KU LEUVEN

FACULTEIT PSYCHOLOGIE EN

PEDAGOGISCHE WETENSCHAPPEN

At the intersection of culture and forced family separation.

An explorative study of lived experiences and dealing with transnational family separation after forced migration.

Masterproef aangeboden tot het verkrijgen van de graad van Master of Science in de pedagogische wetenschappen

Door

Nore Jans

promotor: Prof. Lucia De Haene

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SUMMARY

Transnational family separation and reunification is one of the main disruptive processes constituting the refugee family experience. Persecution and war force people to flee their home country in the search for refuge elsewhere. Some of these individuals ask for international protection in a European country, while being separated from family members living in the homeland or in a country of transit. These ruptures in kinship communities and family life in the wake of forced migration resonate through the lived experiences of individuals living in exile.

The aim of this master's thesis is to reflect on the multi-layered intersection of forced family separation and culture. More specifically, this thesis elaborates on how dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission are experienced in a context of transnational family separation, by adults with a story of forced migration residing in Flanders (Belgium). An exploration of the literature on transnational family separation and forced migration illuminates the emotional distress that is associated with family separation, the process of reconstructing family life in a transnational space and the interplay of culture and family separation. Building on this body of research, a multiple-case study was performed involving the narratives of five individuals of Afghan origin living in Flanders. Two semi-structured interviews were conducted of each research participant. A reflexive thematic analysis of these interviews resulted in the description of four meaningful patterns or themes that were identified across the data set, namely: the supportive role of religious meaning systems in coping with forced separation, the transnational preservation of cultural traditions within the transnational family, loss of cultural traditions as a locus of discord within the transnational family, and the transnational family as a cornerstone for autonomy in cultural and religious practice. The findings of this multiple-case study are subsequently connected to previous scholarly work and implications for research and practice are formulated.

Lived experiences regarding transnational family separation seem to be closely interrelated with cultural repertoires and practices. This explorative study suggests that religion may play a supportive role in coping with transnational family separation. Furthermore, the preservation of cultural traditions and role patterns within the transnational family seems to be a possible source of connection between relatives. Moreover, non-compliance with the family's cultural and religious customs can be the subject of tension, although it may also be associated with a sense of freedom and tolerance. However, there are no final answers and still many questions to be asked about the multi-layered intersection of culture and forced family separation.

PREFACE

Someone once told me that I have been working on this master's thesis with heart, mind, and soul. To me, these were beautiful words.

This thesis is rooted in the various encounters I had with individuals and families with a story of forced migration, and with a few of them in particular. They prompt me to think, to feel, to be indignant, to embrace, to imagine, and to study. I am thankful for these encounters from human to human, however close or distant they might have been.

I want to express my gratitude to Professor Lucia De Haene. She truly inspires me, which is one of the greatest gifts someone can receive. Moreover, she shared her knowledge, her vision and her commitment in an intriguing domain.

Furthermore, I would like to thank the participants in this study to share their narratives with me and to welcome me at their home.

A special word of appreciation also goes to my parents who gave me the opportunity to study, and to all our professors and my internship mentor to educate me. Without their contribution, this master's thesis would not have been what it is today.

CLARIFICATION OF APPROACH AND OWN CONTRIBUTION

This final report is the result of a student-proposed master's thesis topic. More specifically, I was interested in the lived experiences of people living in exile with regard to family separation. Professor Lucia De Haene agreed to supervise a thesis on this subject and the request for my self-proposed thesis topic was approved by the vice-dean of education.

Professor De Haene suggested relevant literature during the entire research process, especially when I started working on my thesis. These suggestions were complemented by my own exploration of the literature on forced migration, transnational family separation and research methods.

I narrowed the focus of my master's thesis on the basis of a literature study and decided which data collection method would be used, both in consultation with Professor De Haene. Participants in the pilot interviews were recruited in a Flemish reception center for applicants for international protection (Red Cross-Flanders, I contacted the management of the reception center myself). The participants in the multiple-case study were partly recruited by mobilizing my own social network. My supervisor also brought me into contact with one prospective participant who acted as the 'source/seed' of a small snowball sampling procedure.

Furthermore I prepared an informed consent form and two interview guides. Professor De Haene gave feedback on these documents. I myself conducted the pilot interviews and the interviews that would provide the data for a multiple-case study. Moreover, I transcribed and analysed the multiple-case interviews manually.

To draw up the report of my master's thesis, I preferred--in consultation with my supervisor–to use the format of a research article. Although my native language is Dutch, I also decided to write this thesis in English. Professor Lucia De Haene provided me with feedback about the written record of my study (section on literature, method, results etcetera).

I could rely on Professor De Haene for valuable guidance and feedback during the entire research process.

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ABSTRACT

Transnational family separation and reunification is one of the main disruptive processes constituting the refugee family experience. This article aims to explore dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission in a context of transnational family separation after forced migration. It reports on a qualitative multiple-case study involving the narratives of individuals of Afghan origin living in Flanders (Belgium). A reflexive thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews resulted in four meaningful themes which illuminate the role of religion in coping with forced separation, the preservation and loss of cultural traditions within the transnational family and processes of friction and tolerance regarding intra-family cultural differences. These findings point to multiple dimensions of the intersection of culture and forced separation.

Keywords

Transnational family separation, forced migration, refugees, culture, religion

INTRODUCTION

Persecution and war leave behind deep traces in the soul of individuals, families and communities. Millions of people are forced to flee their home region due to human violence and seek a safe haven elsewhere. Some among them arrive in a European country and ask the relevant government for international protection. Whether granted protection or not, this migration process is accompanied by numerous transformations in the lives of those who flee their home.

These transformations are entangled with main disruptive processes, which are constituting the refugee family experience through complex interplay: marginality, traumatisation, acculturation, and transnational family separation and reunification (De Haene, Grietens, & Verschueren, 2007). Pre-migration experiences as well as post-migration experiences relate to each of these disruptive processes and may interact with each other. Marginality touches upon marginalization of the family endured in the native country and upon possible social and cultural isolation in the host country (De Haene et al., 2007). Traumatisation refers to a situation of fear and experienced helplessness in which the life or body of oneself or of others is threatened because of violence and atrocities. Traumatic events can have long lasting repercussions, such as disruptions in social connections and meaning making (Herman, 1993; Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011). Acculturation is conceptualized by Berry (1990) as the process that leads to change in a human population when coming into contact with other cultures. Psychological acculturation is defined as the process that induces change in individuals due to contact with another culture and by being confronted with the acculturation changes in their culture of origin (Berry, 1990). Transnational family separation is furthermore ubiquitous amongst refugees, who often leave their native country hurriedly.[1] Many families are fragmented because of people crossing borders to seek refuge, while all or some of their loved ones stay behind. Sometimes there is the possibility to reunite, often after an extended period of living apart (Rousseau, Mekki-Berrada, & Moreau, 2001; Rousseau, Rufagari, Bagilishya, & Measham, 2004).

In this article, we focus on transnational family separation and reunification as a disruptive process in the course of forced migration. According to Barudy (as cited in Rousseau et al., 2004), the family separation and reunification process could be defined by three main stages: before the departure, during the separation and the reunion. A new familial balance or imbalance characterizes each of these stages, partly shaping how the family will further evolve (Rousseau et al., 2004).

[1] Figures on transnational family separation after forced migration to a European country are difficult to find. However, UNICEF reports that on a total of 30,000 children who arrived in 2018 in Europe, 12,700 were separated or unaccompanied (UNICEF, n.d.).

We will delve into the second phase of the family separation and reunification process: the separation itself.[2] According to international human rights standards, people looking for protection abroad should be able to reunify with family members effectively and without unreasonable time delays. Nevertheless, in Europe, official family reunification procedures are imbued with many practical and legal barriers which result in lengthy and complex processes (Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, 2017). Furthermore, an emphasis on the nuclear family can limit the opportunity to reunite with relatives belonging to the extended family. For example, the right to family reunification is in Belgium generally restricted to the spouse (or an equivalent partner), to one's minor children and to parents in the case of underage applicants for international protection (Agentschap Integratie en Inburgering, n.d.).

Transnational family separation resonates through the lived experiences of refugees and their families. Research indicates that the familial homeostasis may be disrupted when relatives migrate (Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002). Family relationships, strategies and roles change as a result of living apart and being culturally uprooted (Williams as cited in Rousseau et al., 2004). Scholarly work in particular highlights how heartfelt suffering is associated with cracks in the family unit (Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011; Miller, Hess, Bybee, & Goodkind, 2018; Rousseau et al., 2004).

More specifically, many in exile are occupied by pervasive fear or concerns regarding the welfare and safety of family members in the homeland, a country deeply affected by profound injustice and atrocities (McDonald-Wilmsen & Gifford, 2009; Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011; Miller et al., 2018; Shapiro & Montgomery, in press). This is especially the case in the absence of information about loved ones, when confronted with news about the conflict in the home region and when one's own political or military history increases the precariousness of others (Miller et al., 2018). Besides

[2] Although we will focus on the second phase of the family separation and reunification process, it seems valuable to address briefly the stage of reunification. Rousseau et al. (2004) indicate that this stage is often expected to be a happy end to a process of many losses associated with forced migration. Nevertheless, they argue that the reunification of relatives, who possibly had very different experiences in the past, often equals another family crisis. It disrupts the balance, however fragile, within the family that may have been established during the separation. Roles and routines, for instance, have to be renegotiated and people are abruptly confronted with the fact that they changed physically and mentally over the years (Rousseau et al., 2004). The complexity of reunification of family members is confirmed by other research on migrant families in which family reunification is associated with feelings of joy, but also with estrangement and leaving behind loved ones or substitute caregivers in the homeland (Suárez-Orozco, Bang, & Kim, 2011; Suárez-Orozco, Todorova, & Louie, 2002).

anxiety, a feeling of powerlessness to control the state of being separated and to help relatives abroad can prevail (Miller et al., 2018; Rousseau et al., 2001; Rousseau et al., 2004). The inability to offer economic support may for instance strengthen the weight of being separated (Miller et al., 2018). Feeling powerless in the wake of separation can challenge one's own identity, the will to live and the meaning of life (Rousseau et al., 2004). Uncertainty, furthermore, often characterizes the experience of living apart. Many dream and hope of reunifying with loved ones, while remaining in the dark about how long the separation will drag on (Miller et al., 2018; Rousseau et al., 2001). However, low expectations concerning the chances to live one day in the proximity of extended family members in the country of destination can prevail (Rousseau et al., 2001). Anger and impatience with regard to administrative and legislative bodies may result from excessive delays in the family reunification procedure (Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011). All this can be accompanied by a sense of loneliness and guilt which surrounds a penetrating silence (Rousseau et al., 2001; Rousseau et al., 2004).

In a study in which refugees were involved who had arrived in the United States less than three years before the study was conducted, participants mark family separation as the most distressing factor of life after resettlement (Miller et al., 2018). Moreover, the weight of family separation may be compounded by other migration dynamics, such as trauma, discrimination in the country of destination, new cultural scripts, difficult working conditions, limited social support etcetera (Rousseau et al., 2001; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

Without minimizing the derailing repercussions of transnational family separation, research findings which illuminate the possible enriching nature of separation should be taken into account. Physical distance can bring those who are forced to live apart closer to each other. It may show the strength of the relationship between spouses and bolster their emotional bond (Rousseau et al., 2004). This finding nuances the given that couples break under the pressure of forced separation (Rousseau et al., 2001). Furthermore, noticing that one can rely on itself can enhance empowering feelings of self-confidence and independence. Some also remark that separation of extended family members simplifies life, because some obligations shrink and interference of relatives reduces (Rousseau et al., 2004).

When physical proximity vanishes and people are separated by rough landscapes, connection can be treasured in transnational spaces. Grace (2018) notes the following: "The emergence of transnational family practices becomes the primary form of extended family relations for those resettled without their extended families" (p. 126). Emotional intimacy, family practices and feelings of home are maintained across geographical borders (Mazzucato as cited in Solheim & Ballard, 2016; Shapiro &

Montgomery, in press). According to Solheim and Ballard (2016), this touches upon carrying out family interactions and processes in two countries simultaneously or transnationally, rather than just in one country. Parrenas (2005) for instance notes that mothers who migrated for economic reasons call their children abroad regularly, send them clothing, monitor meals and are sharing a bank account with relatives abroad, to "achieve a semblance of intimate family life across borders" (p. 334). However, fulfilling roles from afar can be imbued with power dynamics, such as husbands calling their wives randomly to check whether they are at home and who are requesting pictures to supervise how their spouses are dressed (Solheim & Ballard, 2016).

In navigating transnationalism as a shared social space (Grace, 2018), communication plays an important role. Advanced technology opened opportunities for timeless, consistent and close contact through e-mail, social media and mobile phones (Jerves, De Haene, Enzlin, & Rober, 2018; Solheim & Ballard, 2016). Nonetheless, opportunities to maintain close contact can be restricted due to technological limitations in war zones (Shapiro & Montgomery, in press). Furthermore, transnational communication can be entwined with dynamics of silence. Research reports on participants who selectively keep quiet about things that would not please parents (Jerves et al., 2018) or on refugees who conceal adverse resettlement conditions out of care for family members (e.g. by avoiding video calls or contact with relatives abroad; Miller et al., 2018).

Researchers also comment on the role that culture can play in a context of transnational family separation. More specifically, the literature points to processes of cultural disruption that are associated with separation of relatives. This disruption may be embedded in culturally regulated role patterns within the family, such as traditional models of the woman as the homemaker and the man as the breadwinner (Rousseau et al., 2004; Solheim & Ballard, 2016). Although some cultural role responsibilities can be carried out transnationally (Grace, 2018; Solheim & Ballard, 2016), it is difficult to fulfil other roles from afar (Solheim & Ballard, 2016). Family roles are therefore reconfigured when someone is absent for a long time, such as in the case of a parent who starts acting as a father and as a mother (Rousseau et al., 2004).

The disruption in culturally regulated roles within the family due to migration is clearly illustrated in a study of Solheim and Ballard (2016). They indicate that in some cultures child or elderly care is perceived to be a shared responsibility, which is in concordance with more collectivistic ideals. These cultural scripts can ease role flexibility in for example child-rearing, but also regulate continuing responsibilities across borders. The absence of grandchildren may be more intense and distressing for Eastern-European grandparents who expect to participate profoundly in raising the new generation, than for those with other caregiving repertoires (Solheim & Ballard, 2016).

Other dimensions of cultural disruption due to family separation are highlighted by Miller et al. (2018), who suggest that separation challenges cultural practices. They illuminate, among other things, that living apart may bring about disconnection with spiritual practices. More specifically, they quote a man who was forced to migrate and who attributes "straying from strict religious practice to not having family members around him" (p. 32). The importance that is attached to cultural guidance and transmission is further indicated. It is illustrated by a young refugee woman, who is separated from family members and longs for their guidance while living in the host culture. Besides this, someone else in exile wishes that his parents join him in the host country to provide cultural continuity to his offspring, in particular by passing on their cultural legacy (Miller et al., 2018). Interestingly, these findings seem to recall the following remark of Solheim and Ballard (2016): "length of separation is often associated with greater assimilation into the culture and customs in the country of destination. Thus, family members may feel increasingly divided not only by geographic distance but by cultural divergence as well" (p. 353).

The literature not only documents processes of cultural disruption that are associated with transnational family separation, but also addresses culture as a source of coping with the separation from relatives. Mekki-Berrada and Rousseau (2011) illustrate how for refugees in the process of family reunification, (the reconstruction of) family cohesion is anchored in Algerian pre-Islamic and Islamic values of solidarity. Besides, God's presence may alleviate suffering and ease the acceptance of powerlessness in a context of family separation (Rousseau et al., 2004). Moreover, an ethnographic study of Grace (2018) reveals how social remittances, such as cultural knowledge or items, are a source of cultural preservation and of connection within kinship structures. She describes vividly how a traditional healing ritual for a sick woman in California, who fled from her country, was arranged with relatives in Tanzania. Subsequently, the ritual was performed in a coordinated manner with family members and others abroad, transcending distances by using a three-way phone calling:

> Nura sat on the floor grasping her breast with one hand and holding the phone with the other hand. […] The Quran was read, songs were sung, prayers were prayed and the family collectively released a sign of relief. Those in California rushed to work and school while those in Tanzania continued to sing and dance through the night for the sake of the woman's health. (Grace, 2018, p. 130)

Further Grace (2018) outlines how aunts in exile are called upon to teach a young bride in Tanzania by phone, which is their culturally regulated family role; highlights that cultural items such as herbal medicines or rugs are send to the United States to avoid conflicts over economic remittances; and

writes about an older man who demonstrates to extended family members abroad how to perform songs for a dance ritual. In line with the foregoing, Solheim and Ballard (2016) postulate that within transnational families one can still participate together in celebrations and ceremonies by, for example, attending the baptism of a grandchild through video conferencing. They also suggest that culturally regulated family roles, such as the man as breadwinner, can be fulfilled from afar.

However, the body of research on transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration is rather limited, in particular research on the role of culture in a context of forced family separation. Intrigued and inspired by the literature outlined above we therefore constructed the following research question: “How are dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission experienced in a context of transnational family separation, by adults with a story of forced migration residing in Flanders?” This article presents our qualitative multiple-case study on the role of culture in experiencing transnational family separation.

METHOD

Sample and recruitment

Five participants initially were recruited in a Flemish reception center for applicants for international protection. However, for three prospective participants the Dublin Procedure was ongoing, while two participants had to leave Belgium due to the Dublin Regulation.[3] Because of the assumed peculiar nature of lived experiences regarding transnational family separation in such precarious circumstances and the additional socio-emotional distress interviews could cause, we decided to recruit participants by other means.

However, in order to do justice to the wish of these prospective participants to share narratives about family separation in a research context, four pilot interviews were organized (one person had left the reception center and could therefore not be interviewed). Our concerns about the additional socio-emotional burden that research participation might generate were discussed beforehand with the participants.

To collect the data that this article reports on, we mobilized our own social network to find individuals who met a list of predefined criteria for research participation. Seven persons were contacted, of whom five participated in the entire research process (n=5). More specifically, we contacted five persons via own acquaintances who acted as intermediary or gatekeepers. The intermediaries or gatekeepers themselves had no migration background, nor had any substantial personal or professional relationship with the participants in question. One of these five contacted persons refused to participate in the study, one withdrew after the first interview and three participated during the entire research process. Furthermore, two other persons were contacted successively by using the snowball sampling method, with a single participant as the so-called 'source/seed' (Sadler, Lee, Lim, & Fullerton, 2010; Sedgwick, 2013). They both participated in the entire research process.

It should be noted that the person who refused participation was not willing to share personal and burdensome narratives with a near stranger. The person who withdrew from research participation gave as a reason that he felt overwhelmed during and after the first interview. This interview took place immediately after discussing the research design for the first time. Due to the many stimuli

[3] The Dublin Regulation determines which European Member State is responsible for the examination of an application for international protection submitted in one of the Members States. Accordingly, an applicant can be ordered to travel to the State responsible (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013, 2013).

present, he processed information about study practicalities insufficiently and mainly started questioning our intention only afterwards (in interaction with his friends).

The above nonprobability sampling technique seemed appropriate given the difficult accessibility of people who meet the predefined criteria (see below) and the sensitive nature of the research topic (Lavrakas, 2008; Sadler et al., 2010; Sedgwick, 2013; Woodley & Lockard, 2016). A representative sample is, moreover, not a requirement for our study in which we do not have the intention to generalize research findings at population level. The selection bias associated with our sampling technique is therefore not problematic. Besides, the chances that participants are located in the same social milieu, which Woodley and Lockard (2016) describe as a common criticism on snowball sampling, were reduced by not only using the snowball method to recruit participants. In addition, all participants were strangers for the interviewer and vice versa. A possible strong trust base by recruiting participants within the interviewer's own circle of acquaintances would not outweigh the increased risk of bias in the data collection and analysis.

Individuals had to meet a list of predefined criteria to be included in the study. More specifically, they had to have a history of forced migration and had to reside in Flanders. Furthermore, participants needed to be at least eighteen years old. In addition, they had to live separated from family members who reside in their own region of origin or in a transit country and who belong to the nuclear or extended family structure. Moreover, a list of exclusion criteria was used. Persons who did not possess a residence permit of limited or unlimited duration were excluded from research participation (note that persons in the possession of a provisional residence permit on account of their pending application for international protection were also excluded; Commissioner General for Refugees and Stateless Persons, 2019a, 2019b; Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, n.d.a). Not having Afghanistan as his/her country of origin and having insufficient language skills to use Dutch or English as the working language during interviews were two other exclusion criteria.

With regard to the list of exclusion criteria, it should be noted that persons were recruited on the basis of their residence status to ensure that participants were already residing sufficiently long in Flanders when the research took place. This subgroup would probably give the highest chances to recruit participants who had been immersed in the host culture.[4] We also wanted to avoid drawing participants from a particularly precarious subpopulation (see above: Dublin Regulation).

[4] Note that applicants for international protection in Flanders are mainly accommodated in collective reception centers (Federal Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers, n.d.b), which presumably gives few opportunities to be immersed in the host culture.

Furthermore, we designated country of origin as a selection criterium based on the premise that the history, the current situation and the cultural frameworks of one's country of origin influence the experience of cultural identification and cultural transmission in a context of transnational family separation. Homogeneity with regard to this characteristic seems thus preferable to foster depth in our research findings. The choice for Afghanistan is partly rooted in the long-standing and pervasive conflict that marks this country (European Asylum Support Office, 2017). The conflict is reflected in the total number of persons who were given international protection in Flanders in 2018 (Commissariaat-Generaal voor de Vluchtelingen en de Staatlozen, 2019). Moreover, professional interpreters could not be employed due to limited financial resources. In line with the capabilities of the interviewer, sufficient Dutch (the official language in Flanders) or English proficiency was therefore a requirement.

The participants that ultimately participated in the entire research process were at the time of the interviews between 20 and 30 years old, unmarried, and without offspring. They were all men, Hazara or Tajik, had left Afghanistan three to seventeen years before the interviews took place, and had been living in Belgium for a period of time ranging from three to eleven years.[5] Moreover, none of their family members were living in Belgium.

Research procedure

We carried out a qualitative multiple-case study, characterized by being holistic, particularistic, contextual and concrete in nature (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In accordance with Savin-Baden and Major (2013), we define 'case study' as a research approach which draws upon other approaches for its data-collection methods and analytical strategies. More specifically, our narrative case study involves an in-depth examination of the experiences and stories of five participants confronted with transnational family separation (n=5). The preparation of an application for ethics review by the Social and Societal Ethics Committee (KU Leuven) fostered reflection on ethical conduct in relation to a vulnerable research population. Ethical approval was given by the relevant ethics review board (code approval: G- 2018 11 1383).[6]

[5] Different ethnic groups live in Afghanistan, including Hazaras and Tajiks (Minority Rights Group International, 2018).

[6] Victims of forced migration are a vulnerable research population. They often endure an accumulation of disruptive and traumatic life stressors before the flight (e.g. torture, war violence), during the flight (e.g. exploitation, physical injury) and after the flight (e.g. discrimination, barriers to accessing social and health services, limited social support; Cleveland, Rousseau, & Guzder, 2014). Furthermore, as already mentioned, research indicates that transnational family separation is associated with socio-emotional suffering (McDonald-Wilmsen & Gifford, 2009; Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011; Miller et al., 2018; Rousseau et al., 2004).

In the light of our research question, we conducted face-to-face semi-structured interviews with individuals experiencing transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration. This method is convenient for data collection due to its focus on sharing perspectives and experiences (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). As indicated in what preceded, five persons went through the entire research process consisting of two semi-structured interviews with a time interval of a few weeks and a duration varying between 130 and 210 minutes. The interviews were conducted in Dutch and recorded with an audio recorder. As requested by participants, conversations took place at participants' homes from December 2018 to March 2019.

To operationalize our research question, we constructed two consecutive interview guides. The interview guidelines consisted of a number of open-ended questions touching upon some key topics. Both interview guides were based on the literature on transnational family separation and refined by means of the pilot interviews. In addition, we were inspired by a cultural interview and scholarly work regarding the genogram to draw up interview guide 1 (cf. Hardy & Laszloffy, 1995; McCullough-Chavis & Waites, 2004; McGoldrick, Gerson, & Shellenberger, 1999; Nivel, Zorggroep Almere, & Pharos, 2015; Shellenberger, Dent, Davis-Smith, Seale, Weintraut, & Wright, 2007; Thomas, 1998; Warde, 2012; Yznaga, 2008).

The genogram is a graphical depiction of relationships, patterns and critical events (e.g. migration) within a family (see annex 1 for an example of a genogram). Its use as a tool in clinical practice is based on the assumption that people and their problems or solutions do not exist in a vacuum, but in interactional systems such as the family (McGoldrick et al., 1999). More specifically: "Its [genogram questioning] structure provides an orienting framework for discussion of the full range of family experiences" (McGoldrick et al., 1999, p. 150). In addition to the standard model, special attention is given to a family's cultural context in a cultural genogram. This instrument reveals family members' ethnicity, migration history, religious commitment, cultural values or traditions, and other cultural characteristics (McCullough-Chavis & Waites, 2004; Shellenberger et al., 2007; Thomas, 1998).

The aim of interview 1 was to compose a cultural genogram, without already delving into the interactions between family members or in experiences regarding transnational family separation. The information provided by the cultural genogram would be used as an impetus for interview 2. Following the finding that constructing a genogram can foster rapport between patient and clinician in a clinical context (McGoldrick et al., 1999), we also used the cultural genogram as a tool to further a participant-researcher trust base. This trust base was important to broach family separation in-depth during interview 2.

Interview guide 1 consisted of questions about the family configuration and the family's cultural repertoires, in order to compose a cultural genogram (see annex 2 for interview guide 1). More specifically, we asked participants to represent their nuclear and extended family members on a family tree. This phase of the interview included questions such as: "May I then ask you to depict your family as a family tree? You can use the following legend for this." and "May I ask you who passed away in your family?" By means of genogram questioning, participants subsequently delineated orally and partly visual their own cultural repertoires, practices, beliefs, position and history, and those of their family members. The following are examples of predefined questions: "Can you colour the symbol of each family member with a colour that equals the country where he/she is currently staying?", "What role does religion and spirituality play in the lives of your family members?" and "How do you notice in your own behaviour, thinking, life, dressing and so on that you come and have come into contact with another culture due to your flight to Belgium?"

The aim of interview 2 was to explore the interconnections between transnational family separation and dynamics of cultural identification and transmission. We drafted in advance some keywords on the cultural genogram as a way to summarize what the participant had told during interview 1 and visually represented separation from family members (see annex 3, 4 and 5 for a cultural genogram of one of the participants). This summary was reviewed at the beginning of interview 2, constituting a short member check procedure that offered the possibility to modify data and interpretations (Birt, Scott, Cavers, Campbell, & Walter, 2016). It was also meant to be an impetus or reference point during interview 2, for the participant as well as for the interviewer.

Interview guide 2 consisted of questions about the interactions between family members and lived experiences regarding transnational family separation, with special attention to the role of culture in a context of separation (see annex 6 for interview guide 2). The following are examples of questions asked: "What does culture and religion mean to you in dealing with separation?", "Which traditions or rituals do you still experience in Belgium together with your family?", and "To what extent does your family find it important that you hold on in Belgium to their culture and to the Islam?" Furthermore, a more extended summary (with sub-questions arising) from interview 1 was prepared for each participant. This extended summary supplemented interview guide 2 and was used to delve further into lived experiences regarding transnational family separation during the interview.

Informed consent was perceived to be an iterative process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013), whereby the mobilization of autonomy, self-determination and control was central in the light of trauma recovery and power differences between the researcher and members of the socially vulnerable population in question (De Haene, Grietens, & Verschueren, 2010). Note in particular that those who

showed interest to participate in the study were extensively informed about the research design during an individual meeting with the first author in person.[7] An informed consent form was discussed and signed at the beginning of interview 1 (see annex 7 for the informed consent form). At the end of each interview was briefly explored how participants had experienced the interview. It should be noted that the use of sound methodologies to facilitate such conversation could have generated a more profound view on the research process and on emotions associated with (speaking about) family separation.

The names in this article are pseudonyms, in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research participants to the extent possible. We ourselves translated the quotations of research participants that are presented in this article from Dutch to English. In order to stay as close as possible to the original quotations, language difficulties are also reflected in the translation.

Data-analysis

To analyse the data resulting from the above mentioned procedure (ten semi-structured interviews: five data items interview 1 and five data items interview 2), we used reflexive thematic analysis as conceptualized by Braun and Clarke (2006; Clarke, 2017).[8] This flexible qualitative analytic method consists of the identification, analysis and reporting of patterns (meaningful themes) within our data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The method enabled us to single out similarities and dissimilarities across the data set. Reflexive thematic analysis is, moreover, not bound to a particular epistemological or theoretical approach. Its use is appropriate in the light of our research approach and data-collection method (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke, 2017). Furthermore, echoing Braun and Clarke (2006; Clarke, 2017), we acknowledge and embrace the active and creative role of the researcher in the process of analysis.

Themes were not defined in advance to be projected on the data, but were the result of our analysis process (Clarke, 2017). This recursive process, in broadly following Braun and Clarke (2006), consisted of (1) familiarization with the data, which included data collection, transcription, and actively re-reading the transcripts, (2) going through all the transcripts line by line and manually

[7] The first semi-structured interview only took place a few days or weeks after the first meeting, with two exceptions (because of time constraints). It seems desirable, within the framework of informed consent, to build in sufficient time to calmly (re)consider the request for participation in the research.

[8] Incomplete data, resulting from discontinuation of research participation, was not analysed.

coding interesting data elements in the light of our research question (one sentence or extract could be marked with multiple codes), drawing up a code tree that represents a list of meaningful codes and sub-codes (see annex 8 for the code tree used for data analysis), and recoding the transcripts using the code tree to collate relevant data to every code, (3) organizing codes into potential (sub-)themes, (4) revision of themes in the light of the data, (5) refining the characteristics of the themes and the overall story, and (6) explicitly relating the analysis to the literature and production of the final report. Memos were written throughout the entire analysis process.

Data was transcribed letter by letter, including nonverbal aspects such as laughter, hitches, pacing of the conversation and events in the immediate environment. It should further be noted that we practiced constructionist reflexive thematic analysis, in which attention is given to the sociocultural and structural context of the accounts provided by participants. Furthermore, we did not focus on a quite specific research question during coding--rather on our general one--and thus primarily identified specific questions and themes inductively. Besides, an analysis unit was not designated as a theme based on quantitative criteria (e.g. its prevalence across data items), but on how important its content is in relation to our general research question. Moreover, we chose to construe a rich description of the entire data set instead of a detailed elaboration of one aspect in particular. A rich description of the entire data set seemed favourable given that there is not much known about the lived experiences of Afghan refugees regarding the intersection of culture and forced family separation, nor there is much research done on this topic in general (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke, 2018).

RESULTS

During the semi-structured interviews, all participants pointed to close and frequent contact within most families living in their home countries. In what follows, we will elaborate on the way participants experience and deal with transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration, based on our interpretations of the narratives that they shared with us. In particular, we will focus on the intersection of transnational family separation and dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission. Our reflexive thematic analysis resulted in the description of four meaningful themes, which will be presented in depth below. The first theme that we constructed refers to the possible supportive role of religion in dealing with forced family separation and its repercussions. The transnational preservation of cultural traditions within the transnational family is identified as a second theme. A third theme asks attention for loss of cultural traditions as a locus of discord within the transnational family. The family as a cornerstone for autonomy in cultural practice in a context of transnational family separation is at the core of the fourth theme we delineated. Sub-themes were identified if deemed appropriate during the analysis of our data.

The supportive role of religious meaning systems in coping with forced separation

Three participants addressed the meaning of their Islamic religion in the way they deal with family separation and its repercussions. Based on these accounts, we suggest that religious meaning systems may support individuals in coping with transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration. In particular, we argue that the presence of God can provide hope and that religious principles may offer some stability in the absence of monitoring by family members.

The presence of God as a source of hope when powerlessness prevails

We suggest that spiritual meanings regarding a transcendent power may provide hope when being challenged by the repercussions of forced separation. This finding is exemplified by the experiences of Halim, who seems to find relief in his connection with God when worries about his relatives abroad prevail.

Halim is a man of 28 years old, who fled Afghanistan four years ago. He deems his mother, three brothers and three sisters the most important in life. Nevertheless, they are staying in Turkey for a while already, unable to join him in his country of destination. Since Halim left his home country, he is not in contact anymore with other family members. Moreover, his father and older brother passed

away a few years ago. From that moment on he is the oldest child in his family, with an age difference of nine years between him and the eldest of his brothers and sisters. When Halim arrived in Belgium, he was among other things occupied by worries about his mother and siblings, who experienced difficulty in coping with his absence:

> *Hmm, yes yes when I came to here I had many problems about my family, also about myself also. I was older and I had to take care my family too. Without me they was very difficult there with the life. Nobody can work there. How do they has to get living wage? How do they has to continue life? […] And I had also no job. (Halim)*

The above quotation touches upon the disruption of the fulfillment of roles and cultural scripts of care within a family due to forced migration and family separation. Namely, in the cultural community in which Halim grew up, women act as homemakers and men are supposed to provide an income for the family. Since their father passed away, Halim and his brothers are the only ones who take care of their mother and sisters:

> *That all sons take care of them. His mom and his sisters or so. Yes yes. It's like that there. (Halim)*
>
> *What do you mean 'it's like that there'? (Interviewer)*
>
> *In Afghanistan it is like that. […] Everybody does like that. Yes because there is uhm that girls and that women does no job. Does nothing. Just staying at home. (Halim)*

Consequently, during the first period of his stay in Belgium, Halim felt powerless to fulfill his role as a son and was troubled about the well-being of his mother and siblings living overseas.

What interests us here is that turning to God seems to function as a coping strategy when Halim experiences distress and feelings of powerlessness with regard to the welfare of relatives abroad. On moments like the one just described, Halim asks God for help and believes that He will alleviate the situation. Namely, Halim perceives God's control over the reality to be infinite, in contrast to his own powers as a human being. Here, religious meaning systems and practices can bring hope:

> *Yes, for my family what can I do for my family? I will try to ensure try to search a solution. If not possible, what can I do? If I can do nothing about, what do I have to do? Nothing. Just hope and pray or say yes: "God you may you may not… You must on you… Yes if you can make that solution, you may uhm yes open a way", or something like that. (Halim)*

Another participant, called Seyyed, also points to religion as a source of hope in a context of transnational family separation. Seyyed left Afghanistan at the age of 13 and arrived in Belgium ten years ago. He is 28 years old and is the last child his mother gave birth to. Seyyed is mainly in contact with his mother, his oldest brother and some cousins. These relatives live in Afghanistan and are part of the same household. Seyyed's father passed away recently.

This participant told us that when a Muslim becomes desperate, that person has left the faith. According to Seyyed, the Islam teaches that there is always hope, even if one feels unable to deal with the difficulties that arise and one has the impression that there is nobody to give support. Earlier, this participant told us that God has always been helping him when needed. Furthermore, Seyyed highlighted during an interview that religion gives him the power to endure the separation with his family members, to persevere, to move forward and to live stably in a context of forced separation, among other things by offering him hope. He said the following:

> *Uhm, I have become more religious since I left Afghanistan. Yes. Because I uhm, since I am alone, I need God more than at that time. When I was there with family, I had everyone. (Seyyed)*

The regulating role of religion in the absence of the disciplining eye of family members

In addition to giving hope in a context of transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration, religious meaning can also offer guidance and norms of conduct when relatives are no longer present to monitor and regulate the behaviour of the person who is living in exile. The accounts of one participant, who is called Najib, made us attentive to the sense of stability that religion can offer to someone who is devoid of the supervision and disciplining of relatives due to forced separation.

Najib is 21 years old and arrived in Belgium almost five years ago at the age of 16, after fleeing his home country when he was about 13 years old. Najib is the eldest child in his family and has four siblings who are living in Afghanistan, together with his mother. His father passed away before Najib asked for international protection in Belgium. When we interviewed him, he was still in regular contact with his mother, siblings, a few aunts and some cousins. However, technological limitations make contact with his mother less easy and more expensive than preferable.

Before Najib left Afghanistan, he was used to the daily guidance of his relatives who set limits and indicated how to behave. In our view, the accounts of Najib illuminate that religious meanings

support him in coping with the absence of such guidance in a context of transnational family separation:

> *In Afghanistan, for example, […] at nine o'clock I have had to be home, so… And when I came home later, I had to have a reason for it […] But now, nobody expects for me at home. […] If I has no rules for myself, I must just in…. Have to keep yourself in a frame. To say: yes those are the limits, these I must do, these I must do, these I am not allowed. […] (Najib)*
>
> *Okay. And does the Islam help you then in that frame? (Interviewer)*
>
> *Yes, because… […] During the Ramadan for example… […] Islam said: 'Yes not eat.' […] So if that [Islam] can keep me away from those good things, against a bad thing I can for sure stick hold back. (Najib)*[9]

Religious principles and norms of conduct may play an important role in navigating a new-found freedom resulting from forced family separation, by offering some continuity in the teachings of a parent or other family member. Najib indicated during the semi-structured interviews that he is devoid of the regulating frame which is normally formed by the presence of relatives. Namely, since he left Afghanistan he feels like nobody is standing behind him to indicate how to behave. Moreover, his actions became invisible to family members, which also reduced the shame he may feel when transgressing norms. He pointed, furthermore, to the given that the culture of his host country offers some opportunities that are new to him, such as openly buying alcohol in a shop. However, when the daily monitoring and disciplining of relatives ceased, Najib's religious identity provided a regulating frame of principles, standards and meanings. As displayed in the quotation above, Najib seems to value the guidance that his religion offers in a context of transnational family separation. In other words, when someone can no longer rely on the pervasive care of relatives, religion may enable that person to take care of oneself. Namely, although someone may no longer be accountable for one's own behaviour to relatives living abroad, in a religious tradition one is still held accountable to God.

[9] It should be noted that according to Najib the Islam is embedded and visible in many different facets of people's behaviour, ranging from the efforts they make or not make at work to the way they behave towards elderly. In his view, people are occupied by this religious tradition all day long. More specifically, one's surrender to God implies principles of behaviour, such as the prohibition on drinking alcohol and the associated commandment to protect oneself. When discussing the meaning of the latter commandment in his life, Najib provided the account above. We should take into account that he interprets this commandment rather broadly.

The transnational preservation of cultural traditions within the transnational family

We will elaborate on attempts to preserve cultural traditions transnationally in a context of forced family separation. Bringing about cultural continuity can be understood as a vehicle of the relationship between relatives and as a way to take care of the other.

Cultural continuity as a vehicle of the relationship

Prolonged family separation in the wake of forced migration might challenge individuals to keep the relationship with relatives abroad alive and to avoid alienation from one another. Here, our findings indicate the potential role of cultural traditions, operating as threads of connection between family members across geographical distances. Namely, traditions can offer opportunities to make oneself present in the life of those abroad. We suggest that cultural continuity, brought about transnationally, can be a vehicle of the relationship between family members. To illustrate this, we will comment on the role of traditions regarding marriage and demise within transnational families.

According to participants, in Afghanistan it is usually the role of a mother to search for a suitable wife for her son, in some cases together with her daughter(s). This can involve introducing multiple young women to him, examining the history of the kinship community of potential spouses, exploring whether a girl already made a promise to another family to marry their son and so on. If a suitable life partner is found, the time is right for the parents of the young man to ask for the hand of the young woman.

In a context of transnational family separation, the cultural tradition of seeking a spouse for one's child may form threads of connection that keep the mother-son relationship vivid. With one exception, all participants told us how their mothers, sometimes repeatedly, proposed to find a wife for them in Afghanistan or Turkey. In some cases these mothers already had partners in mind for their son in exile, possibly preceded by a visit to the home of a potential wife:

> *Yes that is uhm is saying something that: "You can choose yourself which girl is beautiful or not beautiful, or which you like or not like, or did you see someone, or we have to see for you someone? That maybe we see her a girl is and say: yes we are going to take that for Halim or for my son, my family." Yes something like that. (Halim)*

But did she really had one girl that she wanted to introduce to you? (Interviewer)

Hmhm. (Zia)

Yes? (Interviewer)

She has suggested yes. (Zia)

Engaging one's son abroad in the joint search for a suitable wife can bring family members together in a transnational space. Halim imagined during the interview how his mother and sisters in Turkey will maybe send pictures of girls they like, will give him some information about those girls over the telephone and will ask whether one provokes his interest. Halim was given the option to find a spouse himself or to rely on his family for arranging a marriage, which Halim answered with the request to postpone the search for a wife provisionally. Moreover, Najib addressed that his mother already suggested two potential spouses to him. He did not like the first young woman, but gave his mother permission to visit the home of the other one to clarify whether someone else already had asked for her hand. We suggest that seizing upon cultural repertoires can give a mother the opportunity to assure her presence in her son's life, by still performing an active role in it. Adopting one's own culturally regulated role from afar may be a way to perpetuate the position of being a mother and the position of being a son in a context of transnational family separation.

However, two participants did not want their parents to look for a partner in Afghanistan and rejected their mother's attempts to fulfill this culturally regulated role within the family in a context of transnational family separation.[10] This cultural disruption may move relatives to look for other ways to keep the relationship with each other vivid and to form threads of connection across borders.

Cultural continuity as a vehicle of the relationship between relatives is furthermore illustrated by the transnational preservation of rituals accompanying the death of a family member, which comes to the fore in the narratives of one participant. Seyyed did not visit his family for more than ten years, till his father's passing away eventually brought him back to his homeland for a short stay. Rather than elaborating on this visit in itself, we want to focus on the way this family dealt, in a context of transnational family separation, with cultural rituals performed in honour of a deceased person.

[10] To resume, the mothers of four participants showed their willingness to search a wife for them. One participant accepted this proposal (Najib), one participant asked to postpone the search for a spouse (Halim) and two participants did not want their mother to seek a wife for them (Seyyed and Zia). We will discuss this refusal to accept their mother's proposal more in depth further on.

When someone passes away in the cultural community in which Seyyed spent his childhood, several large meals are organized in the weeks that follow as a way of showing respect to the one that died. All residents of the village are invited to some of the meals that are prepared by the kinship community, because it is believed that the soul of the deceased person will be happy if a lot of people can eat till they are satisfied.

When Seyyed's father passed away, his family requested him to contribute financially to multiple meals that would be prepared by his relatives in Afghanistan. Although he first refused, he himself eventually borrowed money to be able to spend an amount roughly equivalent to three times the annual income of his family. This can be interpreted as an attempt to keep the relationship with his family members vivid. Namely, among other things, he mentioned the following about the insistence of relatives such as his brother and cousin to offer financial help in organizing multiple meals:[11]

> *But I don't want to argue with my family for a few cents. Arguing yes, but not disappointing them. (Seyyed)*

Disappointment could have weakened the relationship with his family members, from whom he has been separated for years. By ultimately acting in line with what was expected, Seyyed possibly strengthened his place in the family. Being involved from afar in the cultural traditions that one's family members carry on abroad may be a way of having something to contribute and may be an opportunity to take up a role within the kinship community. Seyyed did not only support the rituals surrounding his father's death, but also those with regard to the demise of another relative later on. With regard to the latter, Seyyed described to us how he coordinated within his family the practical organization of the meals by handing out tasks to his relatives over the telephone, in addition to sharing in the financial burden. Among other things he said the following:

> *And at the same time you have to adhere to tradition there. If something happens there, you have to… you have to stick to it. Uhm example now since a few days family of mine died there. […] And from here I'm concerned. I say: "Go make food." I participate, I pay a part, I want to participate. While that has totally nothing to do with me here. (Seyyed)*

Interestingly, with regard to his motivation to adhere transnationally to cultural traditions, such as those related to honouring a deceased person, Seyyed said the following:

> *You say: "Okay, I want to preserve that because of my family…" (Interviewer) Because I belong to my family. I am a member of my family, I am part of them. (Seyyed)*

[11] We will discuss this insistence further on.

The above quotation can be read as if belonging to the family leads Seyyed to be engaged in the cultural traditions performed by his family members abroad. However, being engaged in cultural traditions transnationally may also bring about his feelings of belonging in the context of prolonged family separation. Participating in and facilitating cultural traditions performed by his relatives abroad may offer him the opportunity to work on preserving an active place in his family. While forming threads of connection, he furthermore supports his kinship community in continuing cultural traditions from generation to generation.

Cultural continuity as an act of care

The transnational preservation of cultural traditions may not only be a vehicle of the relationship between family members, but can also be a way to take care for one another. In what follows we will discuss this in respect to the cultural practices described above.

Two participants seem to indicate that their mothers try to take care of them in a context of family separation by fulfilling the culturally regulated role of finding a wife for one's own son. More specifically, Seyyed understands his mother's attempts to introduce potential partners to him as rooted in her wish that he would be married. He clarified this intention further by telling that his mother wants him to be happy and taken care for by someone. Furthermore Zia attributes his mother's desire to find a wife for him to her will to know the family of her future daughter-in-law:

> *And which meaning do you think that had for your mom to introduce someone? (Interviewer)*
>
> *Yes… She wants someone that she knows her family and so on. (Zia)*

Earlier, Zia touched upon the given that it is the task of the village elders and of his father to inquire whether the family of a potential wife is a "good" family, by reflecting on their history. Zia fled Afghanistan at about the age of 16 and arrived in Belgium one year later. At the moment we interviewed him, he was 25 years old and had regular contact with his mother, father, younger brother and three cousins (who are all living in the same household in Afghanistan).

In line with the foregoing, it should be noted that some cultural practices cannot be continued in the host country without the involvement of family members. Consequently, in a context of transnational family separation, the commitment of relatives to meet family roles from afar can be valuable in particular by offering cultural continuity to the individual living in exile. This is illustrated in Najib's accounts about his mother seeking a wife for him in Afghanistan. Najib deems it necessary not only to know the character of the woman he will marry, but also to be informed about her family. More specifically, it should be ensured that his future wife is a "good" woman and that the same is

true for her family.[12] In his home village, this is achieved by involving both the female and the male side of one's own family in the search for a partner. Given that women and men live largely segregated, female family members will identify potential spouses and will decide on the value of a woman and her female relatives. However, according to Najib, being sufficiently informed both about a woman and about her family is difficult to achieve in Belgium, due to the absence of female relatives:

> *If you choose a spouse, you have to know who are they, you have to see them first. So… But here I don't see… […] If I see that girl, I don't see that family. And if I see that family, I don't see that girl. But in Afghanistan that's easy, because those families see each other. Because my sisters see that girl, they have uhm relationship together. And my parents, my mother or so, they know their family. (Najib)*

Najib told us that he would not deem it necessary to marry a woman living in Afghanistan if his female family members would also be residing in Belgium. However, due to transnational family separation, he feels deprived of the possibilities to judge the character of a future spouse and of her family members. As an example, he points to the given that women and men are segregated in the mosque that he visits in Belgium.

Consequently, by holding on to cultural requirements and customs in respect to marriage, which include being informed about a woman and her female family members, Najib seems moved to rely on his relatives abroad to find a wife. His mother is providing the necessary cultural continuity by committing herself to her role as an Afghan parent. Namely, she will try to ensure that a suitable wife and family-in-law is found. When Najib talked about his mother's contribution to his future marriage, he seemed slightly excited. Najib expressed his hope that she will find a partner for him, probably in cooperation with his sisters, and indicated to have confidence in them. Reportedly, by that time his mother and sisters had introduced two potential wives to him, however without success.

> *I hope so. (Najib)*

Next to the transnational preservation of cultural repertoires with regard to marriage, engaging oneself in the rituals carried out by relatives abroad may be an act of care within the transnational family. When asked about his motivation to adhere to cultural traditions by, for example, contributing to the organization of traditional meals, Seyyed mentioned among other things the following:

[12] Najib and Zia both used the word "good".

Belonging is very important for us. If his family my community not belongs, then is a shame. That is shame. You have to belong. (Seyyed)

Seyyed elucidated during the interview we had with him that it is of significant importance in his culture of origin to belong to the community, which he defined as a collective society. However, when a family does not participate in cultural practices, such as the rituals usually performed in honour of a deceased person, the family can be excluded from the community. Following from this, we suggest that Seyyed strives to secure the acceptance of his family members in the community by supporting them in meeting the cultural scripts of the village. In our view, his attempts to bring about cultural continuity can be interpreted as an act of care for relatives abroad.

Loss of cultural traditions as a locus of discord within the transnational family

Dynamics of cultural continuity and cultural discontinuity within transnational family relationships may be entangled with each other to constitute a complex whole. In a context of transnational family separation, not acting in line with the cultural repertoires of one's home country can be related to friction with relatives abroad. This finding is exemplified by participants who pointed to disapproving reactions of family members to the cultural discontinuity they disclose. The accounts of these men in exile illustrate how the preservation of cultural practices, norms and values may be a subject of discussion between family members who live geographically separated from each other. In what follows, we will first elaborate on the quite divergent accounts of two participants in the light of this theme. The two examples below will demonstrate that the foci of contestation regarding one's cultural positionings in a context of transnational family separation may be quite different.

If I sometimes tell I uhm going out with the girl, relationship or this. But… That is such a thing not a lot, but sometimes tell, says: "Ah okay, why you do like that? But is not possible." Said: "How is not possible? I'm still young and I do what I want." Says: "No, because you have to be married. And then relationship. Not before." Say: "Yes how can I… allé otherwise I can do nothing?" Says: "Yes is not… does not exist of the Islam like this." (Abdullah)

The above is an extract from an interview we had with Abdullah, a man of 26 years old who left Afghanistan at about the age of ten and arrived in Belgium ten years ago. He told us several times not to be very familiar with his own kinship community and culture of origin, given that he migrated at a young age. Nevertheless, at the moment we interviewed him, he was still in contact with his brother, a few uncles and two cousins.

The previous quotation illustrates that deviating from religious principles in the country of destination may be criticized by family members abroad. It also touches upon the way religious regulations could be conveyed in a context of transnational family separation in an attempt to regulate the behaviour of relatives living in exile from a distance. During an interview, Abdullah pointed to negative responses of his uncle--who is living in Afghanistan--with regard to not complying in Belgium with specific norms of conduct that are rooted in his culture of origin. For instance, Abdullah was criticized for partying with people of the other sex, for having a premarital relationship and for not praying. Reportedly, this critics were accompanied by referrals to the Islam and to Abdullah's Islamic identity. Although Abdullah identifies himself as a Muslim, he indicated to feel quite indifferent about the comments of his uncle. In addition to the given that he deems it too difficult to follow religious prescriptions such as those addressed by his uncle, he seems to attribute cultural identifications and practices to the country one lives in. In line with this, we suggest that Abdullah normalizes the behaviours that his uncle abnormalizes over the telephone:

> *Yes if so maybe going out a weekend and dancing and drinking and this and that. And then they ask: "You with woman or with girl dancing or going out?" Says: "Yes is normal." "No, no, no!" (Abdullah)*

The experiences of Seyyed are another example of being criticized by transnational family members for not acting in line with the family's cultural repertoires. He shows how responsibilities regarding cultural traditions carried out in one's home country can be imposed by relatives on those living in exile, which can be distressful. In what preceded, we described the cultural tradition of organizing multiple large meals when someone passes away, so that the soul of the deceased person would be happy. In the aftermath of his father's death, Seyyed initially refused to contribute financially to the organization of multiple meals in Afghanistan, due to the fact that he did not have the money that was asked for. Moreover, in his view a deceased person will be protected by God if he led a good life or punished otherwise, independent from the food that is distributed by family members. Nevertheless, Seyyed's kinship community reacted profoundly negative to his refusal to finance a series of meals, which eventually moved him to support the preservation of this cultural tradition in his home country:

> *And my cousin and my brother start, everyone say: "Yeees that is not possible, we have to do that, we have received from everyone, from everyone from dying eat and now from us is dead we are not going to do it?" And I get all over me from everywhere. I thought: okay, easy, I will give. I borrowed and spent money like that. (Seyyed)*

The pressure one may feel in exile to fulfill culture related responsibilities and expectations of relatives abroad may be distressful and burdensome. In respect to the negative reaction of the kinship community to his refusal to financially support the organization of multiple meals in Afghanistan, Seyyed said the following:

And what does that with you then? (Interviewer)

That hurts me, but that me I have to pay all. (Seyyed)

After having discussed these two examples, we will in particular pay attention to discord and conflict between family members that flow from the disruption of cultural role patterns within the transnational family. In what preceded we discussed how Afghan mothers, in a context of transnational family separation, try to preserve the cultural tradition of seeking a wife for one's own son. We also touched upon the given that half of the participants were willing to continue this tradition transnationally, whether in the former present or as a possibility in the future. However, two participants indicated that they did not want their parents to search for a spouse in Afghanistan:

So for example my mother had said that uhm that I go that I have to marry from Afghanistan, girl from Afghanistan. I say: "I don't have to, I don't do that." Then is over hé. That means that I must nothing. (Zia)

So your mother had actually introduced a wife from Afghanistan? (Interviewer)

Yes yes yes yes. But I have said: "No mom, never mind, leave her." (Zia)

She wanted to search for me. I didn't want it. I said: "No, I don't want it." She went, says: "I know a girl." (Seyyed)

During the interviews, both Zia and Seyyed did not directly criticize the cultural tradition and role pattern in itself, but referred to external barriers to cultural continuity that result from forced migration and transnational family separation. Namely, given that these young men are living in exile, their future wives (selected by their parents in Afghanistan) would have to migrate to Belgium. This would imply, among other things, long administrative procedures, a financial burden and initial dependency on one's husband in respect to language.

Consequently, in a context of transnational family separation, these two participants refused the offer of their mother to find a wife for them. In fact, these mothers had women in mind who they wanted to visit or introduce to their son. Although the participants seem to understand the efforts of

their parent as an attempt to take care of them, they prevented their mothers from fulfilling this culturally regulated role within the family from a distance.[13] Reportedly, Seyyed's mother was disappointed that he did not want to be engaged in her search for a wife, because she wanted him to marry. However, Seyyed urged her to stop talking about this issue, which she did. Also Zia mentioned that his mother tried a few times to encourage him to accept her attempts to find a life partner. When these encouragements were fruitless, she let the matter rest.

> *I say: "I don't want that." Then is over hé. Then… A few times she has pressed and uhm to say 'yes'. I say: "No mom, let it be. Let it be." (Zia)*

We would like to comment on another illustration of the possible emotional repercussions of the disruption of cultural role patterns within the family due to transnational family separation. Zia told us during an interview that he met a woman of Afghan origin living in the Netherlands with whom he will soon be engaged.[14] Reportedly, it is a cultural tradition in Afghanistan that when a man is going to marry, his relatives will ask for the hand of the respective woman. This tradition involves several visits to the family members of the potential spouse to ask for their consent upon a marriage between the two persons in question. In relation to this cultural practice, Zia told us the following about the pain his mother feels in respect to the idea that she cannot ask for the hand of her son's future fiancée due to transnational family separation:

> *And what does that then mean for you if you are here in Belgium and your family cannot do that? (Interviewer)*
>
> *Yes my mom was finds that also a bit difficult that she can't she can't go herself and ask for the hand of girl and so on. That is a bit painful, difficult. (Zia)*

The foregoing illustrates how culturally regulated role patterns within the family may be disrupted in a context of family separation and how this can be difficult to bear for those who want to fulfill their role (from a distance). It also shows how this disruption may be attributed to external barriers to preserve cultural traditions transnationally, such as amongst others administrative difficulties. To be more specific, questioning the preservation of cultural role patterns in a context of transnational family separation and forced migration may lead to cultural discontinuity in the transnational space. This cultural discontinuity may be the locus of friction, given for instance the efforts of parents to relate in a context of family separation to their offspring in line with cultural scripts. Below, we will

[13] Cultural continuity as an act of care is discussed in detail in what preceded.

[14] It should be noted that Zia met this woman about a year after his mother explicitly showed her willingness to find a spouse for him in Afghanistan.

discuss how friction between relatives regarding the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities that are (experienced as) cultural in nature may evolve into conflict. Moreover, it will be exemplified how not only relatives in the home country may have role responsibilities within the family, but also individuals living in exile.

During an interview, Abdullah referred to conflicts with his uncle regarding financial support, which he linked to culturally regulated role patterns within Afghan families. While residing in Belgium, the uncle of Abdullah asked several times to help his household by sending money. Abdullah seems to associate this requests with cultural scripts of care:

> *I don't know but allé some people does still send. But also… I understand those people. But in Afghanistan really a lot of respect for his family, allé for own family. Because those people is… is just the people the culture of Afghanistan is like that, have to take care of own family. If so mom and dad is old is, have to take care of. (Abdullah)*

According to Abdullah, it is customary in the culture of his home country to take care of one's own parents or older relatives by providing an income. This cultural principle is partly confirmed by other participants, who point to the role of a son to financially support his parents. Although the parents of Abdullah are deceased, he nevertheless seemed to experience the pressure of cultural role responsibilities in a context of transnational family separation. Namely, while outlining the discussions he had over the telephone about financially supporting his uncle's household, Abdullah refers to the cultural script just described:

> *And uhm that [family] says: "Yes is stands with culture". Says [Abdullah]: "How that stands with culture? Don't have to work and sending money for you to live?" How culture is that? Is bad culture. (Abdullah)*

The above quotation reveals Abdullah's critical stance towards the cultural role pattern that, in his experience, seems to form the background of the conflict with his uncle (next to difficult life conditions in his home country). Referring to different scripts of care in Belgian families, he uttered during the interview that people should not rely on their offspring for an income. Above that, he elucidated that he did not want to send a part of his low income abroad in order to safeguard his own plans for the future. Nevertheless, his uncle insisted him to contribute to his household financially, by asking repeatedly for money or other material support. The rejection of this requests resulted in several fights over the telephone and in temporary loss of contact.

With regard to this conflict and the other criticisms about his way of life as described in what preceded, Abdullah expressed how his uncle deprived him from his Afghan and Islamic identity while blaming him for not following his culture of origin:

> *Yes and then says allé he says: "Yes you are not Afghan. Why you do… You don't follow your culture, you don't believe and this not." Says: "Yes I'm Afghan okay, but I don't follow. But is allé is…. Not means I'm not Afghan. I don't follow completely Afghan culture. Have to send money to you. Okay I follow other things, but not to send money or something, take care of you." And says: "Yes no you are not Afghan, are not Muslim." (Abdullah)*

The above reaction of his uncle upset Abdullah. It should be taken into account that Abdullah's cultural identity in exile already seemed fragile, given that he left Afghanistan at an early age and is criticized by friends for his limited knowledge regarding the culture of his country of origin. However, Abdullah's accounts seem to illuminate that he copes with the reaction of his uncle by disconnecting his Afghan identity from fulfilling the culturally regulated role of offering financial support.

Abdullah's case exemplifies how individuals in a context of family separation may be confronted with conflict over the fulfillment of roles and responsibilities that are (experienced as) cultural in nature. Abdullah felt pressure with regard to meeting imposed responsibilities within his family, which he designated to be culturally regulated and which he did not want to meet. Moreover, this example shows that disruption of cultural scripts of care within the transnational family may be related to acculturation dynamics, more specifically to the encounter with new cultural scripts. Further it reveals that one's cultural identity, and thus also one's place in a community, may be questioned on the basis of cultural discontinuity within the transnational sphere.

To shortly elaborate a bit further on the disruption of cultural role scripts within transnational families, we would like to touch again upon the Afghan tradition of asking for the hand of a relative's future wife by visiting her family. Two participants illustrate how the fulfillment of culturally regulated roles may be transmitted in a context of transnational family separation. Reportedly, Zia asked the mother of a friend of Afghan origin to ask for the hand of his future fiancée. Her willingness to take up this role was a relief for Zia, because it gave him the opportunity to approach the family of the woman he wants to marry in the way it is culturally prescribed. Also Halim mentioned that if he would marry a woman of Afghan origin in Belgium, he would engage an older acquaintance of him to ask the family members of his future wife for consent, due to the physical absence of his relatives.

The transnational family as a cornerstone for autonomy in cultural and religious practice

In the foregoing, we discussed dynamics of friction within the transnational family that are rooted in non-compliance with the family's cultural scripts. However, multiple dimensions within and across the narratives of participants concerning the way relatives abroad deal with cultural positionings within the transnational family is striking. Finally, we therefore address the finding that not acting in line with cultural traditions of the home country is in various cases not experienced as being an issue.

Three participants describe a sense of freedom in navigating cultural worlds in a context of transnational family separation. More specifically, they seem to highlight experiences of tolerance in respect to intra-familial cultural difference. For instance, Zia seems to understand his exceedance of cultural standards in respect to body aesthetics as being normalized within the kinship community, due to his immersion in a social environment with different cultural practices. He said the following in respect to the tattoo he put on his arm, what in Afghanistan is deemed to be forbidden for Muslims, after he fled his home country:

> *They know that I live here in Europe, that's a life like that hé here. They realized that. If I do something like that in Afghanistan, then that is that are not going to realize, are going to say: "Oh what's that now? You live here in Afghanistan. You live like a European!" (Zia)*

With regard to religious practices, Seyyed indicated that the way a person practices his religion is considered within his kinship community to be a personal choice, whether living in Afghanistan or abroad. Although his relatives are aware of the fact that he does not participate in the fasting period and does not pray regularly, they do not problematize his behaviour. According to Seyyed, his religious way of life is perceived by family members to be his individual responsibility based on the belief that everyone only has to justify his own behaviours before God:

> *My family is free in that, that say: "You choose on your own what you want." Say: "Later, you must yourself… if are with God you have to uhm justify yourself and not me or you instead of someone else." (Seyyed)*

In addition, we suggest that relatives abroad may bolster cultural discontinuity in the life of those living in exile and in role patterns within the family. Zia, for instance, indicated that when he disclosed his respect for and belief in all religions, he was glad about the positive reaction of his father. Another example is given by Halim, who told us that his mother asked him whether he prefers to find a wife himself or wants to rely on her for seeking a spouse. We suggest that by doing this, she

in fact backed in advance cultural practices which are not in line with these of her country of origin, independent of Halim's preference:

> *Yes sometimes say: "You may choose. Yes you live there, you see a lot of girls, maybe you have interest on a girls. So you may choose", or something like that. "Or otherwise if you want that we choose, we are going to see here maybe is a girl." (Halim)*

Halim relates the freedom that is given to him in respect to seeking a wife on his own to the idea that his mother knows that he would choose a respectable woman. Such feelings of being trusted by family members in regard to engaging oneself in new cultural practices is shared with another participant. More specifically, Zia uttered that his parents know that he is aware of his limits in regard to drinking alcohol or going out.

However, it should be noted that participants seem to ascribe experiences of tolerance and appreciation with regard to cultural difference within the transnational family to the character of one's relatives or cultural community. Three participants emphasized that their family members are not like other Afghans, when talking about the way family members deal with their cultural positionings. For example, Seyyed differentiated his kinship community from "those other conservative Afghans" based on his perception of the extent to which not participating in religious practices such as fasting is accepted. Furthermore, Halim said the following about the given that his family did not problematize the many changes in his behaviour and thinking that result from coming to Belgium:

> *They are a bit modern family, not of that classic [laughter] old family that something like that knowing that of culture or so, of here, they get afraid or so. No no. My family is not like that. (Halim)*

Nevertheless, emphasizing the difference with other Afghan families could be a way for participant to counter specific representations of one's own family and of the Afghan community, such as being a very conservative and traditional family or community in nature. Here, we should in particular be aware of a possible tendency for socially desirable responding. However it may be, there seem to be multiple dimensions and tensions in the narratives of participants, whereby pressure to comply with cultural scripts alternates with a sense of tolerance, flexibility and openness to change. Seyyed, for instance, felt pressure to participate in the cultural ritual that was performed when his father passed away and described how eager his mother was to find a wife for him, but also points to tolerance and autonomy within the family in respect to the way he practices religion.

A sense of freedom in navigating cultural worlds in a context of transnational family separation does not imply that all guidance and expectations of family members have vanished. In regard to culture related expectations of family members, Halim for instance said that although the general cultural background of his future wife is not an issue, he feels like it is expected of him to marry a Muslim woman. Nevertheless, he indicated that this expectation is not in conflict with his own wishes. An example of the way parents try to guide the behaviours of their offspring in respect to cultural practices from a distance, comes to the fore in the accounts of Seyyed. He told us that sometimes his mother slightly encourages him to pray because she believes that praying would be in his favour, and that relatives announce to him the beginning of the fasting period. Seyyed mentioned that this utterances remind him of religious practices and that it shows that family members care about him:

> *My parents, task a parent is that remind you. They remind you. Whether you do or not do is your problem. They are not going to get angry: "Hey why you do not?" […] (Seyyed)*
>
> *Okay. And what does that reminding mean for you then? That they… (Interviewer)*
>
> *Care about me. (Seyyed)*
>
> *… remind you. (Interviewer)*
>
> *Care about me. They don't want me another way to be in trouble later on. (Seyyed)*

DISCUSSION

This multiple-case study sheds light on the multi-layered interplay between forced family separation and the broader cultural context in which it takes place. The study builds on previous research that suggests the importance of reflecting on the intersection of transnational family separation and dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission (cf. Grace, 2018; Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011; Miller et al., 2018; Rousseau et al., 2004; Solheim & Ballard, 2016; Suárez-Orozco et al., 2011).

We conceived the notion family as referring both to nuclear family members and to relatives belonging to the broader kinship community. Transcending the nuclear family as a Western paradigm for family life in research on transnational family separation is proclaimed by several authors. They point to the critical role that the extended family may play in the lived experiences regarding transnational family separation (Jerves et al., 2018; Shapiro & Montgomery, in press), given that conceptions of family are culturally regulated (McGoldrick, Giordano, & Garcia-Preto, 2005). More specifically, research on separation within South-American migrant families argues that extended family households can to a certain extent offer continuity in primary caregiving and attachment figures when a parent migrates (Jerves et al., 2018). Shapiro and Montgomery (in press) in their study furthermore point to the need to acknowledge the importance of going beyond child-parent kinship ties in studying forced separation, due to the cultural regulation of family practices and configurations (such as collective family living which is common in Syria). An interesting example of transcending the paradigm of the nuclear family is found in a study of Rousseau et al. (2001) in which Latin American and African refugees express the high significance of separation from extended family members, next to separation of the immediate family. Therefore, when considering lived experiences regarding family separation and reunification, attention should not only address the nuclear family, but should also include the extended family network.

Transnational family separation and reunification is defined as a main disruptive process constituting the refugee family experience (De Haene et al., 2007). Based on our findings, we argue that transnational family separation not only disrupts the family system and relations within the family, but also the connection with one's own cultural heritage. The interconnection between these two processes is exemplified by unfulfilled culturally regulated roles within the family, such as seeking a partner for a son or asking for the hand of his future wife. Our findings suggest that ruptures of cultural role scripts are, among other things, rooted in the physical absence of family members and in external barriers to the transnational preservation of cultural tradition. Moreover, these ruptures

appear to be a possible subject of tensions and friction within the transnational family. Changes in culturally regulated role patterns as a result of transnational separation is also documented in other research on migrant families (cf. Rousseau et al., 2004; Solheim & Ballard, 2016). This disruption can be perceived as a secondary loss that accompanies the loss of the family member(s) in itself (Suárez-Orozco et al., 2002). It can increase the burden of rebuilding one's own identity after having experienced traumatic events (Vinar & Vinar as cited in Rousseau et al., 2004). Furthermore, as our findings indicate, this secondary loss represents cultural discontinuity in the lives of relatives residing in the home country, as well as for those living in exile. More specifically, discontinuity in the fulfillment of culturally regulated family roles following forced separation may add to the cultural discontinuity that is inherent in migration and organized violence.[15]

However, we also dwelled on a transnational family in which the mother seeks a wife for her son who resides overseas and on a participant who supported the preservation of cultural rituals carried out in his home country. In other words, our study also points to the reconstruction of role patterns and the preservation of cultural tradition within the transnational family. These cases recall authors who comment on the maintenance of emotional intimacy and family practices across geographical borders (e.g. Grace, 2018; Mekki-Berrada & Rousseau, 2011; Parrenas, 2005; Shapiro & Montgomery, in press; Solheim & Ballard, 2016; Solheim, Zaid, & Ballard, 2016), and correspond to previous research that documents dynamics of cultural continuity brought about in a transnational familial space. Scholarly work describes the transmission of cultural knowledge and items between relatives living in different countries after resettlement, the fulfillment of culturally regulated roles from afar and the transnational performance of cultural rituals by using technological devices (Grace, 2018; Solheim & Ballard, 2016).

We suggest that constituting cultural continuity within the transnational family (as we described it in our analysis of the transnational preservation of cultural traditions within the family) may contribute to the restoration of cultural and social structures that are challenged by organized violence (see also footnote 15; Mekki-Berrada, Rousseau, & Bertot, 2001). More specifically, bringing about cultural continuity within the transnational family corresponds to the preservation of cultural heritage in/through a shared transnational space and may strengthen connection between relatives

[15] Organized violence is described by Rousseau (2000) as the violence exerted by a group of people on another group of people because of her ethnic, political, religious, sexual, social or racial characteristics. It threatens social and cultural structures through mass murder and the destruction of meaning making and ways of life (Mekki-Berrada, Rousseau, & Bertot, 2001).

by being a vehicle of the relationship and an act of care. Furthermore, it may in particular play a role in the healing of trauma. Continuity in the fulfillment of culture-related roles within the transnational family possibly supports individuals in rebuilding their identity after having experienced traumatic events (Vinar & Vinar as cited in Rousseau et al., 2004). In sum, strengthening connection within transnational families by shared engagement in cultural traditions may be micro dynamics that counter the derailing repercussions of organized violence and trauma. In addition, Kevers, Rober and De Haene (2017) argue in their study on Kurdish refugee families in Belgium that embracing and developing elements of cultural identifications within the family can alleviate the pain of a separation with the (cultural practices of the) home country. We assume that the alleviation of this pain can also be embedded in the preservation of cultural traditions within the transnational family. However, it should be noted that when the pressure to comply with the family's cultural repertoires is too high, cultural continuity within the transnational family may not be protective against the repercussions of organized violence, trauma and migration.

Our qualitative analysis not only points to dynamics of cultural continuity and change within a transnational space, but also indicates that being anchored in religion may support individuals in coping with transnational family separation in the wake of forced migration. We are aware of only one other study in the domain of research on migrant families that analogously documents the possible protective role of religion in dealing with family separation (cf. Rousseau et al., 2004). We did not find other scholarly work giving evidence for the adverse character of a religious tradition in respect to family separation either. This sole study that points to the possible protective role of religion shortly touches upon a religious concept prevailing in the Congolese community which would suggest that God turned away and death may be bring relief when difficulties persist (Rousseau et al., 2004). Consequently, and keeping with their explorative nature based on a small-scale sample, our findings may contribute to the existing body of knowledge in the domain of transnational family separation by illuminating the supportive role that religious meaning frames and principles can play in coping with forced separation. However, it should be noted that the possible protective role of religion may be complicated by intercommunity tensions in the host country. Several researchers comment on the profound discrimination and negative discourses that Muslims in North America and Europe have to endure because of their Islamic identity and appearance, especially since the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York (e.g. Hassan, Rousseau, & Moreau, 2013; Rousseau, Ferradji, Mekki-Berrada, & Jamil, 2013). Hassan, Moreau, Rousseau and Jamil (2010) suggest that in this socio-political and historical context, one's religious identity, which is traditionally perceived to be a protective factor for mental and physical health, can be a source of vulnerability:

“C’est donc dans ce context historique et sociopolitique que la religiosité, facteur traditionnel de protection, devient une source additionnelle de vulnérabilité pour les minorités visées” (p. 160).

Furthermore, our findings illustrate the imposition of culture-related responsibilities on individuals living in exile by relatives abroad. This imposition of responsibilities is exemplified by the participant who argued with his uncle about financial support and who was criticized for not complying with cultural practices of the homeland, and by the participant who felt pressure to contribute financially to cultural rituals performed abroad. However, our findings indicate that relatives may also react with tolerance or appreciation to non-compliance with one’s own cultural and religious scripts. Reactions to intra-family cultural difference may therefore be imbued with ambiguity within a single case. Namely, one participant seemed to experience a stronger sense of pressure to engage with rituals performed in honour of a deceased person and with traditions regarding marriage than to comply with specific religious practices such as fasting. It should be noted that, to our knowledge, these findings are rather new to the body of scientific insights in forced separation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the integration of our findings and relevant scholarly work, we would like to suggest some questions for future research on the topic of transnational family separation after forced migration. Firstly, it seems valuable to delve into the supportive role of religion in coping with forced separation, without losing sight of possible adverse religious understandings and social conditions in the host country. This research topic seems to be interesting given the limited body of knowledge on this issue, the growing evidence on profound distress that is rooted in transnational family separation and the possible relevance of findings on coping with forced separation for the psychosocial support of refugees. In particular, it could be worthwhile to focus on the supportive role of religion as a regulating framework for children and adolescents when relatives are absent to discipline and monitor them. Secondly, in line with the discussion above, it may be relevant to reflect on how cultural continuity within the transnational family sphere may support post-trauma reconstruction. Thirdly, and in concordance with the previous suggestion, we argue that studies on cultural continuity as a vehicle of the relationship within the transnational family are needed. Scholarly work on threads of connection between relatives that are rooted in a shared cultural heritage may offer valuable insights for the psychosocial support of forced transnational families. Fourthly, it may be interesting to conduct research into lived experiences with regard to culture-related expectations of family members abroad and into ways of dealing with these expectations. Namely, our research results suggest that these expectations may be distressful and burdensome for individuals living in exile. However, research on this topic seems to be rather limited. Finally, echoing authors in the field of migrant and refugee studies, we would like to emphasize the relevance of transcending the Western paradigm of the nuclear family and the rather limited amount of scholarly work on the narratives of family members who stay in the home country (Jerves et al., 2018; Shapiro & Montgomery, in press; Solheim & Ballard, 2016). We hope that the above research suggestions can enrich the intriguing body of research done on forced family separation.

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRACTICE

In concordance with our findings and the discussion that followed, we would like to formulate two suggestions for the psychosocial support of refugees in the host country. However, the explorative and small-scale nature of our study should be taken into account when reflecting on the following suggestions. Firstly, our findings indicate how cultural traditions may operate as threads of connection within the transnational family. Therefore, it may be helpful to support the mobilization of cultural traditions as a vehicle of the relationship. Secondly, it seems important to be attentive to the emotional and practical burden that may be rooted in feelings of pressure, criticism and responsibility in respect to cultural traditions and role patterns within the family.

LIMITATIONS

One of the limitations of our multiple-case study is that we could only perform a member check of the first interview that was conducted with participants, due to time constraints. In the light of the credibility of our study, it would have been favourable to also ask participants for feedback regarding our findings and interpretations further in the research process (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013). In particular, member reflections would have been valuable, a term introduced by Tracy (2010). She suggests that the label *member check* may evoke the impression that there is a single true reality which needs to be checked or tested for truthfulness and accuracy. Member reflections, as Tracy conceptualizes it, are rooted in an emphasis on discussing findings with participants as an opportunity to collaborate and to elaborate further on the results. Member reflections could have been useful, given that we perceive knowledge and the world to be constructed and contested (Tracy, 2010).

Another research limitation is that we could not rely on a professional interpreter due to limited financial resources. Therefore, the semi-structured interviews were not conducted in the native language of the research participants. Although the individuals that participated in the study had sufficient language skills to use Dutch as the working language during interviews, an interpreter would probably have been favourable in order to lose less nuance in the communication. Furthermore, using insufficient Dutch or English language skills as an exclusion criteria in the recruitment of participants generated a selection bias. Here, we would like to emphasize again that we do not have the intention to generalize research findings at population level.

It should also be noted that our participants belong to one of the following ethnic groups: Hazaras or Tajiks. However, there are living several ethnic communities in Afghanistan (Minority Rights Group International, 2018). We assume that ethnic identity may influence how individuals experience the intersection of culture and forced family separation. Although the inclusion of only two ethnic groups may have furthered depth in research findings (by constituting more homogeneity in our sample), it is at the same time a limitation that should be taken into account.

CONCLUSION

We perceived transnational family separation and reunification as one of the main disruptive processes that are constituting the refugee family experience (De Haene et al., 2007). Building on previous research that reflects on the emotional repercussions of family separation, the reconstruction of family practices in a transnational space and the role of culture in a context of transnational family separation, we conducted a multiple-case study on how individuals experience and deal with forced family separation. More specifically, we studied dynamics of cultural identification and intra-family cultural transmission in a context of forced family separation. Semi-structured interviews took place with five individuals of Afghan origin who are residing in Flanders. Our study results suggest the possible supportive role of religion in coping with forced separation by being a source of hope and by offering guidance and norms of conduct when relatives are absent. Further, we understood the transnational preservation of cultural traditions and role patterns as a vehicle of the relationship and as an act of care within the transnational family. Moreover, non-compliance with the family's cultural repertoires and role scripts turned out to be a locus of tensions between relatives. Nevertheless, we also identified a sense of freedom and tolerance in respect to deviating from the family's cultural and religious customs. These findings may offer some relevant insights for the psychosocial support of refugees and their family members. However, there are still many interesting questions to be explored about transnational family separation after forced migration, especially with regard to the multi-layered intersection of culture and ruptured kinship communities.

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APPENDICES

Annex 1: Example of a genogram

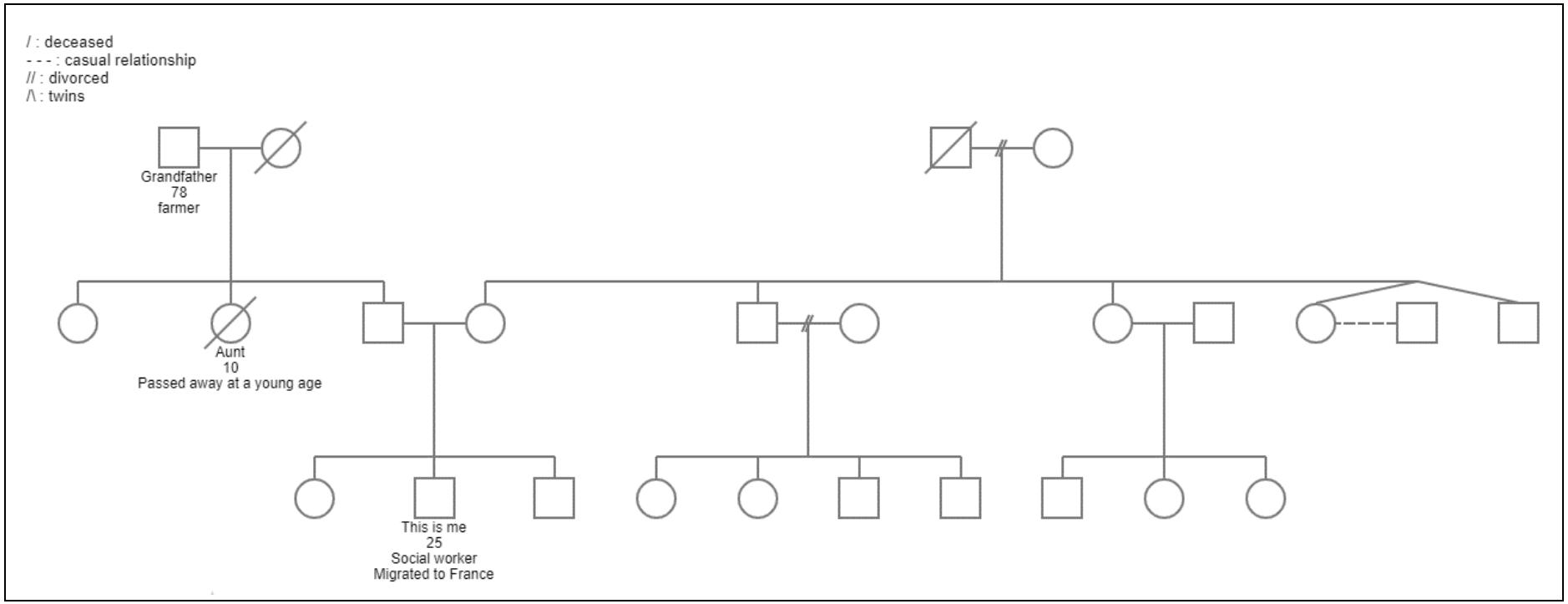


Figure 1. Example of a genogram, which is a graphical depiction of relationships, patterns and critical events within a family. It was used as a research tool during the semi-structured interviews.

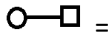
Annex 2: Interview guide 1

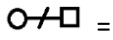
STRUCTUUR FAMILIE

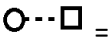
Zoals ik je al heb verteld, probeer ik beter te begrijpen wat het betekent om in een ander land te leven dan je familieleden en hoe cultuur in deze beleving een rol speelt. Familie en cultuur zullen centraal staan in onze gesprekken. Het lijkt me dan ook belangrijk om tijdens dit eerste gesprek jouw familie beter te leren kennen en om een inkijk te krijgen in de culturele gewoonten van jouw familieleden en in deze van jezelf. Ik zou je graag willen voorstellen om samen een familieboom op te stellen. Dat ziet er als volgt uit [toon voorbeeld]. Is het voor jou oké om hier vandaag samen aan te werken?

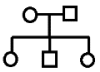
Mag ik je dan vragen om je familie af te beelden in de vorm van een familieboom? Je kan de volgende legende hiervoor gebruiken. Als je wil mag je de legende zelf ook nog aanvullen.

❍ = vrouw
☐ = man


= getrouwd


= gescheiden


= liefdesrelatie


= kinderen
(eerstgeborene → laatstgeborene)


= adoptie

Kan je ook de voornamen van je familieleden naast de symbolen schrijven, zodat we je familieleden bij naam kunnen noemen? Wil je hetzelfde doen met hun ingeschatte leeftijd?

Mag ik vragen wie van je familie gestorven is? [duid aan met een "/"] Is die persoon overleden nadat jij in België bent toegekomen?

Schrijf je even neer welk beroep of ambacht elk familielid vervult of vervuld heeft?

RELATIES

Kan je met een sterretje (*) duiden met wie je nog contact hebt?

CULTUUR EN RELIGIE

We hebben je familie en de relaties hierbinnen in beeld gebracht. Graag zou ik met jou verder in gesprek gaan over de migratiegeschiedenis van je familie en over hoe cultuur een rol speelt in het leven van jou en je familieleden.

Mag ik vragen om bij elk familielid aan te geven in welk culturele gemeenschap of gemeenschappen hij/zij is opgegroeid? [prompt: bijvoorbeeld de Vlaamse culturele gemeenschap, de Koerdische culturele gemeenschap enzovoort]

Zou je het symbool van elk familielid willen inkleuren met een kleur die gelijk staat aan het land waar hij/zij momenteel verblijft (vb. rood = Afghanistan, zwart = België…)?

Hoeveel jaar geleden heb je jouw familie moeten verlaten?

Ben je al lange tijd in België?

Zullen we in je familieboom met een stippellijn aangeven wie gemigreerd is naar België? [soort scheidingslijntje]

FAMILIELEDEN

Zou je me kunnen vertellen welke rol elk familielid innam of inneemt binnen zijn/haar culturele en religieuze gemeenschap? [prompt: Zijn er familieleden waar mensen naartoe gaan voor raad, rituele handelingen of advies? Zijn er bijvoorbeeld familieleden die imam zijn/waren, zetelen in het moskeebestuur, koranlessen geven enzovoort?]

Hoe zou jij de cultuur die jouw familieleden in zich dragen beschrijven?

Waaraan merk je dat jouw familieleden in Afghanistan (of in Y) opgegroeid zijn en dat jij in België leeft? [geïnspireerd op het cultureel interview voor POH-GGZ Nederland (Nivel, Zorggroep Almere, & Pharos, 2015)]

Kan je me iets vertellen over culturele ideeën en gebruiken die jij waardevol acht van je familieleden?

Welke rol speelt religie en spiritualiteit in het leven van je familieleden? En waaraan merk je dat? [prompt: Welke plaats nemen gebed en andere religieuze/spirituele gebruiken of voorschriften bijvoorbeeld in het leven van je familieleden in?]

Welk idee denk je dat jouw familieleden hebben van de cultuur in België? [prompt: Hoe denk je dat jouw familieleden kijken naar de cultuur in België?]

IK

Welke rol of positie neem jij in binnen de Afghaanse culturele en religieuze gemeenschap in België?

Hoe merk je in jouw eigen gedrag, denken, leven, kleden enzovoort dat jij door jouw vlucht naar België in aanraking komt en bent gekomen met een andere cultuur? [prompt: In welke mate heb je het gevoel dat je gedrag, denken, leven, kleden enzovoort veranderd is of kan veranderen door contact met andere culturele gewoonten?]

Aan welke gewoonten van de cultuur waarin je opgroeide wil of moet je je ook vandaag houden? Zijn dat ook gewoonten die leven binnen jouw familie?

Hoe beleef en beoefen jij vandaag religie of spiritualiteit?

Hoe kijk jij naar culturele ideeën en gebruiken die heersen in België?

Annex 3: A cultural genogram of one of the participants

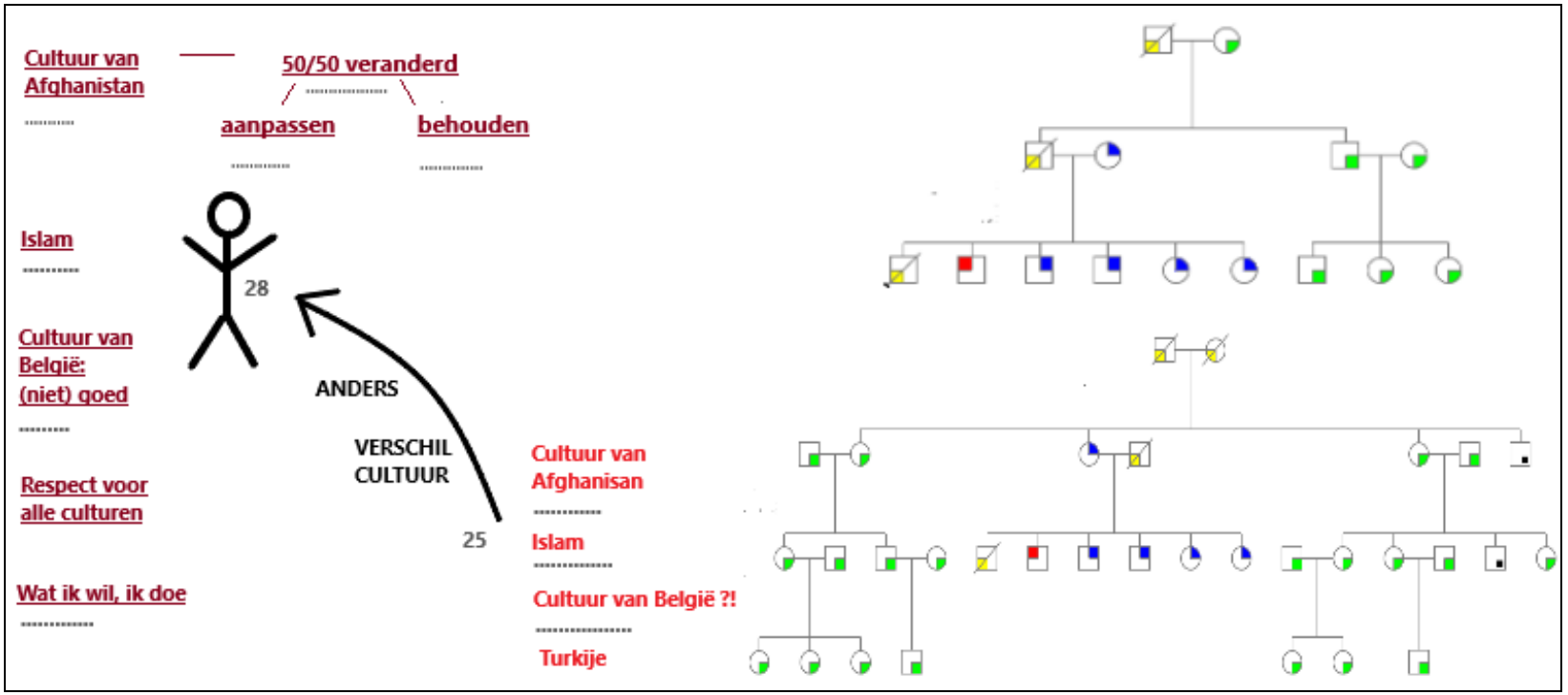


Figure 2. A cultural genogram of one of the participants in our multiple-case study. The participant drew up the right side of the figure during interview 1. The left side was drafted by the interviewer while preparing interview 2 and is based on the accounts that the participant provided orally during interview 1. It operated as a short summary of interview 1 that was reviewed with the participant at the beginning of interview 2 (see annex 4 and annex 5 for more information).

A2 (420 x 594) was the original paper size of the cultural genogram. We made some minor changes in the figure in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research participants to the extent possible.

Annex 4: The right side of a cultural genogram of one of the participants

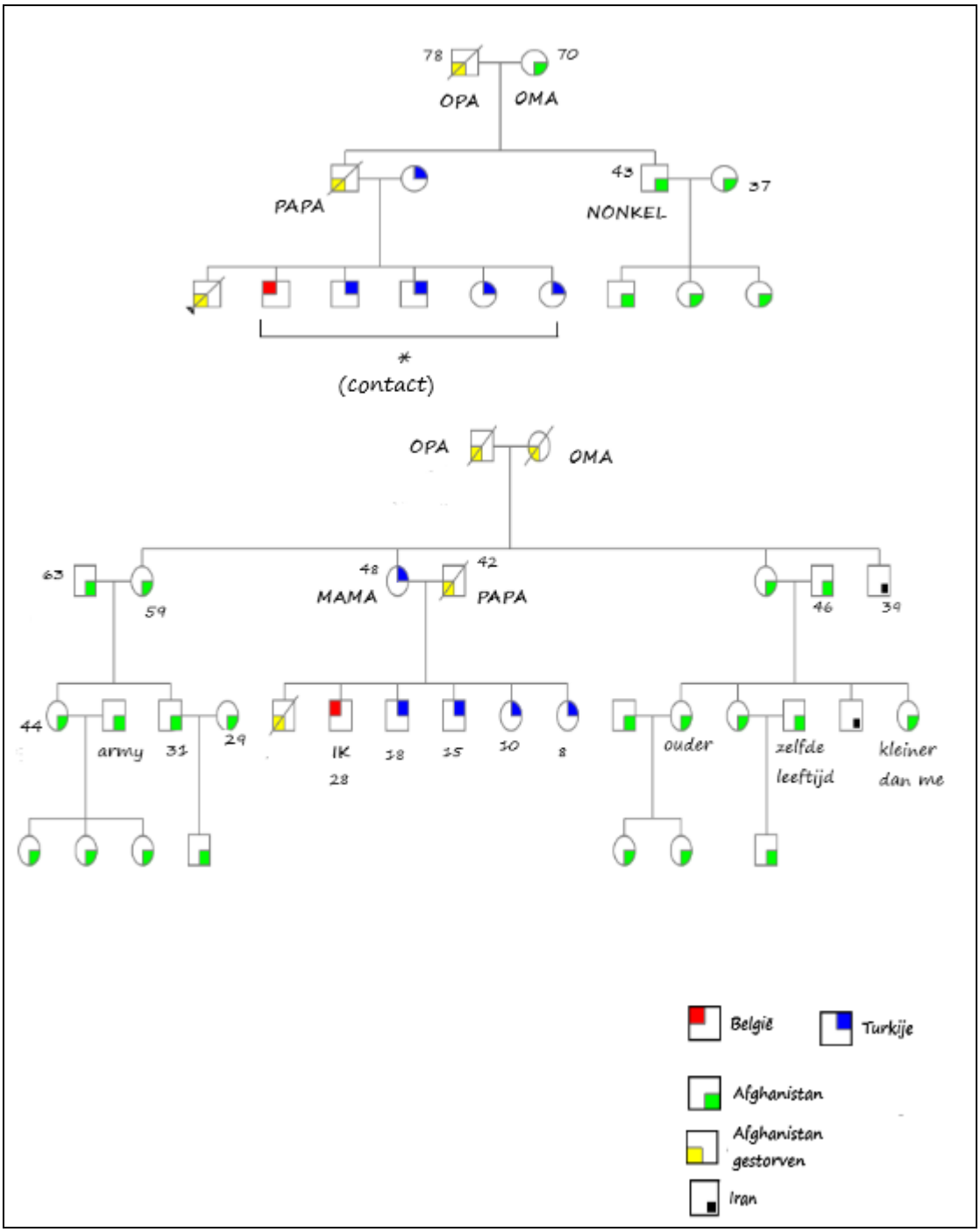


Figure 3. The right side of a cultural genogram of one of the participants in our multiple-case study, which the participant drew up during interview 1.

We made some minor changes in the figure in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research participants to the extent possible.

Annex 5: The left side of a cultural genogram of one of the participants

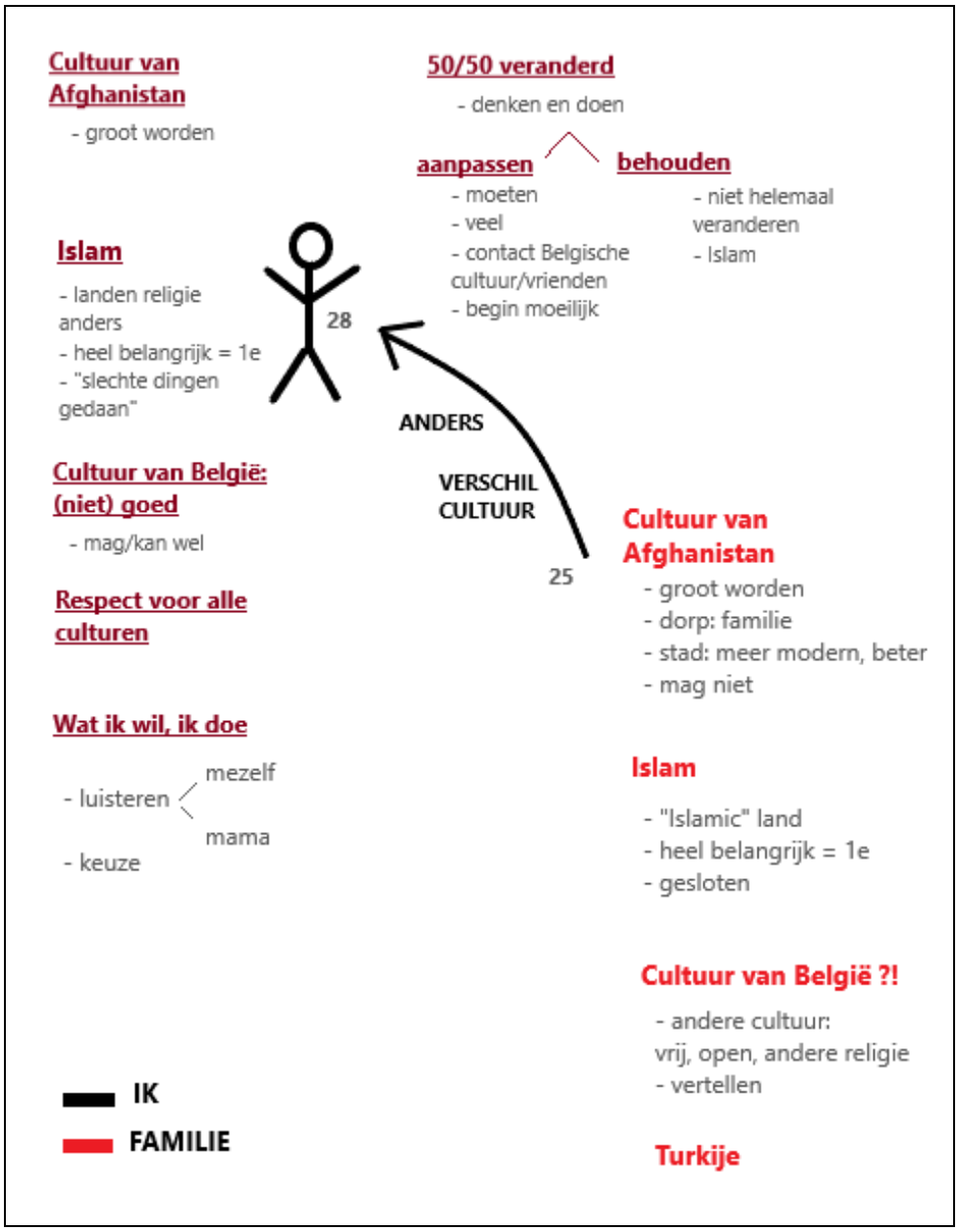


Figure 4. The left side of a cultural genogram of one of the participants in our multiple-case study, which the interviewer drafted while preparing interview 2. It is based on the accounts that the participant provided orally during interview 1. It operated as a short summary of interview 1 that was reviewed with the participant at the beginning of interview 2.

We made some minor changes in the figure in order to ensure confidentiality and anonymity of research participants to the extent possible.

Annex 6: Interview guide 2

Zoals ik je tijdens onze vorige ontmoeting al heb verteld, probeer ik beter te begrijpen wat het kan betekenen om in een ander land te leven dan je familie en hoe cultuur hierbij een rol speelt. Familie en cultuur staan centraal in onze gesprekken. Tijdens ons vorig gesprek leerde ik jouw familie beter kennen via de familieboom die we maakten. Ook vertelde je me over cultuur en religie in het leven van jouw familie en in jouw eigen leven.

Ik zou graag eerst nog even samenvatten wat je me tijdens het vorig gesprek verteld hebt. Ik heb hiervoor dingen geschreven en getekend bij jouw familieboom. We kunnen hier nog even – een kwartiertje ongeveer – over spreken. Als ik iets vertel dat niet juist is, mag je me dat zeggen. Vind je dat goed? [descriptief overlopen vorig gesprek]

Vandaag leef je in een ander land dan jouw familie. Ik zou nu graag met jou willen spreken over hoe dit alles [verwijzing naar het cultureel genogram] hierbij een rol speelt. Daarom zal ik enkele vragen stellen. Deze tekening [verwijzing naar cultureel genogram] kan jou en mij helpen om over de vragen na te denken.

1. **Wat betekent separatie in jouw cultuur en religie? Met separatie bedoel ik: in een ander land leven dan je familie door migratie.**
    a. Je vertelt me dat… Hoe is dit vandaag voor jou?

2. **Wat betekent cultuur en religie voor jou in het omgaan met separatie?**
    a. In hoeverre is het mogelijk om in België jouw cultuur en religie te beleven?

3. **Hoe praat je met je familie over cultuur of religie?**
    a. Hoe spreek jij met je familie over verschillen tussen België en Afghanistan?
    b. In welke mate spreekt jouw familie met jou over cultuur of over de Islam?
    c. Als je vragen hebt over cultuur of over religie, praat je daar dan over met jouw familie?
        i. Wederkerende sub-vragen: Kan je me helpen begrijpen wat dit voor jou betekent? Hoe belangrijk is dit voor jou?

4. **Welke tradities of rituelen beleef je in België nog samen met je familie?**
    a. Wat doet dit met jou?
    b. Zijn er ook tradities of rituelen van je familie die je niet meer kan beleven? Hoe is dit voor jou?

5. **In welke mate vindt jouw familie het belangrijk dat je in België vasthoudt aan hun cultuur en aan de Islam?**
    a. Waarom denk je dat? Hoe merk je dat?
    b. Wat betekent dit voor jou? Wat doet dit met jou?

c. (In welke mate heb je het gevoel dat je kan voldoen aan de verwachtingen van je familie?)
d. (Je komt hier in België in contact met een andere cultuur. Je vertelde me dat jouw doen, denken, voelen enzovoort veranderd is. In welke mate weet jouw familie dat deze veranderingen er zijn?)
    i. Hoe gaan zij hiermee om?
    ii. Wat betekent dit voor jou?

6. Welke rol speel jij in de manier waarop jouw familie cultuur en religie beleeft?

a. In hoeverre verschilt dit van de rol die je graag zou willen spelen?

Annex 7: Informed consent form

Met dit document verklaar ik, Nore Jans, dat ik x (naam deelnemer) gecontacteerd heb vanuit mijn positie als studente aan de faculteit Psychologie en Pedagogische Wetenschappen van de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, België. Voor mijn masterproefstudie aan de onderzoekseenheid Educatie, Cultuur, & Samenleving, nodig ik x (naam deelnemer) uit om vrijwillig mee te werken aan mijn studie over transnationale familieseparatie bij slachtoffers van georganiseerd geweld die om internationale bescherming vragen in België. Hierbij ben ik volledig onafhankelijk van media-, migratie- en overheidsinstanties. Medewerking aan het onderzoek wordt enkel gevraagd met de intentie om familieseparatie na gedwongen migratie te bestuderen in het kader van mijn masterproef.

Aan de hand van deze masterproefstudie probeer ik beter te begrijpen wat het betekent om door gedwongen migratie gescheiden te leven van familieleden. In het bijzonder bestudeer ik dynamieken van cultuurbehoud, cultuurverandering en cultuurspanning in relatie tot familieseparatie. Zo ben ik bijvoorbeeld geïnteresseerd in de wijze waarop men culturele tradities samen beleeft, ondanks een geografische afstand.

Binnen dit kader van geïnformeerde toestemming en medewerking aan de studie, geldt het volgende:

- Medewerking aan de studie betreft twee individuele gesprekken met mij als onderzoeker, er worden geen activiteiten georganiseerd in groep.
    - Tijdens deze gesprekken zullen enkele vragen gesteld worden over de wijze waarop men de eigen culturele identiteit beleeft binnen een context van familieseparatie. Deze gesprekken bieden mij de mogelijkheid om de beleving van cultuurbehoud, cultuurverandering en cultuurspanning in relatie tot familieseparatie beter te begrijpen.
    - Er wordt een audio-opname gemaakt van elk gesprek. Dit heeft als doel om tijdens het gesprek niet voortdurend alles wat gezegd wordt neer te hoeven schrijven. De opnames zullen nadien door mij als onderzoeker vertaald worden in een letterlijke schriftelijke weergave. Het doel van deze schriftelijke weergave is om aan de hand hiervan na te denken over de relatie tussen cultuur en familieseparatie. De volledige schriftelijke weergave en audio-opnames van de gesprekken zullen enkel beschikbaar zijn voor mij als onderzoeker en voor de promotor van deze studie. Fragmenten uit deze schriftelijke weergaves kunnen gebruikt worden in onderzoeksrapporten en/of -publicaties, waarbij persoonlijke informatie desalniettemin steeds vertrouwelijk behandeld wordt (zie hieronder).
    - Wees ervan bewust dat de gesprekken omwille van het thema van de studie kunnen leiden tot pijnlijke gevoelens.
    - Elk individueel gesprek zal ongeveer 1.5 uur tot 3 uur tijd in beslag nemen, tenzij anders gewenst.
    - De gesprekken vinden plaats rond de periode november 2018 – maart 2019.
    - Men kan zelf, in samenspraak met mij als onderzoeker, het moment en de locatie van samenkomst bepalen.
- Mede gebaseerd op deze individuele gesprekken, zullen reflecties over familieseparatie na gedwongen migratie publiek gemaakt worden in de vorm van een schriftelijk eindrapport en/of andere publicaties. Dit eindrapport en/of andere publicaties wordt in een digitale en papieren Engelstalige versie bezorgd aan iedereen die meegewerkt heeft aan de studie, tenzij anders gewenst.

- De persoonlijke informatie van iedereen die meewerkt aan de studie en van familieleden wordt vertrouwelijk behandeld. Dit betekent dat:
  - ❖ persoonlijke contactgegevens niet bezorgd worden aan derden, tenzij men dit als deelnemer van de studie expliciet wenst
  - ❖ medewerking niet publiek bekend gemaakt wordt, tenzij men dit als deelnemer van de studie expliciet wenst
  - ❖ anonimiteit in de mate van het mogelijke gewaarborgd wordt, tenzij men dit als deelnemer van de studie expliciet niet wenst
    - In onderzoeksrapporten en/of -publicaties zal onder meer gebruik gemaakt worden van pseudoniemen (een willekeurig gekozen naam, ter vervanging van een werkelijke persoonsnaam) en worden plaatsnamen gewijzigd. Op die manier wordt getracht de kans te verkleinen dat derden reflecties, bevindingen of illustraties in onderzoeksrapporten/-publicaties in verband kunnen brengen met de betreffende persoon en familie.
- Er worden geen foto's genomen en/of verspreid.
- Medewerking aan deze studie heeft geen invloed op de uitkomst en het verloop van asielprocedures, noch op verblijfstatuten en sociale rechten.
- Er is geen vergoeding gebonden aan medewerking aan deze studie.
- Het staat te allen tijde vrij om de onderzoeksopzet en –procedure, alsook de eigen medewerking, te bevragen en bedenkingen hierover te delen. Op elk moment kan een verzoek gedaan worden tot aanpassing van deze geïnformeerde toestemming en van bovenstaande procedures.
- Men kan op elk moment de eigen medewerking aan de studie beëindigen of weigeren om te antwoorden op vragen, zonder hiervoor redenen aan te hoeven geven of hiervan nadeel te ondervinden.
- Mijn contactgegevens (Nore Jans) (vrij te contacteren voor vragen, bedenkingen, enzovoort): nore.jans@student.kuleuven.be ; ☎ ---- -- -- --
- Contactgegevens van de Sociaal-Maatschappelijke Ethische Commissie van de Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: smec@kuleuven.be Met deze instantie kan contact opgenomen worden voor eventuele klachten of andere bezorgdheden omtrent ethische aspecten van deze studie.

Ik, Nore Jans,

nodig u hierbij – met inachtneming en naleving van het bovenstaande - uit om op vrijwillige basis deel te nemen aan mijn masterproefstudie betreffende transnationale familieseparatie bij slachtoffers van georganiseerd geweld die om internationale bescherming vragen in België.

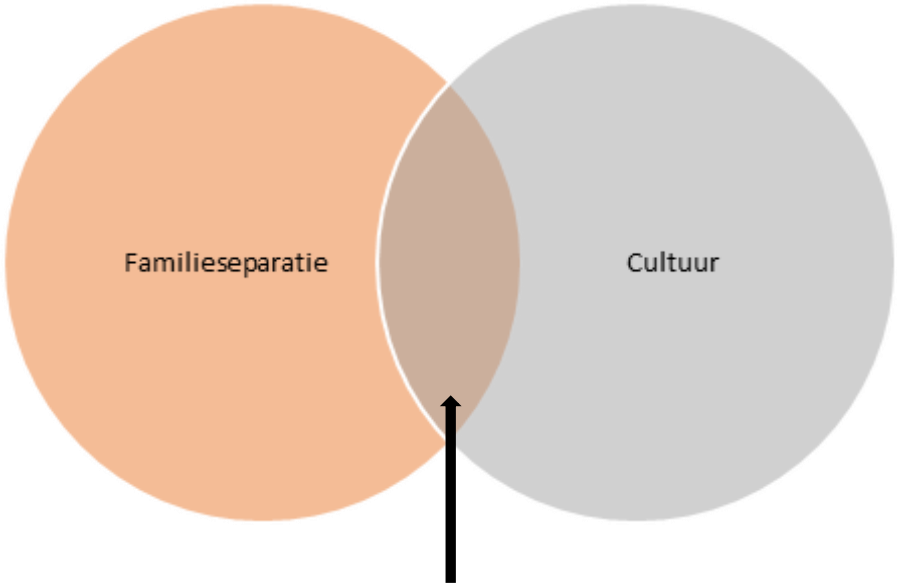
(handtekening)

Ik, _____

ben geïnformeerd over al het bovenstaande en heb deze informatie begrepen. Mijn vragen zijn voorlopig beantwoord. Ik wil meewerken aan deze studie en weet dat ik mijn medewerking op elk moment kan stopzetten, ook na het ondertekenen van dit document.

(handtekening)

Annex 8: The code tree used for data analysis



Leeswijzer

- De codes zijn opgesteld en te lezen vanuit het perspectief van de participant in een context van transnationale familieseparatie
- ‘An sich’ verwijst naar de code zelf in zijn eenvoud

- **Cultuurgereguleerde betekenis van familie**
    - Gehechtheid familie
    - Respect voor ouders/ouderen
    - Luisteren naar ouders/ouderen
- **Familiale verbondenheid**
    - Ambivalente loyaliteit
    - Gehechtheid
- **Religiegebonden conflict Afghanistan**

- **Culturele praktijk als bron van familieseparatie**
- **Familieseparatie als een emotionele en praktische belasting**

- **In contact met een andere culturele wereld**
    - Hyphen cultural identity
    - Eigen culturele verandering
    - Eigen cultuurbehoud
    - Intercultureel verschil/conflict en religieuze principes
    - Cultuur gastland als een bron van vrijheid
- **Representatie cultuur thuisland door het zelf** **[het zelf = de participant]**
    - Bekritiseren culturele elementen/praktijken
    - Ambigue houding t.a.v. eenzelfde cultureel element/praktijk
    - Waarderen culturele elementen/praktijken
- **Representatie cultuur gastland door het zelf** **[het zelf = de participant]**
    - Bekritiseren culturele elementen/praktijken
    - Ambigue houding t.a.v. eenzelfde cultureel element/praktijk
    - Waarderen culturele elementen/praktijken

- **Zichzelf cultureel positioneren/oriënteren**
    - (Toe-eigenen) culturele zelfbeschikking in doen en laten
    - Distantiëren van islamitische identiteit
    - Vertrouwen in eigen goede moraal
    - Geloof in God / gehechtheid aan islam
    - Gehechtheid eigen cultuurbehoud
    - Gehechtheid eigen culturele verandering
    - Culturele vrijheid als waardevol
    - Vooropstellen eigen waardenpatroon
    - Loskoppelen identiteit van herkomst / islamitische identiteit van culturele praxis/competenties
    - Ervaren volledigheid cultuurgebonden kennis
    - Ervaren tekort aan cultuurgebonden competenties
        - An sich
        - Negatief beoordelen tekort aan cultuurgebonden competenties door omgeving
        - Stilte op vragen over Afghaanse cultuur vanuit omgeving
    - Begeerte naar cultuurgebonden competenties
    - Prioriteren van het zelf t.o.v. familie

    - Prioriteren van familie t.o.v. het zelf
    - Cultureel dubbelleven
        - Als praktijk
        - Als belastend
        - Als waardevol
    - Afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes
        - An sich
        - Verantwoorden/gelatenheid
        - Gradaties in ernst
        - Normaliseren
        - Niet verbonden met familie-eer
- **Cultuurverwerving als een proces**
- **Culturele positionering/oriëntatie familie**
    - Islamitische identiteit, islamitische praxis of gehechtheid aan islam
    - Onderscheiden families in culturele beleving
- **Intrafamiliaal cultureel verschil**
    - An sich
    - Gelatenheid t.a.v. verschil
    - Bestendigen verschil
- **Culturele positionering/oriëntatie verbinden aan woonplaats [door familie of door participant]**

- **Familiegebonden culturele traditie als praktijk**
- **Familiegebonden culturele traditie in een context van familieseparatie**
    - Als belastend: een moment van confrontatie met familieseparatie
        - An sich
        - Coping
    - Als niet belastend
    - Herinnerd worden aan hoe het vroeger was
    - Verlies van culturele traditie
    - Gewijzigd nationaal behoud van culturele traditie
    - Transnationaal behoud van culturele traditie
        - An sich
        - Als belastend
        - Als waardevol
        - Ambigue houding t.a.v. behoud
        - Als een daad van zorg
    - Weigeren transnationaal behoud van culturele traditie
        - An sich
        - Redenen weigering (ev. transnationaal gecommuniceerd)
    - Gehechtheid aan culturele traditie
- **Cultuurgereguleerd intrafamiliaal rolpatroon als praktijk**
- **Cultuurgereguleerd intrafamiliaal rolpatroon in een context van familieseparatie**
    - Rolverlies
        - An sich
        - Als verlies van agency
        - Als belastend
    - Transnationaal rolbehoud
        - An sich

        - Als belastend
        - Als niet belastend
        - Als waardevol
        - Als bron van agency
        - Als een daad van zorg
    - Weigeren transnationaal rolbehoud
        - An sich
        - Als belastend
        - Als niet belastend
        - Redenen weigering (ev. transnationaal gecommuniceerd)
        - Toe-eigenen vrijheid in doen en laten
        - Compenseren weigering
    - Roltransmissie
        - An sich
        - Vertrouwen t.a.v. roltransmissie
        - Als waardevol

- **Het oog van familie m.b.t. de eigen culturele beleving**
    - An sich
    - Als een daad van zorg
    - Vraag over religieuze praxis als een vraag over algemene levenswandel
    - Als een spiegel voor het zelf
    - Als niet van toepassing
- **Disclosure afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes**
    - An sich
    - Om respect te behouden
    - Eerlijkheid en realistisch beeld vooropstellen
- **Silencing afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes**
    - Uit respect
    - Om respect te behouden
    - Absolute negatieve beeldvorming over het zelf vermijden
    - Als een daad van zorg
    - Ambigue houding t.a.v. silencing
- **Disclosure afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes als overbodig**
- **Selective disclosure afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes**

- **Het stellen van vragen over een culturele wereld [door familie of door participant]**
    - De culturele wereld van het thuisland
    - De culturele wereld van het gastland
    - Argwaan t.a.v. het stellen van vragen: gebrek aan interesse in het andersculturele
    - Interesse in een culturele wereld
- **Familie ongeschikt/overbodig als bron van cultuurgebonden kennis**
- **Narratieven over de andersculturele wereld van het gastland**
    - An sich
    - Reacties van verbazing, enthousiasme en kritiek
    - Als toevallig gespreksonderwerp
    - Eigen onwelzijn als onderliggende betekenislaag
    - Silencing narratieven

    - Selective disclosure narratieven
    - I.f.v. culturele dynamiek

- **Representatie van cultuur gastland door familie**
    - De wereld als Afghanistan
    - Een andersculturele samenleving
    - Onwetendheid omtrent cultuur gastland
    - Gereguleerd via nieuwe media en 'van horen zeggen'
    - Discrepantie tussen representatie en eigen indruk
    - Transnationaal corrigeren representatie
        - Meer realistisch beeld
        - Aandacht voor intracultureel verschil – stereotypering vermijden
- **Transnationaal waarderen culturele elementen/praktijken gastland door familie**
- **Transnationaal bekritiseren culturele elementen/praktijken gastland door familie**
    - An sich
    - Emotionele neutraliteit t.a.v. kritiek
- **Transnationaal bekritiseren/reguleren culturele elementen/praktijken thuisland**
    - An sich
    - Gevoel van erkenning
- **Niet transnationaal bekritiseren culturele elementen/praktijken thuisland**
    - Discussie vermijden
    - Uit respect
    - Stempel van culturele vijand vermijden
    - Culturele beleving van familie gepercipieerd als statisch
    - Eigen tekort aan culturele competenties
    - Perceptie als bemoeienis vermijden
- **Transnationaal beschermen van de Afghaanse culturele wereld tegen het kind [door familie of door participant]**
    - Aansporen tot religieuze praxis
    - Afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes bekritiseren
        - Ontzeggen identiteit van herkomst / islamitische identiteit
        - Wijzen op cultuurgebonden verantwoordelijkheden t.a.v. familie
        - Wijzen op afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes
    - Duiding/narratieven culturele belevingswereld (- bron van cultuurgebonden competenties)
    - Herinnerd worden aan herkomst
    - (Het oog van) de culturele gemeenschap: sanctie en beloning
    - Als een daad van zorg voor het kind
    - Als waardevol
    - Als belastend
- **Transnationaal beschermen van het kind tegen de Afghaanse culturele wereld [door familie of door participant]**
    - Schijnbare neutraliteit t.a.v. afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes
    - Waarderen/bewerkstelligen afwijken van culturele normen / religieuze principes
    - Autonomie in culturele beleving toekennen
    - Gevoel van erkenning/begrip
    - Als waardevol
- **Inleiden in de eigen culturele wereld als een eindig proces**

- **Religieuze beleving als een individuele verantwoordelijkheid**
- **Transnationaal faciliteren cultuurgebonden praktijk**
    - An sich
    - Als een daad van zorg
- **Vertrouwen van familie in goede moraal**
- **Geruststellen familie omtrent eigen goede moraal**

- **Coping met familieseparatie**
    - Religieuze betekenisgeving en handelingen als coping
    - Een religieus kader als bescherming
    - Intrapersoonlijke culturele verandering als een weg naar sociale inbedding (hetgeen ondersteunend is)
- **Religieuze betekenisgeving familieseparatie: zichzelf beschermen als plicht**
- **Condities gastland**
    - Individualistische cultuur versterkt eenzaamheid
    - Als beperkend voor cultuurbeleving
    - Ruimte voor cultuurbeleving

- **Familieseparatie als een bron van culturele zelfbeschikking door fysieke afwezigheid**
    - An sich
    - Als bevorderlijk voor de eigen religieuze groei
- **Niet instappen in andersculturele praktijk uit zorg voor familie**
- **Zwijgen over eigen onwelbevinden als een culturele daad**
- **Angst van familie n.a.v. afwijken culturele normen / religieuze principes**
- **Psychische gebondenheid aan familie in het navigeren van het andersculturele: behouden van respect**
- **Humor in het spreken over cultureel verschil**
- **Cultuur of culturele beleving niet/beperkt als gesprekstheme**
- **Belang van de gesprekspartner voor inhoud transnationale communicatie**
- **Technologische communicatiemedia als beperkend voor gevoelservaring**