

Knowledge Production in the Australian Afghan Diaspora – The Role of Women in Sustaining Afghan Identity

Research Note

Zarlasht Sarwari

Abstract

This paper documents the experiences of women from Afghanistan and the ways they cultivate identity and knowledge in a diasporic context. Sensemaking practices occur within a dismantled Afghan society ruptured by war, displacement and a Western environment marked by racialised multicultural dynamics. Women's roles have been affected in acute ways, with cascading effects on the collective sense of Afghan nationhood, identity and belonging among Afghanistan's diaspora. The women in this study hold diverse family histories and have lived through different but overlapping political periods, offering a continuum of memories that connect Afghanistan's history to Australia's contemporary social and political milieu. The narratives included here highlight the significant role women play as guardians of culture and heritage and show how, despite the many threats to the endurance of Afghan identity, this identity persists – retained and reinterpreted in diverse ways. Everyday cultural practices by women in the diasporic home act as an often overlooked form of knowledge production, informing and transforming memory, language and identity from Afghanistan.

Keywords: Afghanistan, diaspora, knowledge production, Afghan women, Afghan identity, Afghan Australian, home, everyday culture

Just like there is light in our eyes, this is the feeling in my heart that I am Afghan.
I will never forget it. I will never let my children forget that they are Afghan.

(Zahra, March 2019, Melbourne)

It was not until I had my own children that I fully grasped the labour involved in sustaining culture through the knowledge work of women in diaspora. Raising my children in Sydney, far from extended family, I became aware of the

Zarlasht Sarwari, Western Sydney University, Parramatta, Australia; zarlasht.sarwari@westernsydney.edu.au. I live and work on the lands of the Dharug people, whose lands were never ceded. I am indebted to Dr Susanne Schmeidl for extending a generosity and grace that went beyond her role as editor in guiding my work on this piece.

voids in their understanding of Afghan identity. My own sense of Afghan-ness was formed through the everyday practices of my mother, grandmother and aunt during my childhood in Perth – sharing a meal laid out on a *destarkhan*,¹ passing dishes to one another, showing respect to elders and speaking our mother tongue, Dari. These seemingly ordinary gestures were profound forms of cultural transmission, sustained through the intentional and repetitive labour of women. Without the presence of elders, such practices proved difficult to maintain; language, ritual and embodied knowledge began to fade.

This realisation prompted me to explore how Afghan identity is maintained and reimagined in diaspora and the central role women play in producing, preserving and transforming culture through acts of care, memory and transmission. War and displacement profoundly disrupt belonging, identity and cultural continuity (Sereda 2023). In Afghanistan, four decades of conflict, foreign intervention and environmental degradation have fractured family networks and ties to *watan* (homeland). *Watan* is understood not only as geography but also as a site of emotional belonging and reciprocity (Glatzer 2001). In exile, women become vital to sustaining these attachments through memory, ritual and everyday practice.

As a second-generation Afghan-Australian, I witnessed how the home became a sanctuary for cultural preservation. Through language, food and hospitality, the women in my family recreated a sense of Afghan-ness across borders. These practices were not only acts of nostalgia, but quiet forms of feminist agency grounded in care, memory and resistance to erasure.

This research note examines how Afghan women in the diaspora engage in everyday knowledge production to sustain and reshape Afghan identity. Drawing on postcolonial feminist theory, I analyse interviews with twelve women from diverse ethnic and regional backgrounds who left Afghanistan between 1978 and 2009 or were born in exile. Their ages, ranging from the early twenties to the mid-seventies, offer an intergenerational perspective on how cultural knowledge is transmitted, reinterpreted and resisted. These interviews were part of a broader mixed-methods study in Australia in 2018–2019,² mapping Afghan diasporic identity across generations.

Among scholars, the home is conceptualised as a site of cultural labour and epistemic practice (Blunt / Dowling 2006). Afghan women produce and trans-

¹ *Destarkhan* is a large cloth or mat laid out on the floor, upon which food would be set out at mealtimes. Everyone, young and old, would sit cross-legged on the floor around the *destarkhan* and pass food to each other. In my family, this always created a joyous atmosphere, as it meant many family members were together at once and could not fit around the dining table. Opportunities to share meals like this were rare, usually reserved for special occasions or when a relative was visiting from overseas.

² A total of 251 male and female respondents contributed to the quantitative survey and 20 male and female participants took part in qualitative interviews. The study included the perspectives and experiences of people from various ethnic groups, including Pashtun, Tajik, Hazara, Uzbek and those who identified simply as Afghan.

mit knowledge not only through formal education but also through acts often dismissed as domestic – cooking, storytelling, religious ritual and homemaking. Drawing on Blunt and Dowling (2006), Kamp (2018) and Tsolidis (2011), I challenge views of the home as solely a site of subjugation and instead highlight how women critically navigate inherited traditions, choosing what to retain, reinterpret or reject.

Women sustaining Afghan identity in diaspora

Women from Afghanistan draw on lived experience to critically engage with their cultural inheritance – preserving elements they value while challenging or discarding those they find restrictive. This process of interpretation, adaptation and transmission lies at the heart of diasporic knowledge production. Rooted in everyday practices of memory, reflection and care, Afghan women's narratives reveal an agentic process through which identity and culture are actively reshaped in exile.

Across generations, recurring themes of gendered expectations, intergenerational tension, cultural resilience and memory emerge. What unites these women is a shared labour of making meaning out of rupture – whether through domestic ritual, educational aspiration, emotional resistance or community engagement. To analyse these dynamics, I draw on Rumbaut's (2004) generational framework: 1st Generation (those who lived in Afghanistan prior to displacement), 1.5 Generation (born in Afghanistan, but primarily raised in exile) and 2nd Generation (born and raised outside Afghanistan) to illuminate how Afghan women's knowledge is shaped, contested and transmitted.

The knowledge of first-generation women (Participants 1–5) is grounded in direct experience of the homeland, later reframed through migration and resettlement (Obeid 2013). They carry embodied memories of Afghan social and political life, expressed through domestic practices, religious observance and community-building in exile. In this study, participants from this cohort were of Pashtun or Tajik ethnic heritage but identified only as Afghan.

The 1.5 Generation cohort (Participants 6–10) navigate hybrid identities and layered belonging. Their memories are fragmented and mediated through parental storytelling and community narratives, blending inherited recollections with lived experiences in multicultural Australia. Their knowledge production reflects negotiation: balancing loyalty to ethnic cultural heritage with critical reinterpretation of gendered norms. For many, education became the terrain on which to reconcile, or resist, expectations. In this study, participants from this cohort all identified as Hazara, with one identifying as mixed Hazara and Pashtun.

Second-generation participants (Participants 11–12) inherit cultural knowledge entirely second-hand from family, media and community narratives. Their relationship to Afghan identity is more fluid and self-reflective, shaped as much by global discourses on gender, politics and rights as by family tradition. These younger women assert strong agency in reimagining Afghan identity on their own terms – challenging patriarchal norms, resisting internalised prejudice and positioning themselves as cultural critics and interlocutors between generations. Participants from this cohort identified as Afghan, though they were aware of their family's ethnic and class heritage.

Taken together, the narratives of these women trace an evolving continuum of knowledge shaped by Afghanistan's turbulent history since 1978 and refracted through exile. As I listened to them, I was struck by the persistence of what I came to see as "cultural labour" – an active process of re-making, not merely preserving. Across generations, Afghan women emerge as powerful knowledge producers who sustain, transform and contest Afghan identity in response to memory and the demands of the present. The following section examines the intersecting themes that cut across all three generational cohorts.

Maintaining Afghan identity through memory, etiquette and customs within the home

Across all interviews, participants underscored the centrality of everyday domestic practices and the home as the primary site for the enactment of Afghan identity. Cultural etiquette, customs, language and food were described as key signifiers of belonging, anchoring identity through embodied routines. Such practices exemplify the boundary maintenance and homeland orientation characteristic of diasporic communities (Brubaker 2005) and facilitate the preservation of collective memory across transnational spaces (Blunt / Dowling 2006). Within this context, women's everyday activities in the home emerge as a form of knowledge production through which Afghan identity is sustained, negotiated and transmitted in exile.

For Farida (Participant 3), cultural continuity was expressed through *adab* (etiquette), Afghan cuisine, modest dress and rituals such as standing for elders or hosting Eid gatherings – practices intended to create enduring cultural memories for her children. Similarly, Zahra (Participant 5) emphasised teaching *anamat* (customs), enrolling her children in Afghan weekend schools and instilling pride in their heritage despite the influence of mainstream Australian media and culture.

Homemaking practices such as shared meals, religious rituals and respectful communication were consistently described as foundational cultural touchpoints. Marziya (Participant 6), a 1.5 Generation participant, highlighted mealtimes as

critical for transmitting collectivist values, noting her parents' concern that their children might become "too self-centred or individualistic".

Second-generation participants reinforced this emphasis on embodied routine. Shabnam (Participant 12), born and raised in Australia, described how formal language use, hand-kissing of elders (a form of denoting respect) and immersion in Afghan food, media and music structured her everyday life. Although she had never visited Afghanistan, she explained that these practices felt natural – "it's just the way things are" – and observed their consistency across familial diasporic households: "there are things that are the same no matter which part of the world you're in."

Taken together, the data demonstrate that cultural identity in the Afghan diaspora is deeply rooted in embodied, affective and relational practices within family and home life. These practices constitute a critical mode of cultural transmission and knowledge production, largely sustained through the gendered labour of women.

As feminist diaspora scholars note, women are often positioned as "cultural reproducers", charged with maintaining tradition, transmitting values and embodying the boundaries of community (Anthias 1998, Brah 1996, Yuval-Davis 1997). The Afghanistan diaspora case underscores this dynamic: women's domestic labour is not only reproductive but epistemic, actively shaping how Afghan identity is lived, remembered and transformed in exile.

Centrality and loss of language: "If they know the language ... they will know the stories"

Language maintenance emerged as a central factor in shaping cultural identity across generations. Second-generation participant Tamina (Participant 11) identified both language and food as core cultural anchors, while 1.5 Generation participants who had arrived within the past 15 years consistently reported speaking Hazaragi at home. Across interviews, participants voiced concern that the erosion of their mother tongue would threaten the survival of the culture itself. As Maryam (Participant 10) reflected, without language, "slowly it [cultural identity] will disappear", and Shila (Participant 7) described its loss as "tragic", linking it directly to a diminished sense of identity.

Longer-settled migrants also observed these dynamics. Hawa (Participant 1), in Australia for over four decades, described the generational disconnect caused by language loss. She noted her nephew's children, who grew up speaking only English, often struggled to relate to older relatives, producing a rupture in cultural continuity: "If they know the language ... they will know the stories, customs and etiquette from *watan*."

This tension was also apparent in transnational family contexts. Sahar (Participant 4) recounted her children's difficulties communicating with Dari-

speaking grandparents during visits to Germany, emphasising that language – not official documents – is what ultimately defines Afghan identity.

Taken together, the interviews highlight language as a vital medium of cultural knowledge, enabling the preservation of intergenerational relationships, the transmission of memory and custom, and the negotiation of Afghan identity within both familial and wider diasporic contexts. As Fishman (1991) argues, heritage languages are crucial vehicles of cultural continuity, and their maintenance underpins the durability of diasporic “imagined communities” (Anderson 1983).

For Afghan women in exile, language emerges not only as a communicative tool but as an embodied practice of belonging, through which identity, memory and cultural resilience are actively reproduced. This responsibility, in most cases, falls disproportionately on women, who bear the labour of teaching language in the home, correcting children’s speech and embedding cultural values through everyday interaction. In doing so, they enact a form of feminist knowledge production that ensures cultural resilience and sustains intergenerational belonging in exile.

Cultural practices – changing over time

Cultural practices among participants shifted across life stages and were strongly shaped by the presence or absence of family and community networks. On first arrival in Australia, some women, such as Farida (Participant 3), experienced disconnection from Afghan culture due to a lack of social support, describing early Eid celebrations as unremarkable and isolating. Over time, however, as her family expanded and social ties strengthened, her cultural and religious engagement deepened.

By contrast, Hawa (Participant 1) recalled feeling closely connected to her culture during the early years of settlement, when surrounded by extended family. With the passing of relatives – particularly her parents – and the fracturing of family relationships, her sense of cultural attachment diminished and she became increasingly isolated. Her account underscores the pivotal role of family members in sustaining tradition. Hawa also described household rituals such as *nazer* (quasi-religious offerings) initiated by her mother. Although she did not continue the practice herself, these rituals had served as collective acts of meaning-making in times of hardship. Their decline in diaspora illustrates how cultural forms may lose relevance or fade without a shared community context.

These narratives highlight how migration reshapes women’s cultural engagement. Practices may evolve, fade or acquire new significance depending on life stage, social environment and the strength of community networks. This dynamic reflects wider scholarship on diasporic cultural reproduction,

which stresses that identities are not passively preserved but actively reconstituted in response to new contexts (Hall 1990, Vertovec 1999). As Levitt (2009) argues, migrants selectively adapt, reinterpret or discard cultural repertoires across transnational settings. The Afghan women in this study demonstrate this process in practice, enacting a form of cultural labour that sustains continuity while simultaneously allowing for transformation in exile.

Importance of community networks

Community networks emerged as a vital source of support for sustaining cultural practice and reinforcing positive associations with Afghan identity. Inter-generational conflict or disconnection highlighted their salience, as values and customs practiced in the home were more effectively maintained when embedded within wider networks of shared meaning.

Fereshta (Participant 2), reflecting on her work as a community worker, noted the difficulties families faced in the absence of such support. Without reliable community networks, parents often struggled to negotiate cultural and religious values in the Australian environment:

Parents have dragged their children by the old cultural ways ... There is a push and pull between the generations, conflicts arise between parents and children ... domestic violence can take place and because Afghans don't want other Afghans to find out about their issues, they cover these things up ... Parents need support and information in how to relate with their children in a positive way. (Fereshta, Participant 2)

Conversely, the benefits of strong communal ties were evident in focus group discussions among 1.5 Generation Hazara women, who highlighted the role of the *chanda* network in family and community life. *Chanda* – a translocal network of organisations oriented toward the home village – was described as a vital source of information exchange, material support, fundraising and cultural continuity. It provided a sense of belonging that spanned life stages, while also generating financial capital for villages in Afghanistan. *Chanda* exemplifies homeland orientation and boundary maintenance within diaspora communities (Brubaker 2005), operating as an organised and intentional form of solidarity.

These narratives illustrate how cultural reproduction in exile is not confined to the household but is reinforced through communal infrastructures that rely heavily on gendered labour. Hazara women play a crucial role in sustaining *chanda*, whether through organising meals, transmitting cultural knowledge in domestic and community settings or acting as cultural brokers across generations. This reflects what Levitt (1998) terms *social remittances* – the circulation of norms, practices and identities across borders – and resonates with Portes's (1999) argument that transnational communities generate new forms of collective resources. In the case of the Afghanistan diaspora, women's work ensures that such networks not only preserve cultural continuity but also enact

feminist knowledge production, whereby identity and belonging are sustained through everyday practices of care, organisation and resilience.

Negotiating and transforming gendered cultural norms

Across generational cohorts, participants expressed a shared critique of gender-based restrictions and unequal social expectations, particularly within family and cultural contexts. While education was highly valued – and most women in the study were either educated or employed – varying degrees of gendered obstacles were raised as a persistent concern.

Among the First Generation, Fereshta (Participant 2) recalled how social and familial pressures in Afghanistan threatened to derail her academic and professional aspirations. She described reluctantly agreeing to marriage under social pressure, a union that subsequently presented her with lifelong challenges. Participant 4, Sahar, reflected that her outlook and approach to life were shaped by her mother's lack of educational opportunity as a catalyst for her own determination to pursue employment. Sahar also claimed early experiences of gendered harassment shaped her later advocacy for women's rights and her commitment to raising her daughter with pride and empowerment. Similarly, Farida's (Participant 3) account of being married at 17 and sent overseas highlighted how economic restriction and isolation after migration could compound women's disempowerment. Her agency was later restored through the support of her sister, who encouraged her to pursue employment. These narratives underscore how displacement and trauma can erode women's self-worth, but also how familial support and resilience can serve as transformative resources.

In contrast, Second-Generation women raised in Australia and North America reported greater freedom in pursuing education and openly rejecting restrictive cultural norms. They spoke more assertively about challenging sexism and outdated gender roles. Tamina (Participant 11), for example, rejected the community's pity toward her divorced mother, instead framing her as independent and strong. Shabnam (Participant 12) critiqued the unequal burden of domestic labour placed on women during family gatherings, expressing frustration at the absence of similar expectations for her brothers.

Among the young women from the 1.5 Generation focus group (Participants 6–10), the heightened vulnerability of women in a post-conflict setting was illustrated by Amina's mother (Participant 9). Her isolation and precarity as a widow with young children and no surviving male relatives drove her to leave Afghanistan to seek refuge first in Iran and then in Australia. Other young Hazara women in the focus group noted a disconnect with older female relatives, whom they felt lacked the knowledge or experience to guide them in

navigating contemporary challenges in Australia, particularly in academic and professional domains. This generational gap reflects broader shifts in values and illustrates the complexity of balancing cultural continuity with the pursuit of gender equity in diaspora settings.

These accounts demonstrate how Afghan women negotiate what Anthias (1998) terms the “contradictory location” of diasporic women – simultaneously positioned as guardians of cultural continuity and as agents of transformation. Their narratives resonate with Yuval-Davis’s (1997) argument that women often embody the boundaries of the nation or community, tasked with transmitting cultural values while also contesting the very hierarchies that constrain them. In this sense, Afghan women’s critiques of gender inequality represent a form of feminist knowledge production: rooted in lived experience, shaped by generational position and enacted in the interstices between cultural reproduction and the pursuit of gender justice (Brah 1996).

Unintentional transmission of unprocessed traumas and prejudice

Alongside the many positive aspects of cultural practice and knowledge production within homes and community networks, participants also reflected on the unintentional transmission of negative attributes, including family-based trauma, war-related stress and prejudice. Focus group members acknowledged that real or perceived misconceptions between Afghan groups persist and are difficult to overcome. In some cases, the passing on of knowledge has included inherited traumas and prejudices shaped by experiences of conflict and marginalisation in Afghanistan. As Maryam (Participant 10) noted, “I think sometimes older people influence our thoughts and our behaviour as well.”

These dynamics were seen to affect community relations in Australia, where unresolved grievances from Afghanistan continue to surface in diasporic interactions. Mina described how such legacies weigh on younger generations:

It’s something that we talk about a lot at home ... for younger generations ... we feel ready to move on because it feels like a burden. There are all these prejudices and not just from our side of the community, but throughout Afghanistan. It’s not doing the country any good, it’s not doing the people any good ... Just because a lot of ancestors did something wrong, they did horrible things, doesn’t mean that it has to define the way that we live our lives, the way that we see people. And it does in so many ways, it’s so restricting ... it’s not very productive. (Mina, Participant 8)

Participants 8 and 10 were specifically referring to longstanding divisions rooted in decades of civil conflict and the longer history of Hazara persecution. These collective traumas – spanning over a century – continue to shape the Afghan diaspora, where the absence of truth-telling, reconciliation and justice has produced lasting and cumulative effects. Such dynamics echo what Marianne Hirsch (2008) terms “postmemory”: the transmission of memories of violence and per-

secution to descendants who did not directly experience them, but who nonetheless inherit their emotional and social weight.

While cultural traditions and shared narratives can preserve identity, they may also reproduce intergenerational trauma and entrenched prejudices. As Danieli (1998) has shown in studies of Holocaust survivor families, unresolved trauma can be passed down through silence as much as through explicit storytelling, shaping the identities and relational patterns of subsequent generations. In the Afghan case, participants observed that older relatives often transmit not only stories of survival but also perspectives shaped by conflict and marginalisation. These inherited views can strain intra-diasporic relationships and complicate efforts to foster unity across ethnic and political lines.

Mina's reflections highlight this generational tension: this group of young Hazara women wish to move forward but remain influenced by the weight of historical grievances. This aligns with Halbwachs's (1992) notion of "collective memory", in which group identities are continually negotiated through the remembrance – and sometimes the selective forgetting – of the past. Feminist scholars have emphasised that such processes are not neutral but gendered. Veena Das (2007) demonstrates how women's everyday practices can carry the traces of violence into domestic and community life, while Assmann (2010) highlights how memory cultures are actively curated, sustained and reshaped across generations. In this sense, Afghan women in diaspora are not only carriers of inherited trauma but also active knowledge producers, deciding which memories are preserved, reworked or resisted in order to foster continuity, resilience and the possibility of solidarity.

Despite the challenges of inherited prejudice, the diaspora also creates possibilities for renegotiation. By acknowledging the diversity of traumatic experiences and the uneven burdens of history, Afghanistan heritage groups in exile may cultivate shared understanding and more cohesive community bonds. The narratives in this study suggest that women, in particular, play a central role in mediating these memories, transforming trauma into both a site of struggle and a resource for building collective futures.

Disrupted connections: Lack of return

Participants acknowledged that aspects of cultural knowledge and identity are at risk in the diaspora due to lifestyle pressures, disrupted family networks and the lack of return visits to Afghanistan. The greatest challenge to sustaining Afghan identity, however, remains the country's ongoing political instability and insecurity. The inability to travel back limits opportunities for younger generations to establish positive associations with their heritage. As Wessendorf (2016) notes, return visits play a crucial role in positively anchoring diasporic identity and reinforcing connections to homeland.

This dilemma was poignantly captured in Zahra's (Participant 5) reflections on conversations with her children:

Sometimes I tell them let's go to Afghanistan, our family is there ... I tell my eldest son, "you were born there, it's your *watan*," he says, "*ne modar*, you can see there is a lot of fighting there ... people get killed, we don't want to go there" ... I become very sad and upset. I wish our *watan* was peaceful, our children could take pride. We would be happy to take our children there to experience peace and prosperity, that it is our *watan* ... Our *watan* has many beautiful and interesting places. But because the conditions are not safe, the children don't have the courage to go there. (Zahra, Participant 5)

For Zahra's children, Afghanistan is primarily associated with violence and insecurity rather than with family, heritage or pride. This deficit perspective demonstrates how conflict constrains the possibility of cultivating affective ties to homeland. More broadly, it underscores how the endurance of Afghan identity in the diaspora is shaped not only by family and community practices but also by the broader political realities of Afghanistan itself.

At the same time, diasporic identities are not dependent solely on physical return. As Anderson (1983) argued, communities are "imagined" through shared narratives and affective ties rather than continuous territorial presence. Similarly, Safran (1991) and Brah (1996) emphasise that diasporas often sustain belonging through symbolic connections to homeland – via memory, cultural reproduction and collective imagination – even in the absence of return. For Afghan families, the narratives, rituals and everyday practices that circulate in diaspora homes help to construct what Brah calls the "diaspora space", where identity is forged through a dynamic interplay of longing, memory and present social realities. In this sense, while insecurity in Afghanistan limits physical return, Afghan women's knowledge practices in the diaspora enable the homeland to remain present as an imagined and affective reference point across generations.

Conclusion

The past four decades of war and displacement have not only reshaped Afghan lives but also transformed the ways in which culture, language and belonging are sustained. In tracing how Afghan women across three generations navigate these ruptures, I found that the work of making and remaking identity happens most powerfully in the intimate spaces of home – through gestures, rituals and memories that hold a world together. Central to this process is the relationship between "home" and "homeland", where everyday domestic practices become key sites of cultural meaning-making. These practices – often rendered invisible in traditional scholarship – constitute critical forms of knowledge

production, through which women reconnect with, reinterpret and reimagine a distant or lost past (Obeid 2013).

Women's cultural labour – expressed in language, food, storytelling and ritual – is far more than preservation. Through the rituals of daily life, cooking, speaking their mother tongue, observing religious traditions and practicing customs such as *nazer*, these women affirm ties to Afghan heritage while also transforming it to suit new realities. It is a creative, critical and deeply emotional process through which Afghan identity is continually reimagined. Within kitchens, living rooms, WhatsApp calls and community gatherings, women perform acts of care that are also acts of authorship. These everyday practices sustain continuity, but they also question, adapt and transform what it means to be Afghan in exile.

As I listened to these women, I recognised echoes of my own experience: the quiet negotiations between inheritance and independence, between the pull of homeland and lost histories, and the possibilities of elsewhere and unknown futures. Their stories reminded me that identity is not simply passed down – it is reworked with each generation.

The intergenerational knowledge transfer is not without friction, however. Alongside cultural values, memories and practices, women inherit trauma, prejudices, hierarchies and silences. Yet through ritual, language and collective memory, they also create spaces of repair and renewal. The diasporic home thus becomes not just a refuge from loss but a site of resilience, cultural reinvention and continuity.

Ultimately, Afghan women in the diaspora emerge as knowledge producers in their own right – bridging worlds, sustaining community and transforming tradition through everyday life. Their narratives remind us that feminist knowledge-making is not confined to institutions or movements but is equally forged in the daily labour of care, connection and critique. As Clifford (1994) suggests, diasporas are not only sites of loss but also of cultural creativity. In that spirit, the stories that fill these pages remind us that even in displacement, identity is not diminished – it is remade, with tenderness, defiance and imagination.

References

Anderson, Benedict (1983): *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London et al.: Verso.

Anthias, Floya (1998): Evaluating "Diaspora": Beyond Ethnicity? *Sociology* 32(3), pp. 557–580.

Assmann, Jan (2010): *The Cultural Memory: Writing, Remembrance, and Political Identity in Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Blunt, Alison / Dowling, Robyn (2006): *Home*. London: Routledge.

Brah, Avtar (1996): *Cartographies of Diaspora*. London: Routledge.

Brubaker, Rogers (2005): The “Diaspora” Diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28(1), pp. 1–19.

Canagarajah, Suresh / Silberstein, Sandra (2012): Diaspora Identities and Language. *Journal of Language, Identity & Education* 11(2), pp. 81–84.

Clifford, James (1994): Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology* 9(3), pp. 302–338.

Danieli, Yael (1998): *International Handbook of Multigenerational Legacies of Trauma*. Berlin: Springer.

Das, Veena (2007): *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Fishman, Joshua A. (1991): *Reversing Language Shift: Theoretical and Empirical Foundations of Assistance to Threatened Languages*. Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Glatzer, Bernt (2001): War and Boundaries in Afghanistan: Significance and Relativity of Local and Social Boundaries. *Welt des Islams* 41(3), pp. 379–399.

Haboucha, Rebecca (2020): Reimagined Community in London: The Transmission of Food as Heritage in the Afghan Diaspora. In: Raul Matta / Charles-Edouard de Suremain / Chantal Crenn (eds): *Food Identities at Home and on the Move. Explorations at the Intersection of Food, Belonging and Dwelling*. London: Routledge, pp. 34–48.

Halbwachs, Maurice (1992): *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hall, Stuart (1990): Cultural Identity and Diaspora. In: J. Rutherford (ed.): *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart, pp. 222–237.

Hirsch, Marianne (2008): The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust. *Poetics Today* 29(1), pp. 103–128.

Jones-Gailani, Nadia (2020): *Transnational Identity and Memory Making in the Lives of Iraqi Women in Diaspora*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Kamp, Alanna (2018): Chinese Australian Women’s “Homemaking” and Contributions to the Family Economy in White Australia. *Australian Geographer* 49(1), pp. 149–165.

Levitt, Peggy (1998): Social Remittances: Migration Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion. *International Migration Review* 32(4), pp. 926–948.

Levitt, Peggy (2009): Roots and Routes: Understanding the Lives of the Second Generation Transnationally. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 35(7), pp. 1225–1242.

Obeid, Michelle (2013): Home-Making in the Diaspora: Bringing Palestine to London. In: Ato Quayson / Girish Daswani (eds): *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

Portes, Alejandro (1999): Conclusion: Towards a New World. The Origins and Effects of Transnational Activities. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22(2), pp. 463–477.

Poynting, Scott / Briskman, Linda (2018): Islamophobia in Australia. *Social Sciences* 7(11), pp. 213–230.

Rumbaut, Rubén G. (2004): Ages, Life Stages, and Generational Cohorts: Decomposing the Immigrant First and Second Generations in the United States. *International Migration Review* 38(3), pp. 1160–1205.

Sadat, Mir Hekmatullah (2008): Hyphenating Afghaniyat (Afghan-ness) in the Afghan Diaspora. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28(3), pp. 329–342.

Safran, William (1991): Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return. *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies* 1(1), pp. 83–99.

Sankaran, Lavanya (2022): Sri Lankan Tamil Experiences of the Home-land and Host-land: The Interaction between Language and Diasporic Identity. *Language in Society* 51(1), pp. 143–166.

Sarwari, Zarlasht (2016): Afghan Australian Identities. *Southerly* 76(3), pp. 46–64.

Sarwari, Zarlashht (2023): Beyond Watan: Valency of Place among a Fragmented Afghanistan Diaspora. *Journal of Conflict Transformation & Security* 10(1), pp. 57–67.

Shahrani, M. Nazif (2018): Modern Afghanistan. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Sereda, Viktoriya (2023): War, Migration and Memory: An Introduction. TRAFO – Blog for Transregional Research, <https://trafo.hypotheses.org/44549#:~:text=Extreme%20events%20such%20as%20war,or%20and%20how%20to%20respond> (accessed 3 March 2024).

Stevens, Christine (1989): *Tin Mosques and Ghantowns*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Tsolidis, Georgina (2011): Memories of Home: Family in the Diaspora. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 42(3), pp. 411–420.

Vertovec, Steven (1999): Conceiving and Researching Transnationalism. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 22(2), pp. 447–462.

Wessendorf, Susanne (2016): *Second-Generation Transnationalism and Roots Migrations: Cross Border Lives*. London: Routledge.

Yuval-Davis, Nira (1997): *Gender and Nation*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.

Appendix 1: Overview of interview participants

| Participant number / name* | Generation | Age at time of interview | Ethnicity / religion | Family regional identification | Interview location | Interview date |
|----------------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Hawa | 1 | mid 70s | Afghan Pashtun, Sunni | Kabul | Perth | 5 May 2019 |
| 2 Fereshta | 1 | mid 60s | Afghan Tajik, non-religious | Pul e Khumri | Perth | 21 Apr 2019 |
| 3 Farida | 1 | early 40s | Afghan Tajik, Sunni | Kabul | Sydney | 24 Nov 2018 |
| 4 Sahar | 1 | early 40s | Afghan Tajik, non-religious | Mazar i Sharif | Sydney | 12 Sep 2019 |
| 5 Zahra | 1 | late 30s | Afghan, Sunni | Kabul | Melbourne | 22 Mar 2019 |
| 6 Marziya | 1.5 | mid 20s | Hazara Afghan, Shia | Jaghori | Sydney | 27 Aug 2019 14 Sep 2019 |
| 7 Shila | 1.5 | early 20s | Hazara Afghan, Shia | Jaghori | Sydney | 4 Oct 2019 |
| 8 Mina | 1.5 | early 20s | Hazara Afghan, Shia | Jaghori | Sydney | 4 Oct 2019 |
| 9 Amina | 1.5 | early 30s | Hazara / Pashtun Afghan, Shia | Mazar i Sharif and Kandahar | Sydney | 4 Oct 2019 |
| 10 Maryam | 1.5 | early 20s | Hazara Afghan, Shia | Ghazni | Sydney | 4 Oct 2019 |
| 11 Tamina | 2 | mid 20s | Afghan Tajik, Sunni | Kabul | Sydney | 17 Sep 2019 |
| 12 Shabnam | 2 | mid 20s | Afghan Tajik, Shia | Kabul | Sydney | 29 Sep 2019 |

* All names have been changed for reasons of anonymity.