



## Article

# Transnationalism: A Vehicle for Settlement and Incorporation of Muslim Iraqi Turkoman Forced Migrants in Sydney

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**Abstract:** Based on a qualitative study of eight “less visible” Muslim Iraqi Turkoman immigrants in a multicultural Sydney, this article highlights the dynamic nature of immigrant identity that is constructed of multiple ethno-communal identities. This article explores the significance of transnational activities, due to readily available communication technologies, and how this allows Muslim Iraqi Turkoman immigrants not only to hold multiple identities, but also move and mix in societies with plural ethno-religious communities, such as Sydney. Through a transnational lens and the use of qualitative study, this article looks at how Muslim Iraqi Turkoman forced migrants have engaged in identity reproduction and settlement in Sydney, and how their experiences compare with the utopic dream of a “multicultural Australia”. The key findings in this article show that: firstly, “less visible” Muslim Iraqi Turkoman ethnic minority usually finds it difficult to self-define their identity, and often uses nation states as point of reference; secondly, Islamophobic attacks affect feelings of belongingness to the larger Australian society; thirdly, maintaining home culture promotes feelings of belongingness to Australia.

**Keywords:** transnationalism; Iraqi Turkoman; Muslim; migration; integration; incorporation; settlement; ethnic minority; identity; culture

## 1. Introduction

Migration is a global phenomenon and a fundamental feature of human social existence occurring as a reaction to political, religious, social and economic changes within nation states [1]. In an era of advanced technology and high flows of migration across nation states, the resulting increase in cultural diversity promotes a growing need for researchers to understand cultural identity reconstruction and the intercultural relations of immigrants in receiving nations. “Immigrants” are a socio-political construct created by nation states to define citizens and non-citizens as insiders and outsiders respectively.

The social identity theory indicates that a person has multiple social identities derived from perceived memberships of social groups, such as national, ethnic, religious, political and cultural groups. Social identity provides the individual with sense of belonging and pride, often grouping people holding the same social identity together, thus creating the “us” and “them” ideologies [2]. Equally, the “us” and “them” rhetoric often occur as a perceived clash of values and beliefs between social groups. For instance, an individual’s lack of speaking English and maintaining home culture, can make this individual be perceived as less Australian by some mainstream Australians, and therefore initializing “us” *versus* “them” rhetoric [3].

Previously, research on migration and immigrants was structural in nature and viewed migration as a linear trajectory in the form of assimilation of the migrant into the host society, hence a movement

from culture A to culture B [4–6]. Recent work in social and cultural theory, challenges this position, claiming that the relationship between immigrants and the host nation is complex and fluid. This relationship is constantly changing in a global era offering advanced and cheap technology such as fast cyber and telecommunication technology as well as readily accessible air transport and social media. It is in this dynamic world that increased migration requires our attention.

The dynamic nature of immigration processes has led many researchers to adopt a transnational lens when researching with immigrants in their host nations. Transnationalism refers to various types of global relations such as economic, cultural or social relations [7], and is more specifically defined by Basch *et al.* [8] as the processes by which immigrants create and preserve multiple relations that link them to their home and host societies. This allows immigrants to develop identities that are submerged in multiple relationships which connect them simultaneously to two or more nations [8].

Through the lens of transnationalism, this article provides an empirical analysis of the Iraqi Turkoman forced migration, settlement experience, and processes of identity reproduction in Sydney. Understanding the identity reproduction processes of Iraqi Turkoman immigrants can add vital information to the research arena on “less visible” ethnic minority groups as such groups are often understudied and more research is required to explore their identity reproduction processes. This article also considers the religious identity of the Muslim Turkoman community and tracks the impact of religion on their settlement experiences. Muslims have been perceived as a security threat to the Australian nation-state post 9/11 [9]. In the current context of the global-led confrontation against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the settlement experience of forced Muslim Turkoman migrants is likely to come up against a set of obstacles given the vicinity of the Turkoman cities (Kirkuk, Duz Khurma, TalAfar) to the territories controlled by ISIL forces. The Muslim Turkoman migrants’ connection to the aforementioned Iraqi cities, can act as an example of such obstacles and may create suspicion on Turkoman Muslims naturally connecting with Iraq, whether in terms of direct travel, money remittances and so forth. Interrogation of Turkoman Muslims travelling to Iraq from Australian airports is indicative of such suspicion, where some are denied travel on basis of potential involvement with “terrorism”. This is likely to be exacerbated in the context of rising Islamophobia within a multicultural Australia.

In theory, Australian Multiculturalism allows migrants to participate within society, to develop and to overcome obstacles as they adjust to a new country of settlement, and simply, “to allow them to flourish as individuals” [10], which Bowen frames as “The Genius of Australian Multiculturalism”. The Australian government’s official discourse recognises cultural differences, encouraging all to contribute equally to all levels of society without discrimination, and benefit from productive cultural, social and economic diversity [11,12]. Therefore, an Iraqi Turkoman migrant is both Australian and Iraqi Turkoman, encouraged to maintain the home identity in the larger Australian context. However, regardless of this idealized non-discrimination policy, discrimination is still a reality of many immigrants in Australia [12–14].

This article provides an insight into incorporation processes experienced by “less visible” ethnic minorities who also experience discrimination, particularly due to identifying as Muslim and Middle Eastern, in a multicultural context where diversity is officially stated to be encouraged by government policies. This article looks at, first, how Iraqi Turkoman participants reproduce and maintain their Turkoman ethno-communal identity in the Australian host society, and second, how these Muslim Iraqi Turkoman participants settle into this host society, is the central focus of this article.

### 1.1. Iraqi Turkomans

This section provides an overview of Iraqi Turkomans who are part of the ethnic continuum from Central Asia, including Iran, Iraq and Turkey. They are different to “Turkmen”, which is the term used to define nationals of the Republic of Turkmenistan [15]. Iraqi Turkomans have an established cultural identity that is different to Iraqi Arab or Kurdish identity and, like the Kurds, Turkoman cultural

identity crosses and exists beyond the national borders of Iraq, and is found in Turkey and Iran as well as other countries such as Syria, Lebanon and Palestine.

### Turkoman Forced Migrants: The “Less Visible” Non-National Minority

Decreased visibility of Turkoman migrants in the context of Sydney is an interesting focal point, as dominant national discourse and framing of identity results in Turkoman identity being subsumed within, and rendered subsidiary to, national communal forms. The Australian Census is indicative of this dominant framing, making non-national identities less visible. These Turkoman migrants are rendered coherent to the state through their articulation as members of national migrant communities.

In his work on the Ainu indigenous invisible minority of Japan, Takaaki [16] discussed invisible minorities as people who lack institutional and general public recognition, and are subject to various forms of national discrimination that enforces their invisibility. Although the Ainu are indigenous to Japan, their experiences of invisibility are still relevant to, and resonate with, Iraqi Turkoman experiences of invisibility due to a similar dominant national framing of identity which constructs decreased visibility of Turkoman forced migrants.

The complexities of migration and settlement increase when we consider the transnational activities of migrants. Globalisation and transnational diaspora add to these complexities, where multiple factors such as religion, politics, economics, and language play a role in shaping individual cultural identity. This is shown in the case of Iraqi Turkoman immigrants in Sydney who are also Muslims, and share this identity at the local, national and global level with the larger Islamic global community or *Ummah* (the global Islamic community). Additionally, Turkoman people share cultural ties with Turkey and Turkic people of Central Asia, and here in Australia, they are Australian. This dynamic nature of identity affiliation allows for multiple identities to interplay within the same individual and community upon settlement in the receiving society. Each of the above identities is unsettled, and can hold various meanings depending on migrants’ perspectives.

#### 1.2. Motivation for Turkoman Migration

The largest contemporary migration of Turkoman people occurred around First Gulf War (1990–1991) where the main motivation for migration was insecurity due to war and conflicts, resulting in forced migration [17]. Forced migration is the movement of people cross-border due to any external factors, including war and natural disasters [18]. While some forced migrants are classified as refugees, others are classified as asylum seekers, the difference between the two terms being that the asylum seeker claims that he or she is a refugee but the claim has yet to be evaluated, while a refugee is someone whose claim of forced migration has been accepted [19]. In many cases, experiences of insecurity contribute to valid asylum claims.

## 2. Methodology

In order to amplify the participants’ voices and investigate their settlement experiences, a qualitative, in-depth, semi-structured interviewing methodology was used where the researcher interviewed each participant between two to four hours in one sitting. The researcher, also holding a Muslim Iraqi Kurdish-Turkoman background, and fluent in participants’ mother tongues, did not require an interpreter for this study. Nevertheless, majority of participants spoke fluent English during the interviewing process. This study took place during in the year 2013, after methodology and interview questions were cleared by Western Sydney University’s ethics committee to ensure that ethical standards were to be maintained during the entire study.

In this study, the researcher asked the participants about the reasons for initial migration to Sydney, definitions of self-identity, cultural interests, belongingness to Australia, personal values, Islamic values, academic backgrounds, current careers, and discrimination within Australia. This study allowed the participants to freely narrate their stories providing the interviewer with in-depth information about the participants’ settlement experiences. Participants’ subjectivities were vital in

order to interrogate participants' settlement process in Sydney, and compare this to transnationalism. The findings of this study were reliant on the interview data.

### *Selection and Overview of Participants*

Muslim institutions such as mosques in Sydney were used to locate Turkoman families and individuals who were then invited to participate in the study. A total number of eight individuals (five females and three males) participated. This research was limited to Iraqi Turkoman migrants, excluding Turkish, Syrian, Iranian and Lebanese migrants who could also identify as Turkoman, and is an important area for future research on migration and settlement. Participants ranged in age between early twenties to late fifties, and identified with Iraqi Turkoman cultural background. Forced migration was reflected through participants' migration experience out of Iraq, which occurred during late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

The interviews were conducted in English, Turkoman and Arabic language, depending on individual language preference. Allowing the participants to choose between multiple languages of communication meant the interview did not place an emphasis on a particular set of language users. The participants were given the choice to select an appropriate interview location, such as a participant's own home or other comfortable and appropriate locations such as cafes. A voice recorder was used to record individual interviews, and all participants were given fictitious names in this article to protect their identities. The interviews were analysed by comparing participants' stories against the backdrop of established research as discussed in the introduction.

## **3. Findings and Discussion**

This section provides an empirical analysis of the Iraqi Turkoman participant's settlement experiences in Sydney and compares these experiences to transnationalism. The following themes emerged in this research: How participants defined Turkoman ethno-communal identity; how this identity compared and related to their definition of personal ethno-communal identity; challenges to their identity reproduction in the Australian context; methods used to maintain cultural identity and influences on the desire to return to the "homeland," all played out in these identity reproduction and settlement processes.

### *3.1. Migration Motivation and Settlement*

Sarah, a mother of three said she "Fled Iraq out of fear when the Iran-Iraq war started". This corresponded to the migration experiences of the remainder of the participants who also fled Iraq either because of wars and conflicts, or due to fear of persecution or death because of their ethnic minority status within Iraq. Participants first settled in countries neighbouring Iraq, namely Iran, Jordan and Turkey for a particular length of time. This initial settlement in a neighbouring country to the homeland further enforced the status of forced migration among these participants, where migration motivation was safety for self and family members. Participants entered Australia through various means: some as refugees on humanitarian visas, others declared asylum. Forced migration was the main factor that initiated migration for all of the participants. Their status as asylum seekers, or refugees, reinforces the shared experience of exclusion that works to secure diasporic identities [20]. For the Turkoman migrants, this could mean that they identified with both Turkoman and Iraqi diaspora, depending on the participant and therefore link with these diaspora communities.

### *3.2. Definition of Self-Identity*

When people ask where I come from, I say Iraqi Turkish or Iraqi Turkoman. I can't just say Turkoman as people wouldn't know exactly where I am from, so I say Iraqi Turkoman. I am a Turkoman from Iraq [21].

Participants were asked about their self-identity. Two critical points arose from the responses: first, participants' definition of their self-identity reflected their decreased visible ethnic minority status as they needed to use nation states such as "Iraq" or "Turkey" to clarify their origin, and second, their definition of self-identity suggested simultaneous plural identities and relationships with multiple societies. This suggested transnational practices among the Turkoman participants.

Besides mentioning their Turkoman ethno-communal identity, participants strongly referenced their Muslim identity, and also mentioned their Australian identity. Some participants referred to ethno-communal identity aspects shared with the nation-state Turkey. The level of identification with each of the above categories seemed to affect the level of incorporation and identification into the Australian host society. In particular, personal interpretation of Islam played a role in this identification process. Reflecting plural identities, Sarah said:

I am a Muslim, Turkoman woman from Iraq. I share my culture with all Turkoman communities in the world, such as Turkoman communities in Syria, Iran, Turkey, Palestine and Lebanon. I also share culture with Turkey, and here in Australia I am Australian [22].

Vertovec [23] refers to transnationalism as multiple interactions that link people or institutions across nation states. While transnationalism was originally viewed as an avenue for mobility of entrepreneurial immigrants [24,25], transnationalism today is understood to extend to the social and cultural aspects of immigrant life. This allows immigrants to contact home society and other ethno-religious communities through video chat such as Skype and Facetime [23], or through other media platforms. Despite the geographical distance, immigrants can engage in two different modes of transnational connection: firstly, immigrants can participate with home society or other communities without being physically present, allowing for a virtual, real time connection, and secondly, maintain contact and relationships with their home societies through frequent (or infrequent) visits, depending on their financial, social and other life circumstances.

### 3.3. *Emphasis on Particular Turkoman Cultural Characteristics*

Despite varied fluency in Turkoman language, the most critical method of ethno-communal identity maintenance for all participants was maintenance of Turkoman language together with Turkoman ethno-communal values and customs. Discussing the importance of language, Zina said, "I think it's very important to maintain your language, it's extremely important, because it's a blessing to be able to express thoughts and ideas [with your own people]. It's important." Similarly, Omer stated, "It's very important to keep your language, because if you lose your language, you will lose your culture." This reflects Anderson and Joseph's findings on the dual relationship between language and identity [26,27].

### 3.4. *Identity Maintenance*

Having the freedom to maintain Turkoman identity within a multicultural Australian context, is imperative for participants who expressed an obligation to maintain their Turkoman identity, as this ethno-communal identity held a central place in their self-identity. Emine, a mother of six, said, "We maintain our culture through attending social groups, marriages, funerals, picnics and friendly visits" [28]. Also, those who could afford to travel to Iraq with their families would do so in order to expose themselves and their children to a more concentrated Turkoman culture and language. Omer observed: "At least you have to take your kids to the homeland for a couple of months so they learn and maintain their culture and language."

While transnationalism is not a new phenomenon and has existed historically, the rapid development of modern technology certainly aids its flourishing. The variety of ways that immigrants can maintain multiple relationships with home and host societies are not only social, and include money remittances, dual nationality, business ties between home and host countries, continued relations with



friends and relatives from the country of origin, participation in politics and religion of home society and visits to former country [23].

### 3.5. Romanticisation of the Homeland

Following migration and settlement, research finds that forced migrants might romanticise their ethno-communal identity where they dream back to nostalgic times and places of their homeland, creating “imagined communities” [27]. In reality, these communities do not exist in either current time or place due to social and political changes that have occurred in the homeland since migration [29]. This appeared particularly true for older participants in the study, who had much more vivid memories and imaginations of home society prior to migration through “long-distance imagining”. Sarah stated:

Kirkuk probably wasn't as beautiful as I imagine it to be ... But I choose to hold this memory of a good past, real or imagined, as it is a positive memory of a past homeland that in reality was troubled with discrimination, fear and insecurities [22].

Transnationalism presents opportunities of unsettling the dominance of national discourses on identity in order to create more flexible perspectives on identity, culture and belonging within society [7]. Immigrants, as Itzigsohn and Saucedo affirm, redefine but do not break ties with their home countries [30].

### 3.6. Socio-Political Factors in the Incorporation Process

The dynamics of transnationalism are complex. While affluent people with higher education are found to be more likely to engage in transnational activities, it is not the only criteria [30]. Transnational activities can be triggered, despite level of education and affluence, by external socio-political factors. For instance, immigrants who experience negative reactions in the form of discrimination from the host society can become involved in transnationalism in response to the negativity experienced. Simultaneously, resonating with Itzigsohn and Saucedo findings, this study found that transnational practices of immigrants can assist the process of incorporation into the host society [30]. Maintaining ties with home society can aid the settlement process into the receiving country and promote emotional and economic wellbeing [8]. Therefore, visiting the homeland frequently, and otherwise being involved in the Turkoman community and maintaining home language (see Section 3.3) can lead to positive incorporation in the host society. However, the host society's reaction to the immigrants can shift the incorporation process at any time.

Participants' incorporation process has been affected by external socio-political influences such as discrimination and media discourses against Muslims. It is a reality that Muslims have faced difficulties in settlement and identity maintenance in places like Sydney in the wake of 11 September [9], as Omer reflects:

I don't feel like I fully belong to this place ... when media speak negatively about Muslims, I get really shocked. Even if you submit yourself fully to Australian mainstream way of life, you still look different, and therefore you will be treated differently [21].

Participants expressed feeling more offended if their Islamic identity was attacked, than if their Turkoman ethno-communal identity was attacked. This reflected Bhatia and Ram's contention that for some migrants there was a realisation occurring post 11 September where they began to acknowledge that they did not and could not fully belong to mainstream, Anglo societies [31]. This could be due to participants' increased visibility as Muslims or Middle Eastern, in a socio-politically difficult time post 11 September.

Thus, the settlement journey of an immigrant is never complete due to external forces. Settlement process is affected by socio-political factors, regardless of individual desire. The importance of visibility plays a role here, where migrants of certain characteristics may be more visible to the “host” society and experience greater discrimination, and therefore, increased difficulty in the incorporation process.

This was true for female participants who were all wearing Muslim attire, such as the *hijab*, and therefore had visible characteristics.

Evidently, participants held such strong connections and values to their religious identity that it influenced the majority of their lifestyle. To clarify, not all Iraqi Turkomans are Muslims, however in this research study, all participants were Muslim.

### 3.7. Past Trauma as Strength

The ability of forced migrants to adapt to the receiving society may be influenced by the considerable trauma experienced in their homeland [32]. Participants identified their experience of trauma in Iraq as motivation for incorporation in the Australian community, as participants perceived Australia as providing them with freedom of cultural, religious, and political expression. Based on this perspective, a majority of participants were able to ignore most discrimination, from the wider Australian community, towards their ethno-communal identity. Sarah's comment was typical:

Since settling in Australia I have experienced multiple instances of Islamophobic or racially motivated harassment from individuals in the public. As a matter of fact, I was even spat at once! But I as got to know my Australian neighbours, whom, by the way, come from many different backgrounds themselves, I came to realise that such ugly attacks are only committed by those who are ignorant and closed-minded. And as for the government's negative view or comments on immigrants and Muslims . . . well, the government doesn't represent the individuals within the community [22].

### 3.8. Incorporation in a Multicultural Australia

I participate in Australian culture by engaging in the community: by respecting this country, obeying its laws, voting, studying, working, and contributing. However, at the end of the day, I never forget who I am and where I came from. I am Australian, Turkoman and Muslim [33].

Turkoman forced migrants already hold plural identity relations to multiple societies. Thus, incorporation does not necessarily mean absorption and complete submersion into an "Australian" identity. Instead, for participants, it meant active, productive coexistence in Australia based on an emphasis on respect towards the home society and the Australian host society.

While not perfect in terms of creating a national utopia of ethnic incorporation, multiculturalism in theory is effective in providing a productive context for ethno-communal identity reproduction for forced migrants. It is in the context of multiculturalism that Iraqi Turkomans are undergoing identity reproduction and incorporation. The level of incorporation of the participants occurred as a result of external socio-political factors, past life experiences, migration motivation and personal interpretations of duties towards the host society based on the multiple identities of each participant [27,30]. Multiple identities were at interplay during the settlement process. The settling immigrant produces interpretations of values contained within each of these identity relations that in return affect the settlement process. One individual may have a completely different interpretation of values within a particular ethno-identity compared to another individual, such as seen in the case of Turkoman participants using their interpretation of Islamic identity and Turkoman identity to determine level of connectedness within Australia or other nation states. As Zina states:

First and foremost I am Muslim, my values lie within my Islamic faith. I therefore feel that I belong to the greater Islamic *Ummah*. Because my values lie so strongly within my faith, I feel that I do not "belong" to any particular nation state, whether it is Iraq or Australia. Yes, I am Australian, I live here and respect this country, but I feel that my *identity* is with the Muslim community first [34].

### 3.9. The Meaning of “Being Australian”

Being Australian, in a multicultural Australia did not, for any of the participants, mean they shed part of their ethno-communal identity. Rather, it was the maintenance of these very identities in a multicultural Australian context where many ethnicities and religions were coexisting that promoted feelings of Australian identity. Therefore, not having to give up their culture of origin promoted positive feelings of belonging and incorporation in Australia.

All participants expressed an active coexistence and participation within the larger society without, or with very little, shedding of their culture of origin. This was reflected, for example, in Emir’s previous statement.

In contrast to the majority of participants who used religious interpretation of lifestyle to determine strong “connectedness” to Australia, a minority of participants used religious interpretation of nation states to determine the opposite. Although all participants identified with Australian society to varying degrees, this minority group of participants who did not strongly identify with Australian society also did not strongly identify with other national societies. Instead, these participants held an Islamic religious identity where they didn’t identify with any particular nation or ethnicity, but rather identified with the greater Islamic *Ummah* (see Zina’s previous statement). These participants equally engaged in the Australian society through education, social networking, work and politics and also emphasised respect of land and people as residents of Australia.

### 3.10. Incorporation in a Transnational World

Research on transnationalism shows that incorporation into the host society and transnationalism can go hand in hand [30], and, moreover, transnationalism can occur regardless of incorporation within the host society. Through a transnational lens, all participants were “incorporated” and settled in Sydney to varying degrees, as well as other communities, such as their “home” and religious communities, through transnational practices. The participants incorporated into the Australian society by participating in some of the mainstream Australian culture yet maintained their ethno-communal identity, thus incorporation did not mean a change in ethno-cultural identity. Rather, if any changes did occur, then it was the addition of cultural heritage elements to their self-identity, in terms of language, customs, food, clothing and so forth. Discussing this, Emir said:

It may sound like cliché, but I love sharing a barbeque meal with friends and family, and I enjoy watching sport games with my mates and supporting the Australian teams. That is quite Australian I think [33].

Participants held plural cultural identities and relations to multiple societies (Iraq, Turkey, Turkoman diaspora, Australia and the *Ummah*), and engaged in transnational activities as a method of identity maintenance. Those who could afford frequent visits to their home society would do so to expose themselves and their children to a more concentrated home culture. Modern communication technology was also used to maintain relations with home societies, allowing participants to virtually connect to and receive real time information despite the physical distance from home societies. Remittances were also sent to home society or other Muslim societies in need in the form of charity, reinforcing transnational activity. Regardless of the frequency of such transnational activities, transnationalism allowed participants to redefine their identity and incorporate into the Australian society on their own terms, without shedding their ethno-communal identity. Despite his previous statement, Omer, for example, although he felt he was treated differently due to his cultural background, still described himself as “integrated” and “incorporated” into the Australian society.

This study found flexibility in relation to identity among participants. Although nation states still remain important in identity construction, transnationalism allows migrants to adopt identity pluralism where nation states are no longer the only constructs of identity [23]. Regardless of identifying as “Australian” as well as having other identities, not all participants felt welcome in Australia.



With the increase of modern technology, immigrants will continue to be involved with multiple societies and maintain identities other than the identity of the host society. In order to succeed within a multicultural society, governments that endorse such multiculturalism must be aware of and support transnational activities of migrants, which would not only encourage the incorporation of migrants but also maintain emotional and social wellbeing [8]. Negative perspectives on the government of the host society may occur should immigrants feel that multiculturalism only exists in theory, but not in practice. Zina declares:

Don't celebrate multiculturalism when you lock up the very people that bring multiculturalism to this country [referring to asylum seekers in detention camps]. And you may sense the anger in my voice, because I am angry. We are told to go back to where we came from, and you know what? I may one day pack up my bag and go to a different country because I don't feel welcome here, to be frank [34].

Besides everyday racism faced by members of the public, government directed criticism of Muslims can further enforce the relationship of Muslim migrants to the *Ummah*. Within this *Ummah*, Muslim migrants find a sense of belonging despite their ethno-communal differences: a sense of belonging they may find lacking in the Australian host society. Ironically, criticising members of the Muslim community for not "integrating" into the Australian society and negatively portraying Muslims through social media can backfire and result in further withdrawal of these Muslims from the host society. Racism and exclusion could prompt transnational activities in migrants in order to reaffirm their ethno-communal identity [23]. Migrants who feel unwelcome in the host society will engage in transnational activities that help reaffirm their home identities, in order to increase feelings of connectedness and emotional wellbeing [8].

#### 4. Conclusions

The participants holding both a "less visible ethnic minority" position and "forced migrant" status suggest an alternative way of considering migrant incorporation as compared to incorporation between culture A to culture B, as discussed in the introduction. The picture that emerged was that transnational activity was very evident in this "less visible" forced migrant group and would occur regardless of incorporation status in the Australian host society. While transnationalism could promote incorporation and feelings of connectedness within Australia, equally racism and exclusion could result in transnational activities that helped reaffirm migrant ethno-communal identities and belonging to the home societies. Transnational activities not only helped participants maintain ties with the home society from which they had to forcefully flee, but also improved emotional wellbeing and self-worth of migrants within the host society, allowing them to continue their "less visible" ethno-communal identity despite the physical distance from the homeland. For all participants, an attack on their religious identity as opposed to their ethno-communal identity was experienced as more offensive to participants' dignity, honour and pride. Furthermore, transnationalism seemed an important factor in Islamic identity maintenance, where participants could, through transnational activities using communication technologies, connect virtually in real time with the Islamic *Ummah* and as such construct active connectedness within this community. Transnational activities allowed the Turkoman participants a co-existence within Australia, where they balanced a diverse self-identity based on home and host cultures, feeling connected to multiple identities within the larger Australian context while maintaining their "less visible" ethnic culture.

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