometown which I never really agreed with at all. ...they sensed that I did things differently.

Their individual stories seem to have an impact on how and where they thought they were being made as a man. It becomes clear that they are changing their perspectives according to time, places and personal history. For most of them this journey is a continuous one.

4.3.3 Siblings

In a world where migration has increased enormously in the last two decades it is bound to affect ideas of multiple gender roles. Just as the men would talk about the influence of their mothers they would sometimes talk about their siblings or how raising a daughter was different from raising a son. Nemos, for example, who was very keen on raising his daughter to be independent, discussed how it was more difficult for parents in Greece to be more supportive towards the daughter if there was a son in the family. By supporting the daughter Greek parents felt they might appear to be diminishing the son in the public eye. Others would talk about daughters wanting to do something different or behaving differently because they were girls and the fathers were trying to be considerate of that. There was also a trend to raise their boys up to be more aware of their feelings and how to deal with them but the level of emphasis on this aspect of being would vary greatly among the men.

Men who were raised with their sisters would sometimes talk about how their sisters seemed to be lost today and perhaps their parents should have influenced them more, either by being strict or motivating the girls more. Some would discuss how the sister had started coming on trips their fathers were taking them on but then dropping out. In this way it is implicated that the girl becomes weaker and therefore drops out, that it may be a natural thing for girls to have different interest but also that their parents were too indulgent toward them. Only Sam talked about his sister as his equal:

My sister is an incredible shot with a gun. She's unbelievable. ...she keeps more than thirty firearms at home.

Most of the men did not talk much about their brothers if they had one. Deep friendship between brothers seemed to be lacking and mostly it was thought that they went different ways in life. One exception to this was when Henry was talking about his brothers but he was referring more general to his friendship which he had made in Iceland with his African brothers:

We call, like mostly, like African friend of mine - it's all kin. We call our self's brothers and sisters.

One other thing that came up regarding siblings was birth order. It was stipulated that the further away from the oldest sibling you were, the less time your parent would have for you. This was considered to be negative. Yet, the men believed it gave them freedom to find their own way.

4.3.4 Passing experiences down to your children

Teaching their children to respect different cultures was one of the most common issues to be brought up. For example, Henry was very keen that his son would feel comfortable with Icelandic culture in his father's apartment so he would always have an Icelandic chocolate drink for him in the fridge and sometimes cook traditional Icelandic food for him but he also wanted him to learn to share different cultural food and values:

Like you want me to take yours but you don't take mine and if I only take yours there is no life for me. Most westerner are like that. ... If he [his son] just learn take I don't like.

At the same time all of the interviewees thought it was important that their children would learn to make their own way no matter what culture they were in and take on the responsibility of freedom. A good example of this was when Laurent was walking with his young son in the forest. He would encourage him to choose his own way to travel but insist on him walking by himself instead of carrying him. Finding out who you were and what you wanted seemed to be one aspect of their own experience that they wanted to pass down to their own children:

...he's being himself which I like, I don't like what he's doing but I like him being himself. ...I am trying to teach him how to fit in but still keep his individuality and not give a shit what others think about him, that is so very important.

In this way they are not just passing down what they have learned from their parents but also from their own life of travels. Being able to face the obstacles that will be in your way as well as appreciating what you have. Many said that it was important to know how to make the best of things and being responsible regarding how you spend your money. Marino for example sometimes takes his daughter to the mall. When she sees something she likes she will always take note of the price:

Me, I will say I want to buy this for you. She will say maybe next time. I think this is good. She is responsible, always thinking and things like that. ...smart girl. I am proud of her.

They would also teach them things that they learned from mother and father figures, like cooking and taking care of yourself. Many of them talked about taking their children on short trips like fishing or walks or wanting to do that when they grew older. In this way they are doing the same things with their children as their fathers did but it was also evident that most of them wanted their children to be in better touch with their feelings and know how to deal with them, even if varied in how much or how it should be done. This was more apparent when they were talking about how they were raising their sons:

...if he is turning, back and forth in his bed and instead of going mad, then just say: Hey, is there something that you want to talk about or do you have something you have to do? [Changes his voice while imitating the voice of his son] “There is a birthday with Gunna and I don't know”. And then he just finished talking about what he is thinking and then just two minutes later he is asleep because he was allowed to express himself.

In this way it can be seen that the men are continuing what they have learned as children but at the same time adding to it their own life experiences in a changing world.

4.3.5 Mixing different cultures

Different habitus, both social and biological environment, has an effect on what the men thought to be important for their children. Therefore, they would point out what was different in Iceland compared to where they had lived. These could be both negative and positive things.

The positive things they noticed about the Icelandic environment would be that fathers were expected to spend more time with the children and that the parental leave was very good, especially how their employers were supportive of them using it. Most would mention how fathers in other cultures were not so different by wanting to be with their children but were not always able to. Sometimes it would be because of work, sometimes because of social pressure from their peers. Another factor that was perceived to have impact was the sense that the women would not allow them to enter that sphere of the home life. They would reflect on their Icelandic experience of this in various degrees:

...but I think it is even harder for men to take over some female parts of education, staying at home still. Not because women are accepting it but not their male friends. ...

This is also connected to the circle of friends. ... And maybe this is something I see more in Iceland. At least I think I see it more. But maybe men are doing more with the children, just going alone with the child, going to the supermarket with the child, moving the pram or something like this, you don't see it that much in Germany. Perhaps the women in Germany do not want them to be too much involved and there this still have to do with how much the men are working.

In this way they would demonstrate that peer pressure is still apparent in Iceland in perceiving child caring as a degrading feminine function but at the same time they felt the atmosphere was more supportive towards them tending to their children. Still they also observed that some divorced Icelandic fathers were attending to their children but others were not:

...when we started going through the divorce I started... ..calling other men that had gone through divorce or something and tried to get advice from them on how it was best to arrange things. And from 99 % of them... I always got the same answer: Hey man, just pay the alimony and take the kids every other weekend. ... I disagreed with all of them. The reason is very simple. You see, Icelandic men have their families here. ... I am alone here. I have nothing but my children. I love them more than life.

They would remark on how family connections were very strong in Iceland even after divorces, something most of them were not used to even if they came from cultures that are very family oriented. Laurent, for example, noted how his mother-in-law was still in a close relationship with her former daughter-in-law. The negative aspect of the family relations was thought to be the strong influence of the mother, the mother's right. Some would blame this strong matriarchal stance on the fathers having to work long hours in the past or be away at sea for extended periods of time.

Sometimes the lack of discipline was brought up but at the same time the men were finding a way to teach their children without the threat of violence. Most were trying to adapt to this new way of raising children without too strict a discipline and talking more with their children. The men who were divorced would often mention that the mothers were too soft on their children, letting them play with computers too much or using medicine to calm them. The negative aspect seems to be that the women are too soft on boys or not really being able to handle them and teaching the girls to be more occupied with their own lives instead of the marriage life.

It is intriguing to see how the men would admire older Icelandic men for working hard and being more of 'real' men in their eyes. Admiring them for the sacrifices they made

by being away from the family to provide for them but at the same time most of the men wanted to be closer to their own children and not miss all the precious moments:

If I missed that stuff I don't know what I would do. I take it to my grave not having, it would be terrible. Some of the important things in our children's lives happened before they even remember them so we have to keep that memory ourselves and if she, if my wife is the only one keeping the memory then I am just a second hand, I'm just watching from outside. I wanna be there; I want to take part in the show. I wanna see what is happening.

Perhaps it is a mix of reasons that explains this dichotomy. By spending more time with their children they can have a stronger effect on how they are raised as well as giving them the emotional closeness they crave. Therefore, when the legal system is more in the favor of their mother, like it is in Iceland, they lack the cultural and gender influence over their children as well as the emotional closeness that family bonds can bring them. In addition, even if they admire hard working men, they want to find a way to be part of the moments that are being created in the children's daily lives.

Another complex issue is evident in the men's discussion of how children were more free to ply outdoors in Iceland without the fear of danger and most of them thought this was a great thing. At the same time some of them would worry that their children would not be prepared for the toughness of the world in general and thought many young Icelanders were naïve to the ways of the world:

..because even though it bothers me I like the fact that my little girl can go outside and play and I go like: man it's 10.30 I need to go get her and I am not thinking: Oh my god, it's 10.30! I need to call the police. ...I also want them to know, cause I figured they are probably not going to live in Iceland their entire life and go to somewhere else where, it's like living in a bubble, someone pops the bubble and you are like woohh!

The men would therefore often be conflicted about raising their children in Iceland. They perceived the environment to be very safe and good for the children while simultaneously worrying about ways to prepare them for the larger world. A place they had experienced as much more dangerous.

Most of them expressed how changes were happening everywhere in the world regarding gender roles. Some of those changes were considered good while others were seen as bad. Some would discuss how the families were losing their closer bonds of getting together while they saw them as still being close here but others would mention the opposite. Some thought women everywhere were getting more education and men had to step in and

become more involved in bringing up the children while others thought it was more dependent on who would earn a better salary. In essence; who should work, and who should stay home:

Like my brother in law, he doesn't work or only two days a week but now all the children are starting school so he is going back to work... My sister is an accountant, she gets good salary and it is better that she is working than him who is just something like electrician.

One mentioned how young people were having children in Iceland but today the grandmothers were still working and living their own lives so it was more up to the social system to help with the upbringing. So the difference between many other cultures where women are getting better job opportunities and education seems to be that in Iceland the social system is more supportive of them so they can have children young while in other cultures it becomes more the role of other family members like grandmothers to take care of the children.

Some would observe how people in other cultures would be more surprised at men being with their children, especially if they were single parents:

I don't really know many young black people that are married and I think it's probably the way they look at it that it is a single mother thing but I don't know... I heard more like people go like: he's such a good daddy than they do here, it's like here it's like you know. In America, in general, like I've heard people make more of a deal out of it like, oh he is such a good daddy or this guy is such a good dad...

Sam noted that this is still to be found in Reykjavík for people seem to look at him differently when he is walking with his children depending on whether it is a weekday or a weekend:

For a long time and still when I walk with my boys during the week and people see me picking up my boys and they see me regularly walking the same road, it's like it's ok, he is always there. But on the weekend... People still look at me like, oh good, he is doing something with his boys this weekend and I can see that look, I can see it in the eyes of people now, because I am of that age that maybe I am a weekend father...

Further he had noticed that more and more fathers were outside with their children but others usually had to think about it for a while and then most of them thought there had been a slight increase. Edgar noted though that more mothers were coming out to coffee houses on Wednesdays so perhaps fathers were staying with their children then. He thought that might

be a sign of fathers spending more time with their children. Most of the fathers seemed to be working more than the mothers and that was something they were battling with when it came to spending time with their children.

4.3.6 Combining work and child care

Many of the men in the study said that it was good to live in Iceland if you had work. Some thought that you had to work hard in Iceland to be able to live and in some cases it was the reason men would leave the country even if they had children here. For the men in my research it was not an option to leave even if it was hard to get a job or if you had to work hard. Being legally dependent on their employer, not only for salary but also for work- and resident permits would often leave them insecure in their roles as providers and protectors, a position they saw as a big part of their social identity. Men who had their own business were more secure but the economic crisis had the effect that even men who had stayed in Iceland for many years had a hard time finding and keeping work.

Their work would sometimes require them to stay away from their children for extended periods and they were very concerned that this would affect their relationship:

I missed him a lot but it is also important for me to have this feeling of missing. But there is a fear of missing and also fear of losing connection. Will he recognize me? Constantly asking [his partner]: Do you think he will remember me when I'm back. Of course he will! Really? And things like this. Emotional moments...

I am now going away and that is a little sad. I have done that a couple of times, just working out in the country. Ahh..., it is sad for a week but then I always come back home and then it is fun again. Only they have to get to know daddy again and there is so much to do.

This often did put the men in a dilemma. They wanted to stay close to their children but felt they no choice but to move away where there could be a better job opportunity. In some cases they would blame the mother of the child/ren for pushing blame on them for staying away. It was a personal choice for some of the others, where they saw themselves as better men for staying close or it could be a mixture of both. For some it was an opportunity to change their employment even if the child's mother would be concerned about the income aspect. Pierre, for example, talked about how tired he was of being the boss of thirty people in construction work and felt he always had to maintain a mask. It left him with no energy to take care of his children when he arrived home. Because of this he changed jobs and started working with

children which he is very happy to do today. In this transition he experienced pressure from his former wife who worried that his new job would not earn them enough money.

Being a daily part of their children's life was a major factor in their identity making as well as their emotional well-being. Mikita would use his lunch breaks to come home and the first thing he would usually do was to go straight to his young twins to see if they needed tending. For him it was important that he would be trusted to take care of them alone, as he would dislike being checked on by the mother relatives when the mother was away. The emotional aspect of childcare goes both ways as it not only fulfills the child's needs but also the father's:

But with the diaper changing, I often do the last diaper before going to sleep. They are really special moments, you know. But sometimes it is also when I am alone. I never wanted to be the male person who says oh, I have to rest. I know I must have the energy to do it but if I do it I am getting so much back of the power.

This emphasizes an aspect of how an ideal of fatherhood is perceived and how individuals are negotiating that role depending on the environment and time.

4.3.7 The ideal of fatherhood

...now that I'm a father, good lord, I don't know what I am doing! I have no clue. I am making it up every day.

One thing that came up in the interviews was what it meant to be a good father and it was duly pointed out that it depended on who was talking about what the role of father is supposed to be. The men usually had some image of this beforehand but throughout their lives it would change as well. This would be affected by the age of the children, the relationship with the mother, their work position and the changing attitudes of their social surroundings. Charles, for example who is homosexual, has come to the conclusion that he does not really like children all that much even if he takes the responsibility of being a dad very seriously. Coming out as gay though has given him a new opportunity to be a different kind of dad to his almost grown up daughter. Today, he feels he can have deeper conversations with her and advise her more on her own choices. Marino's daughter is also growing up and he does feel that they don't have as much in common any more but respects her choices. Edgar feels that currently he is in better contact with his younger son even though it used to be different before. This reflects how the father role is not only changing regarding the outer social environment but also between individuals and what is happening in their own lives. In the

beginning there may be this image of what it is to be a father that can reflect ideas of the media or older generations but as time passes other aspects influence this role. While watching a television show about couples Laurent got into an argument with his pregnant wife about what it meant to be a good dad:

She was saying that it meant that you would stay awake with a sick child, take it to the emergency room, do stuff you don't want to do, that's being a father, and I get really angry. Listen! I am going to be supportive, and I am going to be friends to the child. And she was like that is not being a dad. It is the same thing as when you move here, you romanticize the idea.

It became apparent that the idea of fatherhood evolved and changed over time as relationships developed and their cultural and social environment changed.

4.3.8 Changes through fatherhood

The idea of fatherhood is shaped while the men actively deal with being fathers. Sometimes it meant that they realized that they were becoming the kind of fathers they had been thought to be by their older cultural zone. Some did not like it and put an effort into changing their ways while others were more accepting and came to terms with the old prescription of fatherhood:

I never meant to be like my father but you know, then I am doing just like him but he is just great my dad... Perhaps it would be nothing like this if I had not had children. ...building a house and a car and all kinds of things. And just, you know, just why we are doing this, it is fun to be doing it for someone else. It is dull to go to work and pay bills but it is nice to do it for them, you know.

The idea of fatherhood would be affected by a myriad of influences. In some cases it meant that the men had to be aware of how to change themselves and how older behavioral patterns affected their attitudes:

I still have to work on it too, like being more compassionate like when Bella cries she normally walks away from me because my first initial reaction is ok, can't be that bad. And sometimes I forget that sons don't... It got to the point I would look at him and he would like: I'm not a girl and he would stop crying because I would be like why are you crying like a little girl, stop, boys don't cry like that for no reasons, are you hurt? And it was just, it's a learning process, I've gotten more compassionate I guess I would say.

For many of the men this meant that if they wanted to change their behavior as fathers they had to be reflective and define what kind of fathers they wanted to be:

I was totally hung over, I was a mess but that was a wakeup call. Ok, I got to do something about this too. Cause I had no idea how to look after this one in the present state I was...

Being fathers in a place far away from the social support of family or friends had an impact on the men. They had to be mindful of their roles as fathers and the battles they sometimes had to fight with the social system and/or institutions in order for them to be a part of their children's lives. Staying in Iceland was therefore not always their personal choice but a negotiation involving how to make the best of things; a part of that was being where their children had their home.

4.4 The unexpected safe place

John: Yeah, the biggest time was probably walking through the wood with the kids where I was just like whole like [sentence faded out]

Me: At ease?

John Yeah! ...I am from a fairly big city but I never really liked the city. ...I was in the Boy Scouts and my best times that I remember was being out in the country and in the tree and the woods and stuff...

Searching for this feeling of ease in the body was perhaps the most difficult part of the research as the men were often unclear about the meaning of my question and had to take some time to think about it. Their partners, who had lived abroad, were much quicker to understand the meaning. However, this was not always the case and sometimes the men understood the meaning but thought it unimportant. Michael Jackson (1983/2006) remarked that the bodily behavior is built on former life experience, that it is in a dialogue with the existing environment and connected to the gendered patterns in societies. I therefore expected that men would feel more comfortable in male gendered spaces, like rugby or the pub, where their might be some gendered experience that went beyond culture. However, the pub was only mentioned once and no one referred to any kind of male sports field. In many cases it was outdoors but not always. I was thus reminded of Jackson's warning that we must be careful not to have predesigned ideas about the behavior patterns of the body.

The spaces the men mentioned were connected to many kinds of senses, such as the sense of smell, taste, temperature, hearing or a sense of being a part of the environment but it was almost always more connected to the idea of people rather than places. Their bodily posture would change during this discussion when a sense of ease was connected to a memory of

being. Initially they would talk about what they missed from former places, like food, forests or beaches without a change in their bodily behavior. When they connected it to a memory of being there, a memory that was most often connected to people, their physical demeanor changed. Then they would often relax their shoulders, lean back and a little smile would come to their lips. Sometimes the feeling they connected to the places would be one of relief, described by the words: “I feel it is a little easier to breathe.”

4.4.1 Memories of people

Most often this feeling was connected to memories from their youth but not really to the most common surroundings of their neighborhood. Rather it was connected to the places where they did not feel the pressure of the social gaze, where they felt a deeper sense of belonging. A place where they felt free to play without scrutiny of their bodily behavior:

...those memories would be of summers in Greece though. I mean that's when I was most relaxed because we moved around a lot in America so I didn't really make that many friends growing up. As in Greece, I had my cousins and I also had other people, like friends. So I probably knew more people, went out more in the summer in Greece... I think it was also like having people there that you were comfortable with, knowing the area so you wasn't the tourist there. You know there was still feeling that I was part of it because I am accepted there...

Where the feeling of home was connected to memories of people, places like the beach could be a part of the sensing but it could be connected to activities, the feeling of recreating by doing what made them feel good. This could be divided to two categories. One was where they liked to be in a place alone but connected the place to childhood memories. *Öskjuhlíðin* in Reykjavík was for instance a popular place among them. It is an open green area in the middle of the city, dominated by a hill and dense vegetation of birch trees and pine, traversed by walkways and paths for outdoor activities. It is among the few places in the middle of Reykjavík that has trees. Iceland has very few trees and most foreigners would not find a forest in Iceland. There are some places with more trees further away from Reykjavík but *Öskjuhlíðin* was in more close proximity for most of them. It was often thought to have enough similarities to the memories of a good place even if it was not quite the same. Laurent described the feeling of being there in the following way:

In the forest there is no one else and it is like ok. I just can forget about the world for a bit, I don't feel there is anything I need to do, I just don't feel tense, I don't feel stress.

He connects this feeling of being in Öskjuhlíð to the memories of being with his grandparents in Ireland. There was a local park the city where they would take him. That is where he felt at ease because he felt he did not stick out. His whiteness made him more visible in the area where his parents were bringing him up in the Middle-East.

In other cases this feeling was reached by the sense of doing what the memories brought up regarding people who made them feel good. By doing similar things they used to do with these people it was possible to get this feeling of relaxation in their body. This was not necessarily connected to the male gendered experience. Sam would for example connect this act of doing to the memory of hunting with his father but Marino to the cooking of his mother. He loves to cook and invite people, old friends and new, to his place to eat but only people he feels that are truly good, that he trusts. Henry, on the other hand, gets this feeling by both making food from his country of youth, sharing it or going to an African friend's house to eat. When he starts to smell this kind of cooking, even if he is outside the house, he will feel like his body is already there in the memories of his past. Henry is in this space with people who he feels share his cultural way of being. Something that can be seen as shared cultural memories (see Lassiter, 112). It is the same with Nasim as he connects this to when he goes fishing with a group of Thai people in Iceland. They will laugh dearly during this trip, a shared act which is precious to him as he enjoys being able to share the same sense of humour. He does not feel that Icelanders have any. Furthermore he connects this feeling of wellbeing to the respect for the nature which he was taught as a child. In a way it is a kinetic sense of nature he is referring to.

All this is connected to memories of people; by finding or recreating a sense of being at peace in the world. Sometimes alone or with people they felt comfortable with. The people who shared their worldview or they hoped would do so were not always people from the men's cultural past but sometimes new acquaintances.

4.4.2 Reconstructing new space

By reconstructing a new space with new people the men were able to create this feeling of being safe, of home or of a good place to be. In some cases this was done with people who shared their worldview, who had similar experiences like for instance being part of a group of transnational people in a foreign place. For Charles this meant meeting with people from various ethnicities where they shared with him basically what it meant to be a good person

while at the same time keeping judgemental attitudes at bay. There he feels he can talk his emotional tongue as he puts it and by that he means to meditate openly about his feelings in his native language. He has been familiar with this space for a long time and shares it with old friends and new. For Edgar, it was specially the place *Hressingarskálinn* in Reykjavík. It is a restaurant/bar with a long history in the centre of the city. There he felt people were open to new ideas and it gave him the freedom from social scrutiny and being put in a box of class division. This place has changed through the course of his stay in Iceland and in a way he is looking for a new place like it. Edgar is also finding different spaces that bring him the feeling of wellbeing, such as early mornings in the country which he connects to the memory of being a child and sneaking out in the early mornings to help the nearest stores, like the baker, with their chores. All places change just as people do but it may be a matter of agency how it is possible to recreate this sense of wellbeing in the world.

A part of this feeling for Edgar was being able to be creative and this could be found in others as well. Some found this space among the younger generations in Iceland. Pierre experienced this feeling where he was working with children. There he could be creative, play, and not be judged by the way he ought to behave as a man. When he was working in construction he felt that he always had to wear many masks and was extremely tired coming home to take care of his children. Working with children he feels he is much freer to be himself. Karl, shares this aspect as well:

...the younger the people were here the better I was connecting... ...they don't have prejudices... ...I'm really interested in things, still interested in things children do like drawing something, playing something stupid, not in the way of, what can I say, in a competitive way.

But Karl also felt this at home where he is reconstructing a new space. Having a young son at home makes him a sense of having deeper roots in Iceland. This was a common theme, especially with men who were in a relationship with their children's mother. This feeling connected to the home could also be reached on the way home.

4.4.3 Between spaces

In two cases an interesting theme emerged. That was to be in-between spaces, where they were travelling from one space to another. One of the spaces Karl mentioned, for example, was in his car on his way home from work:

It is really more from work to home than from home to work. ...of course I am looking forward to come home but I am also enjoying the time between so it could be, like today I was coming home and there was a traffic jam and ...in a way I was also enjoying taking an hour going from the harbor from office to the Miklabraut. These moments when I am alone, when I can listen to music that is not loud, just possible to hear. I think it is a mixture, because music always has a big part in my life...

Sam felt this feeling when he was aboard Icelandic airplanes when they are landing in Iceland and the speaker says in Icelandic: “Welcome home” (*i. Velkomin heim*):

They always say that. I feel it now. After been here long enough, this is home: This is where my children were born. There is nothing against having two homes. The home in Canada, the forest where I grew up and the rivers where I fished and the hills that I hunted that is the home for Sam but for Pabbi, for daddy this is home.

Both of them are talking about going home, that it is the space between where one social role is left behind and another awaits. Going home to where their children are is something that gives them this special feeling of belonging but for Karl it is also having this little space where he can be on his own even if he is in a crowded place. In a way they are both describing a space that has less gazing, be it between culture zones or work and home, and using that time to be mentally and physically ready to enjoy fatherhood.

This aspect of having more than one home also came up several times and wanting their children to get to know some of the spaces they cared about as kids and specially people that where dear to them for the connection between memories of spaces and people was very strong. Yet, even if the men were making new spaces in Iceland there was this need now and again to take a break.

4.4.4 A break from Iceland

When I lived in Athens I was intensely in love with the place but after eight months I felt I needed a break from constantly reading the environment, to be in a place where I did not have to think about how I was breathing. People often feel this need to get a break from work, break from parenting and so forth. It is interesting to look at how people can need a break from culture. This often came up in my research, both in my participant observation and interviews. I once met one of my interviewees, the one from Sierra Leone, on the city bus where he told me he was going to Britain to take a break from Iceland. For John, who lived in Reykjanes, it was also going to north of Iceland where he says that people: “...are generally nicer to me.” He feels there is less racism there. Another talks about needing a break from the

Icelanders' mentality every once in a while even if he does not feel he belongs so much to another nation anymore since he has lived here for such a long time. Anthropologists often remark on how they feel they belong to in-between spaces, living in different cultures and not really belonging to the home country on their return. This may be akin to what the men are describing; they need a break from one culture without belonging to another. For some it was the opposite.

Pierre, for example, felt right at home when he came to Iceland. For him it may be that being away from the social scrutiny at home made him feel like he was on a break coming to Iceland. Later on in his stay, he describes feeling the social pressure from his wife and workmates in construction and it was through his own agency of reconstructing his environment, for example by going to work with children that he started to feel free again.

There are various ways in which the men found this space. For some it was connected to the feeling of home but for others it was not. Home was not always a welcome space wherever it was. For some it was a connection to a good place, be it reconstructed or found. For all of them it was this feeling of a safe place. A place they are free from the social gaze where they have to live up to the social and cultural construction of a man or be frowned upon for the stereotype they present. In this way they find this space where they are free from the male gaze (Bartky, 2003) where both sexes participate upholding the cultural image.

4.5 The social environment

So far the focus of the results has been on the inner sphere of family life and the agency of the individual in that space. However, as Friedl (1986) pointed out behavior in one sphere has an effect on the social role in another. The social norms are very often integrated into how people look and act with their partners. In some cases this pressure may have contributed to divorce. Many of the women I talked to felt a gaze on them in the public sphere, like in the local groceries store of *Bónus*, if their partner was looking or behaving differently than the acceptable norm is for an Icelandic man. If the man had dark skin, they would interpret this gaze as marking them 'immoral or loose' women as was done with women who were associated with American and British soldiers in the past. Margrét, who was living with a man from Thailand, very often got the question where she adopted her daughter from or even, jokingly from friends, whether she had bought her partner. Her reply would often be: "Yeah, I bought him in a six-pack". This she did to remind people how insulting this kind of humor

was. Behavior patterns would also be frowned upon as Pierre felt when he greeted his in-laws for the first time at the airport:

...and I am, you see, French so I just came and hugged them like this and they just kkkggggghhh [made a face with tightened mussels] you see, not used to this and I felt it. ...very stiff or something, worried about how others would perceive them or something...

This indicates that men with different body type or cultural behavior are under more scrutiny from the society than the average Icelandic man. Pierre further noted how the family members changed as soon as they were inside their home. For him it was almost like seeing two persons. How men are negotiating with this outer and inner sphere of society is therefore of some relevance to how their role as fathers and partners is formed.

4.5.1 Negotiations with the outer family space

The notion of the Icelandic family has been going through some morphed changes in the last decades. Single mothers are quite common, gay couples with children are more visible, and more recently single fathers are no longer the new phenomena in the kindergartens. Seeing a father braiding his daughter's hair is not that big of a deal anymore. At the same time, the outer family is almost always present in their lives and as Sam noted the Icelandic social structure can very much be seen as a family structure even if it is taking on a different form. This is, for example, noticeable when the Gay Pride parade is held in Reykjavík. Laurent explains this: "My brother came last summer around Gay Pride and he was kind of blown away by how it was a family business."

So family structures are floating forms, yet they are very present in the lives of parents in Iceland. The men in this research had different experiences of Icelandic families which show how varied they can be. In the course of this study certain trends became apparent.

None of the men talked about having difficult interactions with their fathers-in-law though in a few cases they talked about him as absent from their partners' lives and in two cases they thought him a little strange. Most of them talked about having a really good relationship with them. Pierre, for example, found him to be very helpful as he was speaking French with him and Sam, who held his father-in-law in deepest respect for being the kind of

Viking he came to Iceland to find, said: “Yeah, the first attraction to him was fantastic. He is a very open man. He was very understanding and grew to call me son eventually.”

On the other hand it was more common for them not to get along with their mother-in-law:

Tasos: ...we did not quite fit together but we tried to be polite to each other. She cared for me just as I cared for her but there was something that got on her nerve about what I did or did not do.

Me: Was she unhappy that her daughter married a foreigner?

Tasos: Not really foreigner but who I was because I was much younger... ...and she thought I could not take care of her [daughter] I think. ... My former mother-in-law is also pretty much materialistic.

Divorced men were more likely to talk about this trouble with their mother-in-law but men in relationship would be silent about their relationship with them as they would talk more kindly about their father-in-law. The most common aspect of this dislike seemed to have been that the men were not thought to be good enough in a way that they could not be relied on to take care of their partners and children. Occasionally the fear of the men taking the children or women away was spoken of. Sometimes the men were aware of the in-laws talking about this with their partner and the fathers-in-laws participating but the main dislike seemed to have come from the mothers-in-law. This was not always the case though for three of them talked about having an excellent relationship with their mothers-in-law. Chris said: “Mother-in-law is great, really good connection. Always teasing each other or pulling pranks”.

Brothers and sisters of their partners were rarely mentioned. Sisters seemed to be more neutral but brothers-in-law were either very welcoming, more neutral yet helping them find a job or in one case outright hostile:

...when he [brother-in-law] came to greet me he had pimples which he pushed on and then put his hand forward to me. This is the way he greeted me when he knew some French guy was coming... we talked about it later and then he told me he did it on purpose.

In three cases the women had children from previous relationships and mostly the men had good communication with them but at the same time there was some distance as they tried to show the older children respect or were afraid of stepping into what they considered

their partners role. In one case there seemed to be a dislike between a former child, a son, and the foreign man but the mother traced it to different interests in life rather than open hostility.

Mainly the men had good relationships with other men in their partners family's but the poorest relationships seem to be with their mothers-in-law. The evaluation of whether they met the family standards for suitable partners for the women seemed to fall on the mothers who were mainly focused on the economic aspect of the partnership.

4.5.2 Negotiations with the public space

It is evident that the men are under pressure from the Icelandic families to be in a job that provides well and this they have to integrate and adjust to their roles as fathers. It is further of note that most of them started by getting a job through their partner's family even though some of them had higher education or ethnic group staying here helping them. Being thus reliant on their partner's family often puts them in a very vulnerable spot because should there be a custody battle the court will take into account their ability to provide for the child and have a good family setting (Jónsson, 2012). In most cases when there was a divorce the men in my research had found other means to get a job but the work space was often insecure. Their workplaces would vary between being multicultural or mainly Icelandic. Most of them preferred to work in the former but almost all of them talked about work being the main place where they learned Icelandic:

...mostly it was my first job here. I was working in metal up North; there were only Old Icelandic men so they did not speak any English. Always handing me some tools and telling me in Icelandic. ...It was just good way to learn and also to connect.

Chris was the only one who said he preferred working mainly with Icelandic people and the reason for this was that he could practice the language. When interviewing Edgar at his workplace a Polish man came in to deliver goods. They spoke some kind of Icelandic with each other as the Polish man did not speak English. Explaining this Edgar said: "Yeah, we foreigners speak special kind of Icelandic together that Icelanders don't understand." This may indicate that the constant pressure of speaking the correct language is diverted in a roundabout way. The foreigners find a way to speak to each other comfortably without the pressure of always having the right pronunciation or correct grammar. Some of the men

would said that they felt the gaze of racism in their work in other ways as well, be it by the look in people's eyes, comments dropped or a changing in the tone of voice.

In semipublic places they most often mentioned having good interactions with teachers in their children's school but many of them felt discriminated by people working in legal public institutions. This seemed to depend on their marital status. Some were surprised by how easy it seemed for them to receive papers to be in the country legally. Laurent's paperwork, for example, was mostly handled by his employers and both John and Nemos had been married to their partners for some time before asking for residency. How they acquired their working permits varied but many received it through marriage. After the divorce only Charlie was seeking residency through the family reunion regulation. He received support from The Directorate of Immigration but had difficulties from his Union when he was applying for a work permit. Tasos, on the other hand, felt that people working at public offices were from a different area that had not yet realized the globalization of the world. Charles's case happened some years ago but Tasos was referring to more recent struggles. This may indicate a recent change in attitudes but also that different cases are handled differently by different people about different issues. The men seemed to feel this discrimination mostly in cases of custody battles.

The men would often mention the monopoly of the capitalism in Iceland. They felt that the Icelandic commercial oligopoly was limiting their ability to start businesses, to import products or export money. In addition, many of them said that access to some products was difficult and the price much higher than the usual mark up and taxes could account for. Capitalism is usually more connected to the male sphere of societies so it may be that foreign men are more excluded when competing with other Icelandic men. The way in which Icelandic men needed to situate foreign men became especially clear when they were under the influence of alcohol. In parties Sam observed that:

...a lot of them switch to English even though we spent the last fifteen minutes talking in Icelandic and immediately that is a less of a man to me because you just put yourself higher than me and now I have to treat you as a dog fight... ...and I am really tired of that!

John, who worked as a doorman at a pub for a while, observed that under the influence Icelandic men were prone to put him in the stereotype of a black music producer.

Nevertheless, Icelanders seem to feel this is not negative stereotyping or tend to try to make it seem to be harmless as John remarked:

I get people to make a little comments in Icelandic, thinking I wouldn't understand them and once I say something back to them in Icelandic they start like *hugga* me, like you're my friend, you're my friend! Like actually the most annoying part to me is European men are really touchy feely to me when they drink, like I have never been kissed so much by guys in my life since I lived here.

This was something Karl brought up as well but as he felt less judged by young people in and around Reykjavík, John often got this attitude from young people on the streets. This collides with what I observed in my participant observations as well where on one hand men of darker skin color were more likely to be stereotyped by both young and old while on the other hand men with pink skin would be stereotyped by older people, especially if they came from Southern-Europe but not so much by the younger generations. This brings me to my last observation which is; where do the men find friends they feel comfortable with?

Like their workplace, most of the men had a group of friends that was multicultural. Only one talked about having only Icelandic friends but almost all of them would discuss having an Icelandic male friend as well. Two of them, both from countries distant from Europe, were more involved with their own ethnic group in terms of friendship but one was, in a way, in-between friendships, for he felt himself distancing from his ethnic group but not yet acquiring other friends. He said taking care of his young children did not give him much time to form new friendships. Others would say this as well, raising a child and being a part of a family would diminish the time left for friendships. For some the partner seemed to occupy the role of a close friend and in a few cases the friendship would continue after a split up. Only in two cases did the partner seem to be the only close friend. Most of the men were aware of the need to find support away from home as well.

When finding friends they were mostly seeking people with similar world views or experiences. This did not necessarily mean that they would seek out men of their own ethnicity, class or gender even if more of them talked about male friends. They did not seem to find their friends through work or through their partner's group of friends. The workplace seems to be a place of too much competition in terms of male behavior. Their partner's friends seemed to have a tendency to put them in a box of stereotypes where they were thought of as lacking compared to the Icelandic male. As Sam put it:

This wasn't the kind of thing; they were just showing me who was who. Fill me with alcohol as much as they can, get blasted drunk as quick as you can. The evening wasn't one that my friends and I had a comfortable relationship with. ... This was a group of guys that I have known for a long time but I wouldn't classify any of them as, you know, friends. They were people I knew. To get into the friend group it is difficult now, it is very difficult.

They were all aware of the need to have friends but wanted to choose them carefully which indicates how aware they are of the masculinity gaze which will allocate them an inferior role if they are thought to be lacking. This sectioning seems to be connected to stereotypes of nationality so the men mostly wanted to belong to a friendship group that was more transnational but would include Icelanders as well.

5. Discussion and conclusion

This is a qualitative study that is meant to draw out the food for thought. It is not meant to draw forth concrete evidence. What I present here is built on my education, methodology, personal history and process in the field. It may not reflect the experiences of all those who might fall in this category of samples. In addition, some things might resonate and other things might not.

It seems as more Icelandic women are seeking better opportunities in education, career choices and gain new experiences they live abroad for a time. This research indicates that some women get acquainted with foreign partners abroad. Others meet their foreign partners after returning home. Few of my interviewees partners had lived in communities in Iceland were people of other ethnicities were common. Migration is going both local and global. This may have something to do with the cultural logic of desire (Flemmen and Lotherington, 2008) as they find foreign men exciting but when returning to their own ethnic space feel the pressure of the public gaze on whether their men measure up to material expectations. The fact that most men are from Western or European countries indicates that the image sought cannot be too unfamiliar. This can also mean that they feel that they have more of an individual choice of finding a partner and thus are freed from the cultural role of bearing 'pure' Icelandic children. When having children, on the other hand, the women seek to have family support and familiar surroundings. The men seem to see it as their role to be supportive of their partners. This indicates that they come from a cultural kinship structure where the grandmother on the mother side is supporting her daughter through childbirth. Charlsley (2005), who did research in Britain among Pakistani men who married Pakistani women with British citizenship, pointed out that men may change this cultural role if they have more prospects in a new world. Further, there can be other aspects at play here such as the image of Iceland as a peaceful family place. Appadurai (2000/2008) points out that images travel over boundaries even if they are contested. This image that Iceland has been eager to produce and maintain, the one of being inventive, egalitarian and prosperous, to the outer world, can therefore be attractive and become a reason for others to come here.

In inter-ethnic couples the Icelandic mother has the dominant role; she has the cultural capital that Friedl (1986) points out, which influences the man's social position. The man is supposed to adjust to the Icelandic norm, like the men in Charlsley's (2005) research. The expectations they must live up to is to have well-paid jobs, be attentive fathers and secure

providers. They need to show that they are worthy of what is seen as the ‘independent, strong, beautiful, Icelandic woman’ who is seen as an ‘indisputably good mother’. It is a little contradictory but it places them under a constant gaze, as Puwar (2004) points out, those who are different have in a constant need to prove their worth. It further falls under the masculine gaze, which both men and women participate in upholding. This research indicates that the men are forced to succumb to the harmful effects of masculinity by proving their worth by competing in a harsh financial world (Beasley, 2008) or working long hours (Collins, 2005). There is some indication that skin color and culture zones are partly implemented in the gaze, as is seen by the way women feel this gaze in public places. That can further be mixed with men of different skin color having less opportunities for good jobs unless they are highly educated (Amit and Dyck, 2011). It is interesting to look at whether this may be changing as men from Southern-Europe felt this gaze before but in contemporary Reykjavík it is more men coming from further south of the continent or even the east that experience this. There is some indication of Polish men being increasingly accepted as a partner in Iceland (“Sex prósent para”, 2013).

The main criteria of the social gaze seems to be focused on the financial means. This provokes the egalitarian myth of no class division in Iceland (Pálsson and Helgason, 1996). Further, it indicates how personal traits are seen in the forefront of success rather than socially constructed. Generally speaking the value of a ‘real’ man in Iceland lies in his ability to build a house (Björnsdóttir, 2011) and the main rite of passage is to have been a fisherman or ‘pissed in the salty sea’ (Pálson and Durrenberger, 1983) but this may be the influence of older generations. As Gíslason (2010) points out gender roles tend to change later in older generations and in rural areas in Iceland. It might be very interesting to see what a study of foreign men on Icelandic fishing boats might bring into light. In my interview with Icelandic men it seems foreign men were trusted less. Examining how much foreign men are trusted in the financial world of Iceland, the higher education system and the child care centers might reveal the prevailing infrastructure.

As Puwar (2004) suggested about space invaders, the multitude matters; what traits the bodies carry and how the space they are coming into is constructed. Reykjanes has a history of foreign, unmarried, men invading in multitude. Men who had more financial and cultural capital in the global sense than Icelandic men. The state reacted by constructing a literal, physical fence, disciplining women and instituting a committee which regarded this invasion as a disease (Björnsdóttir, 1989). When a multitude of women came to work in the

Westfjords, albeit forty years later, the government reacted by implementing ways to help them integrate and create a more diverse society. The refugee quotas that Iceland is integrating are focused on women (Minister of Welfare, 2013). At the same time, male refugees are facing discrimination and even violence. If foreign men come in multitudes they are not as welcomed by the state as women are.

Looking at the inner sphere and outer sphere of society it is interesting to see how the men's *translocational positionality* is situated. In the inner sphere fathers-in-law are accepting, helpful and even sympathetic to the foreign men. When they had misgivings they left it to the mothers-in-law to voice them. This may be reflected in state offices as my interviewees more often dealt with women when it came to official licenses. State offices are marked by feminine traits. If there is a multitude of foreign bodies the governmental state takes over or if the women are seen as needing help the judges and police take over, institutions marked by masculine traits.

In the outer sphere Icelandic men mostly treat foreign men with ignorance built on stereotypes or contest. As Loftsdóttir (2009) pointed out, it appears to be important to Icelandic men to prove their worth to the global world, especially Western men who have more power, while at the same time they want to be seen as humanitarian (Björnsdóttir, 2011). This is reflected in their relations with foreign men in the streets or in bars and at parties. The Icelanders want to show their friendliness, but at the same time make sure they are perceived as being superior.

In Iceland both women and men are testing foreign men and they must prove their worth. This is in line with what Connell (2005) has pointed out. She states that both men and women participate in upholding a patriarchal ideology. What is further revealed is how the men come occupy a very different social position after they are divorced so their marital status is an important variable in translocational positionality. If they have not created a support group of their own, they can experience trouble finding housing, work or emotional help. Finding a friend in a competitive environment where the language can be a barrier appears to take time. When the men are married the image is one of being a supportive husband and attentive father who is a good provider. A good woman is supposed to be supportive of the man's emotional needs and help provide for the home. In this way they reflect Strathern's *dividualism* (see Cornwall and Lindisfarne, 1994). If a divorced foreign man does not have a social support group, he is more an individual in Strathern's sense. They

come under the social gaze of whether they are good weekend dads for it is rare for them to gain custody of their children. Yet, many of the divorced men choose to stay in the country to be closer to their children. Being a good father who does not leave his children has become an integral part of their identities.

After a divorce the men often experience a disagreement with their former partners about money and what is best for the children. As Bryceson and Vourela (2002) pointed out in their *relativizing* theory, relativity can differ among family members in transnational families. As the mother has more ethnic power her voice carries more weight in the ethnic social space of Reykjavík. This fight about who should be in control of the financial means is reflected in Icelandic families as well (Skaptadóttir, 1996) and the state has taken on the role of the supporter in the case of single mothers (Gurdin, 1996). Yet in a consumer society where, in spite of the outcome of gender equality status in the Gender Gap Report, women still have less salaries and the mother image is still at the front of their identities which makes it harder for them to work long hours. This again creates conflict which can be seen both in foreign men and Icelandic ones.

I find Collins' description of *hegemonic masculinities* to be helpful to see how the gender practice of the Icelandic masculine norm is being upheld by both men and women as a he needs to be a provider and is constantly challenged to be worthy. He is rarely seen as equal to other men in the open sphere. However, I find Collins' model to be a little too simple as shown in other aspects of translocational positionality. Marital status, social support, economics and language skills are important variables. As the relativizing shows, the power position of persons in the transnational family matter greatly. These conflicts bring out some complexity of image and identities. For example, if a new attribute of being an attentive father is becoming more dominant in the hierarchy of masculinities in Reykjavík, will the hard foreign worker not be thought to be good enough? Another complexity is that while the interviewees did not seem to hold the common Icelandic man in their age group in much esteem, they would admire the older generation of Icelandic men. They were often tired of being in a dog fight with the Icelanders, thought them on average to be ignorant or drunk or too metro while they found the older generation to be hard working and a role model for sacrificing their time with their children so they could provide for the family. At the same time the foreign men have been changing the ways they are teaching their own children new gender roles and their identity is very much embedded in being a father who is close to his children.

Coming thus to Vertovec's *bifocality* (2004) it is interesting to see how my interviewees were often using the most prominent father figure in their life as a role model but also taking into the picture their own transnational experience as well as attributes from a mother figure in their life that they wanted to pass down to their children. Further, they wanted to be more emotionally present in their children's lives than many of their fathers had been.

They are creating a dwelling embedded in their own social relationships that are formed and reformed as Ingold (2000) remarked. They do this while raising their children but also in dialogue with their partners or ex-partners. The quality of the relations varies, based on many intersectionalities, space and time. Sometimes their own age and the age of the children seem to matter and sometimes the time that has passed since the divorce. Personalities likewise seem to matter as one could have a really good relationship with one ex-partner but not another. In addition, they are creating their own transnational space among friends, which includes both Icelanders and foreigners. A place where the gaze is not so intense, male competition is less and acceptance of transnationality is more prevalent. This is further reflected in the way in which they feel at ease in their body, in the manner Jackson (2005) described. It is often connected to people or the memory of people but almost always it involves a space where they can breathe easier away from the cultural male gaze.

This shows clearly that the gender of men in migration is changeable and they are not just repeating the cultural gender role of their youth. It may have an immense effect on them as Bourdieu (1977/2006) points out, but they are molding it in various ways in a new space as well as recreating that space. This was particularly apparent when it came to raising a child and forming friendships. This could be seen with both men in relationships and single men.

It is therefore important to open up new *dialogical moments* as Anthias (2002) suggests. One way might be to talk more positively about men trying on new gender roles regarding work or how they are trying on new roles. This can be done by media coverage, role models and in everyday conversation. A woman's choice to stay at home with her children has been a popular topic of conversation in the media and in social circles while it is rarely asked if the man has this choice. Men may feel the pressure from both men and women of being a good provider and supportive husband by giving up this choice but at the same time want to have more emotional ties to their children. Gislason (2010) believes this is changing and I believe we must keep up this discourse so more men can have this choice. I do not want

to downplay the provider role by this, it is a worthy role, but both parents are able to do that just as both parents are able to raise children from an early age.

Another dialogue that needs to be opened is the one of custody. In a recent change in children's laws, nr. 76/2003, there is a requirement for the parents to use a counselor to find the best solutions for the children involved. In the case of foreign partners it is important to have people present that can mediate how cultural gender roles are changing with men as well as women and can help them present their case. Protecting the child is something that most cultures find vital even if what is thought to be best for the child varies. Wanting to protect children is understandable but between transnational people a new dialogue must be opened that does not involve either/or choices but incorporate finding various ways in a changing world.

I came across a picture online that shows two books side by side. One is large and is supposed to represent women. The other one is very thin and represents men. In this lies the assumption that women are complicated and men simple. I believe this is partly because the gender of men has not been in the public discourse that much. Perhaps it further helps to maintain the image that the man is better in dealing with the outer sphere because he does not make things too complicated yet it also keeps him away from children, as he is being seen as too simple minded to take care of them. This idea maintains that men are unable to change. I believe this research is contributing to the growing field of studies that clearly show otherwise.

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