

Jubileumsymposium van De Evenaar

# Veranderingen in culturele identiteit door trauma bij vluchtelingen



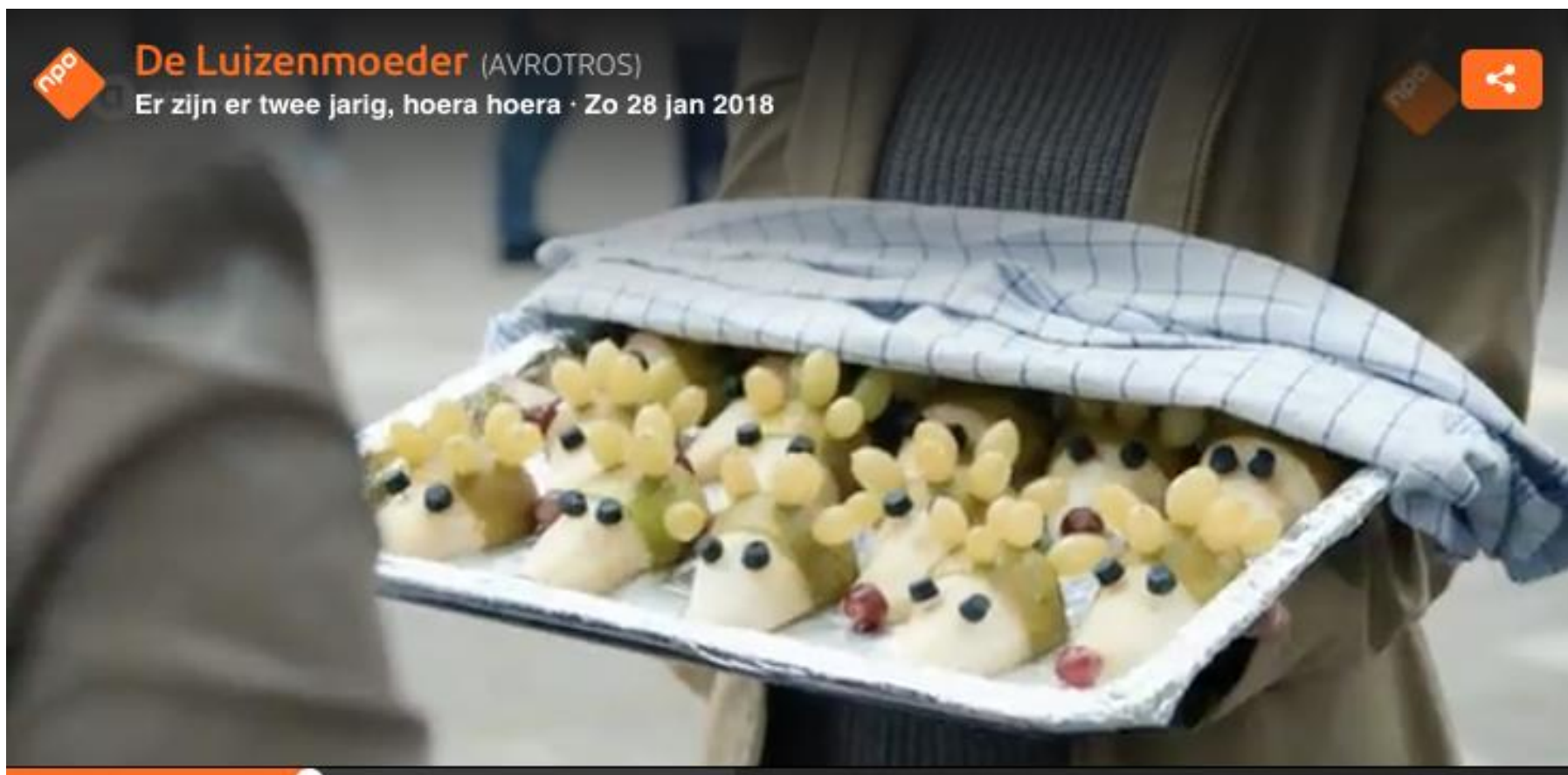
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Cultureel antropoloog en onderzoeker

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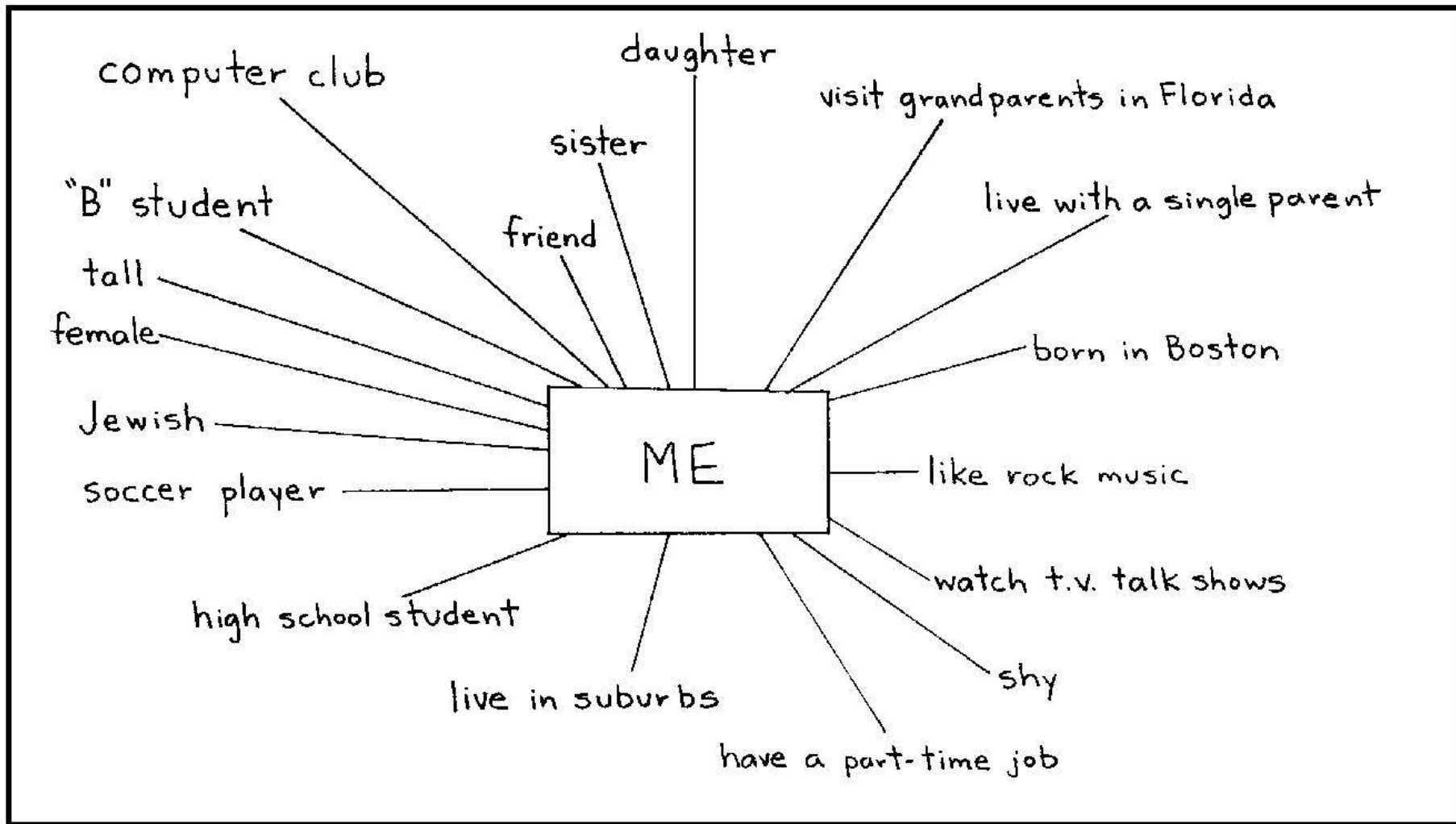
## Cultuur is overal





**De muizenpeertjes met dropoogjes**

Iedereen heeft een identiteit





Culturele identiteit is veelgelaagd en complex



## Table 1. Components of a Cultural Formulation

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Cultural identity of the individual

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Cultural explanations of the individual's illness

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Cultural factors related to psychosocial environment and levels of functioning

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Cultural elements of the relationship between the individual and the clinician

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Overall cultural assessment for diagnosis and care

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*Source:* DSM-IV-TR, pp 897–898

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**transcultural  
psychiatry**

September  
2009

ARTICLE

## Recognizing Cultural Identity in Mental Health Care: Rethinking the Cultural Formulation of a Somali Patient

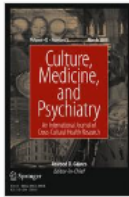
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**Abstract** Although there are many ways to produce a cultural formulation that facilitates a culturally sensitive diagnosis and treatment for asylum seekers and refugees in mental health care, it is essential to gain trust and 'recognize' the patient. One way to achieve this recognition is through a cultural interview, in which cultural references of the health care provider and the patient are exchanged. This paper presents an example of such a process with a Somali migrant to the Netherlands, whose passivity and inactivity puzzled the psychiatrist. Gaining his trust and recognizing his cultural roots as a member of a Somali ethnic group revealed more about his motives, concepts and attitude. This example suggests the importance of cultural identity as a way to explore the meanings of the illness and the interrelationship between the patient and health care provider. The cultural identity of the patient is a basis on which meanings can be exchanged in an ongoing way and starting points for effective treatment can be found.

**Key words** anthropology • asylum seekers • cultural formulation • cultural identity • ethnicity • refugees

What role does the cultural identity of an individual play when he is forced



[Culture, Medicine, and Psychiatry](#)

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## Cultural Identity Among Afghan and Iraqi Traumatized Refugees: Towards a Conceptual Framework for Mental Health Care Professionals

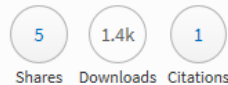
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### Abstract

Cultural identity in relation with mental health is of growing interest in the field of transcultural psychiatry. However, there is a need to clarify the concept of cultural identity in order to make it useful in clinical practice. The purpose of this study is to unravel the complexity and many layers of cultural identity, and to assess how stress and acculturation relate to (changes in) cultural identity. As part of a larger study about cultural identity, trauma, and mental health, 85 patients from Afghanistan and Iraq in treatment for trauma-related disorders were interviewed with a Brief Cultural Interview. The interviews were analysed through qualitative data analysis using the procedures of grounded theory. The analysis resulted in three domains of cultural identity: personal identity, ethnic identity and social identity. Within each domain relationships with stress and acculturation were identified. The results offer insight into the intensity of changes in cultural identity, caused by pre-and post-migration stressors and the process of acculturation. Based on the research findings recommendations are formulated to enhance the cultural competency of mental health workers.



## Culturele identiteit

“... norms and values that constitute an image an individual holds of him or herself, which urges an individual to decide what is right or wrong, what kind of behavior is appropriate or not, as well as norms and values that are negotiated within the (ethnic or ethnoreligious) group the individual belongs to”

## **Culturele identiteit**

Op basis van interviews met 85 Afghaanse en Irakese patiënten

### **Persoonlijke identiteit**



Leeftijd, gender, burgerlijke staat, opleiding, werk, sociale klasse

### **Etnische identiteit**



Etnische waarden, etnische problemen, religie, taal, uiterlijk

### **Sociale identiteit**

Familie, sociale status, sociale relaties, sociale contacten

Personal identity		Trauma	Acculturation
Age	young  old	Children unaware of flight reason Forced marriage, kidnap Exposure to PTE (war periods)	Living between two cultures Differences with Dutch peers Feeling disconnected from Dutch society
Gender		Vulnerability of women <b>Forced to stay at home, no schooling</b> Men feel unable to fulfil duties Role as partner and/or parent	Wanting same rights as Dutch women <b>Illiteracy hampers integration</b> Decreased sense of masculinity Increased distance to partner and/or children
Marital status	single married widowed	Loneliness Mixed marriage Single women are stalked	Failing to connect to Dutch peers Differences between partners in adaptation to NL Feeling unsafe among nationals
Education	low  high	Stress establishing position in society Disparity with Dutch Loss of education achievements	Difficulty establishing position in Dutch society Experiences distance to Dutch peers Feelings less appreciated in society
Work		<b>Stress of finding work</b> <b>Fear of losing work</b> <b>Unable to gain similar level of work</b>	<b>Feeling powerless in NL</b> <b>Feeling different from Dutch workers</b> <b>Dissatisfaction with work in NL</b>
Social class		Vulnerability Feeling bereft of social position Loss of social status	Feeling unable to participate in NL Feeling unable to profit from opportunities in NL Feeling worthless compared to home society

Ethnic identity	Trauma	Acculturation
Ethnic values	Stress in relation to other groups Fear of other ethnic groups	Avoiding contact to other ethnic groups Discrimination by other ethnic groups
Ethnicity problems	Oppressed as ethnic minority Mixed ethnicity/religion: threats	Feelings marginalized in NL Not belonging to either parent's groups
Ethnoreligious problems	Fear of other religious groups Fear of other religions, conversion	Avoiding contact with other Afghans/Iraqis Avoiding contact with Sunnis/Muslims
Language	Fear of not being understood Fear to speak in public Not being able to understand children	Perception of not being understood in NL Unable to speak to other nationals Fear that children are losing their mother tongue
Physical features	Ethnicity is easily recognized Shame, withdrawal, avoidance	Not being accepted by other ethnic groups in NL Not wanting (much) social contact in NL
Political activity	On black list because power change Ethnic/religious discrimination army Stress through political changes	Wanting to stay quit/undercover in NL

Social identity	Trauma	Acculturation
Family	<p>Worries about family in home country Murdered/missing family members Worries about family in NL</p>	<p>Thinking more about home than about NL Feeling distant to Dutch with complete families Losing norm/values and mother tongue</p>
Role within family	<p>Feelings unable to fulfil father tasks Feeling to fail as a mother Feeling powerless/meaningless</p>	<p>Avoiding social contacts in NL Avoiding social contacts in NL Feeling to fail in Dutch society</p>
Social status	<p>Social drop, negative change status Fear for risks of high status partner Marginalized, feeling guilty, single</p>	<p>Loss of social status in society Feeling lost in NL Trapped between culture NL and home society</p>
Social relations	<p>Children missing, in home society Worries about parents home society Fear of family in law, lack of support</p>	<p>Failing as a parent hampers integration Feeling lack of support in NL Differences in acculturation with other family</p>
Relationships	<p>Missing partner, stress about safety Relationship problems, overloaded</p>	<p>Loneliness, women afraid of men in NL Loneliness, acculturation differences with partner</p>
Social contacts	<p>Grief over parents, lack of contact Less contact stress within family Ethnic problems, fear for curiosity Not enough concentration for Dutch</p>	<p>Homesickness Family more important than integration Avoiding contact with peer group Insufficient communication with Dutch</p>

# Conclusie

Dealing with the complexity of mental health problems in culturally diverse patients through cultural identity

From personal to ethnic to social identity:

- Start with the cultural perspective of the individual
- Through the most direct meaningful environment
- Contextualise through the wider social environment

Towards a deeper understanding of the problems refugee patients face from their point of view that is coloured by their cultural identity: what is really at stake

# Post-migratie stress en culturele identiteit

- Post-migratie stress belangrijker voor psychopathologie dan aantal meegemaakte traumata  
Carswell et al., 2011; Porter & Haslam, 2005; Laban et al., 2005
- Acculturatie ook belangrijke risicofactor Bhugra, 2005
- Culturele identiteit belangrijk voor begrijpen van psychopathologie en individueel/sociaal functioneren  
Mezzich et al., 2009

Reden om te onderzoeken hoe dat zit:

1. Post-migratie stress, acculturatie en psychopathologie
2. Hoe hangen deze risicofactoren samen in culturele identiteit

# Post-migratie stress en culturele identiteit

Culturele identiteit



geeft duidelijkheid over wie je bent, bij wie je hoort

Meegemaakte traumatische gebeurtenissen



reden voor de vlucht

Post-migratie stress



leven in een ander land

Acculturatie



aanpassen

Culturele identiteit



# METHODEN

## **Sociodemographic data**

## **Mental health problems**

Harvard Trauma Questionnaire (HTQ), 2a+b, 30 items, 1-4<sup>1</sup>

Hopkins Symptoms Checklist (HSCL), 25 items, 1-4<sup>1</sup>

## **Post-migration living problems (PMLP) or difficulties<sup>2</sup>**

PMLP-CL: 23 items, 1-4 Likert (no-very much)

## **Acculturation/bicultural identity**

Cortes Rogler Malgady Bicultural Scale (CRM-BS): 20 items, 1-4<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Mollica et al. (1987)

<sup>2</sup> Silove et al. (1997)

<sup>3</sup> Mezzich et al. (2009)

# METHODEN

## Culturele interview<sup>7,11</sup>

- 27 open questions
- Analysis qual software: Atlas.ti 7.0

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*Source:* DSM-IV-TR, pp 897–898

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<sup>7</sup> Groen et al. 2017

<sup>11</sup> Groen et al. 2018

Variable		Afghans (n=28)	Iraqis (n=29)	Total (n=57)	$\chi^2$ and $p$ Value
<b>Gender</b>	Male	20 (71.4)	17 (58.6)	37 (64.9)	$\chi^2(1)=1.03,$ $p=.311$
	Female	8 (28.6)	12 (41.4)	20 (35.1)	
<b>Juridical status</b>	Asylum	21 (75)	3 (10.3)	24 (42.1)	$\chi^2(1)=24.43,$ $p=.000$
	Refugee	7 (25)	26 (89.7)	33 (57.9)	
<b>Marital status</b>	Married	7 (25.0)	16 (59.3)	23 (41.8)	$\chi^2(1)=6.63,$ $p=.010$
	Partner hc	1 (3.6)	2 (7.4)	3 (5.5)	
	Separated	0 (0.0)	4 (14.8)	4 (7.2)	
	Widowed	2 (7.1)	2 (7.4)	4 (7.2)	
	Single	18 (64.3)	3 (11.1)	21 (38.2)	
<b>Education</b>	None	12 (42.9)	7 (26.9)	19 (35.2)	$\chi^2(2)=9.52,$ $p=.009$
	Primary (reli)	11 (39.3)	4 (15.4)	15 (27.8)	
	> Primary	5 (17.9)	15 (40.7)	20 (29.1)	
<b>Employment</b>	Yes	4 (14.8)	10 (40.0)	14 (26.9)	$\chi^2(1)=4.19,$ $p=.041$
	No	23 (85.2)	15 (60.0)	38 (73.1)	
<b>Age</b>	Mean (SD)	27 (8.2)	44 (9.8)	36 (12.3)	$T(55)=-6.93,$ $p=.000$
	Range	17-43	19-59	17-59	
<b>Length of stay</b>	Mean (SD)	4.08 (3.6)	9.06 (5.09)	6.61 (.5)	$T(46.64)=-3.85,$ $p=.000$
	Range	1.25-16.83	0.83-19.25	0.83-19.25	

# RESULTATEN

**TABLE Mean experienced traumatic events (HTQ-part 1), Anxiety/Depression disorder (HSCL-25), Posttraumatic stress disorder (HTQ-part 2), Post-migration living problems (PMLP-CL), and acculturation (CRM-BS) in Afghan and Iraqi patients ( $n=57$ )**

Variable	Afghan patients ( $n=28$ )	Iraqi patients ( $n=29$ )	Total patients ( $n=57$ )	$\chi^2$ Value and $p$ Value
Posttraumatic stress (mean, SD)	3.07 (0.46)	2.79 (0.61)	2.93 (0.55)	$t(53) = 1.92, p = .060$
Anxiety/depression (mean, SD)	3.12 (0.45)	2.90 (0.63)	3.01 (0.55)	$t(52) = 1.44, p = .155$
Total experienced traumatic events (N, SD)	10.93 (5.57)	8.66 (4.78)	9.77 (5.26)	$t(55) = 1.66, p = .029$
Post-migration living problems (mean, SD)	2.50 (0.48)	2.39 (0.56)	2.44 (0.52)	$t(54) = 0.84, p = .407$
Acculturation (mean, SD)	0.87 (0.38)	0.99 (0.70)	0.93 (0.31)	$t(54) = -.785, p = .436$

# RESULTATEN

**TABLE Correlations between posttraumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) symptoms, anxiety/depression symptoms, experienced potentially traumatic events (PTE), post-migration living problems (PMLP), and acculturation in Afghan and Iraqi patients (n=57\*)**

		PTSD	Anxiety/depression	Experienced PTE	PMLP	Acculturation
<b>PTSD</b>	Pearson Correlation	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)					
	N	55				
<b>Anxiety/depression</b>	Pearson Correlation	.875**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000				
	N	54	54			
<b>Experienced PTE</b>	Pearson Correlation	.234	.225	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.086	.102			
	N	55	54	57		
<b>PMLP</b>	Pearson Correlation	.475**	.480**	.130	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.341		
	N	54	53	56	56	
<b>Acculturation</b>	Pearson Correlation	-.199	-.244	-.102	-.032	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.150	.078	.456	.814	
	N	54	53	56	56	56

## Post-migration factors

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Uncertainty about stay</li><li>▪ Fear of being sent back →</li><li>▪ Language problems</li><li>▪ Financial problems →</li><li>▪ Housing problems</li><li>▪ Lack of safe environment</li><li>▪ Lack of privacy</li><li>▪ Lack of work</li><li>▪ Work below education level</li><li>▪ Loneliness</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Missing the family</li><li>▪ Worrying about family at home</li><li>▪ Worrying about (political) friends</li><li>▪ Unable to return in emergency</li><li>▪ Health problems</li><li>▪ Discrimination</li><li>▪ Lack of social contacts</li><li>▪ Lack of contacts with same religion</li><li>▪ Lack of religious meetings</li><li>▪ Uncertainty about the future</li></ul> |
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## RESULTATEN

- PTE hangen vaak samen met etnisch-religieuze minderheden
- Post-migratie stress: familie en leefomstandigheden
- Acculturatie: onzeker over begrepen voelen, culturele dilemma's
- Afghanen: bang teruggestuurd, eenzaamheid, gebrek aan steun
- Irakezen: missen van familie, huwelijksproblemen, moeite met inburgering
- Culturele identiteit na migratie: verwarring
  - Veilig, maar moeite met verlies en aanpassing in Nederland
  - Bevrijd van stress, maar sterk verbonden met familie en werk (betekenisgeving)

# CONCLUSIE

20-jarige sjiitische Sahar uit Afghanistan weigerde met een soennitische man te trouwen, waarna haar sjiitische vriend werd vermoord en zij verkracht voor de ogen van haar familie:

Angst diep geworteld in het risico op ontvoering en gedwongen huwelijk dat verankerd is in de culturele identiteit van Sahar

- oudste dochter (sociale identiteit)
- van een sjiitische minderheid (etnische identiteit)
- cultureel ongepast gedrag: gender, leeftijd, single (persoonlijke identiteit)

## **Post-migratie stress**

- schuldgevoel naar familie, vooral naar vader met hartproblemen
- moeite met taal vanwege ongeletterdheid en geen scholing

## **Acculturatie**

- teveel schaamte voor sociaal contact landgenoten en Nederlanders