



# **When romantic love crosses borders: the case of mixed-nationality and transnational couples**

Başak JANOTA

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Supervisor: Maria das Dores Guerreiro

Co-supervisor: Ana Raquel Matias

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## Abstract

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**Author:** Başak JANOTA

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The analysis of mixed-nationality and transnational couples' portraits represented here aimed to explore their experiences and difficulties about adaptation to transnational arrangements, and how these experiences shape their spousal and familial dynamics over time and space. They were analysed by following the main research questions: a) In relation to transnational migration, what are the experiences of mixed-nationality and transnational couples?, b) What are the dynamics and characteristics of mixed-nationality and transnational couples' relationships and how do they change over time and space?, c) How transnational migration has influenced spousal and familial dynamics and future plans? These questions were conducted in a qualitative research on the basis of ethnography and semi-structured interviews. I found that their socio-demographic status of both members of the couples had an influence on reshaping family functions, gender relations and roles in both domestic and outside spheres. Their past trajectories reflected that they acknowledged their self, their partner and family members in cross-borders while experiencing a reformation about themselves and new forms of living with diversity. These couples created their own way of intimacy and privacy while reconsidering the globalized perspectives of loving, living, thinking, acting and interacting with their beloved ones through the lens of bi-nationalism and transnationalism. Mixed-nationality couples had fixed plans, on the contrary; both mixed-nationality and transnational couples could not have stable plans because of their specific transnational way of life. Besides, I also discovered that there were some alterations in the present life of the couple's social circle of family, friendship and socialization activities. Last but not least, I figured out that they chose to raise their children in multilingual and multicultural environment in order to improve children development.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the contemporary times, globalization has had an enormous impact on the growth of economy as well as the increase of international migration around the world (King, 2001; Lauth Bacas, 2002). Whether as a cause or a consequence of cross-national migration, affective reasons have absolutely taken part in forming numerous bi-national families across transnational boundaries.

Though the concepts of cross-nationalism and transnationalism resonate in contemporary migration studies, the particular cases of the mixed-nationality and transnational couples' experiences about sentimental side of their migration, daily lives and future plans have been surprisingly absent within social science literature (even, love migration is hardly considered as a phenomenon). Notwithstanding, this specific pull factor of geographical mobility should take its place on further agendas of migration studies because it is a misconception to realize migration only makes individuals mobilized, yet; their ideas and values move as well from one country to another. That is to say, border crossings are not only territorial, but also political, economic, cultural and psychological (Kurki, 2014). Moreover, the lack of research on this specific subject makes this study a good opportunity for exploring and developing further lines of inquiry, as the descriptions and analysis of the present study gives a portrait of these kinds of family arrangements. Since the world is being modified through wider conjugal and familial configurations with the specific circumstances of their chosen way of life, we should take into consideration the possible changes in the spousal and familial dynamics over time and space. For some couples, bi-national and/or transnational relationship(s) may be a transformative and self-realizing experience as they may require a greater degree of negotiation between their origin and host countries' while undergoing cross-cultural and cross-lingual phases.

The purpose of the research tries to find out the mixed-nationality and transnational couples' experiences and their difficulties about adaptation to the transnational arrangements. Moreover, the present study also aims to provide answers how transnational experience shapes their spousal and familial dynamics over time and space. The study will therefore address the following research questions: a) In relation to transnational migration, what are the experiences of mixed-nationality and transnational couples? b) What are the dynamics and characteristics of mixed-nationality and transnational couples' relationships, and how do they change over time and space? c) How transnational migration has influenced spousal and familial dynamics and their future plans?

In order to have a better understanding for this thesis, the second chapter of literature review will be helpful to describe how mixed-nationality and transnational couples have become a migration phenomenon. As a supplementary point, the role of language in shaping spousal and familial contexts, and individual's experiences in migration will be discussed. In addition to that, theoretical perspectives of family and conjugality will explain how spousal and familial dynamics are shaped. The third chapter will be useful to identify the analytical framework of phenomenological issues that are found in this particular study. The fourth chapter will reveal information about the methodology including research design, study setting, participants, sample and selection procedure, data collection, and ethical considerations. The fifth chapter will include empirical findings of the research with the topics of social characterization of the interviewees, mixed-nationality and transnational couples, background of the couple's life, couple's daily life, sociabilities (family relations, friendship and socialization), parenting, and lastly future plans. Finally, the entire thesis will be wrapped in the conclusion chapter.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

The literature review provides an overview of the ideas and significant literature to better explain the phenomenological issues whilst focusing on migration theories, the role of language in shaping spousal and familial contexts, and individual's experiences in migration, and lastly theoretical perspectives on family and conjugality. These specific viewpoints will also be considered in further analysis and interpretation of the data gathered.

### **2.1. Framing mixed-nationality and transnational couples as migration phenomena**

Migration is a key theme in human history, whose significance and consequences are varied and influenced by globalization. It can be identified as a spatial event of crossing borders, moving from one place to another and residing in other countries. The ease of travel and improvements in transportation and communication facilitates mobility and connection among people around the world, and increases the flows of migrants in labour market, education, tourism and marriages between different nationalities (King, Black, Collyer, Fielding, & Skeldon, 2010; Goldin, Cameron, & Blarajan, 2011). However, migration has its own complexity which affects people's lives on the move through time and space (King et al., 2010).

The international migration encompasses several concepts, and one of them is transnational migration. It can be specified as a constant movement of heading back and forth between home and host countries well-phrased (2004: 1) by Levitt "when 'home' means more than one country". Cross-border marriages or intimate relationships define a picture of far-reaching issues to the global phenomenon which means to float between countries of the world for the purpose of love. It is essential to understand the contemporary drivers of migration to grasp the idea of how relationships come to the point of discussion for global events, and how the implications of love and intimacy have changed across the countries and continents when long-distance love occurs.

In accordance with Cresswell (2006), seemingly everyone is on the move in recent times. In terms of understanding migratory drives, there are different reasons that people migrate, for instance; wishing to improve their lives through better conditions, seeking independence, career development via studying and working abroad, searching for modern ways of life that they have not acquired in their own country or escaping extreme conditions within their home country (Charsley, 2012). Besides other motives, love is another central factor to migrate across borders (Mai & King, 2009; cited in Van Mol, de Valk & van Wissen,



2015), and today love is accepted as an intrinsic part of migration and mobility (King, 2002). A variety of authors will be mentioned to understand the reasons of mixed-nationality and transnational couples' motivations about cross-border migration and how their experiences are shaped during the migration process.

Ravenstein (1885, 1889) developed the push-pull theory to explain how migration is reasoned through push factors –“such as poverty, unemployment, landlessness, rapid population growth, political repression, low social status, poor marriage prospects etc.” (as cited in King, 2012: 13). He also added that individuals are inspired by pull factors to the country of destination –searching for better living conditions with better job, education, welfare systems, environmental factors and political freedom (ibid.). However, Ravenstein's view was not enough to capture the whole picture of migration. The motives of migration might affect migrants in a different sense of hope vs. hopelessness, expectations vs. disappointments, and achievement vs. failure. As a supplementary, Lee's study (1966) mentions that the relevance of cultural and language barriers, physical distance and cost of the journey, international borders and restricted immigration policies can be the main obstacles for the achievement of pull factors not only for departure point but also for intermediated countries and lastly in the host country. There is still a missing part of the specific motivations of migration, thus it is essential to explain further about emotion, both-sided views and experiences, and individual motivations. Fielding's study (1992) added that there are “two main ‘cultures of migration’: the ‘stairway to heaven’ (migration as freedom, new beginnings, going places, opting out etc.); and the rootlessness and sadness of migration (migration as exile, displacement, rupture, sacrifice, failure)” (as cited in King, 2012: 27). These aforementioned studies help to view the specific motives of migration from different angles while picturing the changes in migrants' need, experiences and opportunities.

Another important insight to consider is the relevance of social networks in order to provide further information about migration in personal and social levels. In this way, individuals might go beyond their personal motivations and push-pull factors of migration because social networks help to combine individual and socio-structural reasons for migration (Goss & Lindquist, 1995; Faist, 1997). Along with Brettell's study (2008), migrant social networks serve on the basis of ‘transnational turn’, and this gives floor to observe not only reasons for migration but also experiences of migrants relied on individual, familial angles and other social networks. During the migration process, people are never alone; they are equipped with their social capital, yields, ideas and cultural motifs. Migration decisions are shaped by the governmental structures and networks, creating the potential for opportunities

and social changes. The decision of migrating is connected with a combination of “family considerations, social networks, political and economic conditions” (Goldin et al., 2011: 98), and values and goals of migrants change in accordance with the experienced conditions. This means that the process of migration is formed by a variety of interactions at the micro level (migrants), meso level (migrants’ social networks), and macro level (governmental structures) (ibid.). Family networks and even long-distance friendships may play a key role in migration decisions because they instil a sense of shared trust, understanding and empathy. Nevertheless, this might not always be the case because there are people outside of the individual’s social circle that may provide more relevant information. Their guidance will be a key factor to learn about the necessary documentations and steps while crossing borders and settling down in another country.

The effect of the modernized global economy and internationalization leads to modern forms of transnational relationships based on contemporary changes such as social change in cultural, social and economic matters. Hence, it is essential to describe and understand how globalization has an influence on transnationals’ life zones in love, intimacy and familial relations. Zelinsky’s (1971) former model of migration, transitions and development demonstrated that the level of migration and mobility is triggered by the role of globalization, advanced communication and transportation technology. The modern communication capabilities enable the maintenance and sustainability of personal relationships across borders. Individuals create their own way of thinking and experiencing “transnational intimacy” in order to maintain cross-border communication and emotional ties (Parreñas, 2005: 317). Still, it does not mean that everyone has the same possibility or access for certain necessities to keep in touch. In terms of real world connections, when the subject is about the cost of the journey the situation will be completely different because it will depend on the socio-economic condition of the individuals implied. For instance, as illustrated by Nesteruk and Marks (2009), the experiences of elite immigrant professionals are taken for granted since they are eligible to hold benefits of economic conditions and immigration status while receiving visas and privileged residence permits. Though they overcome the challenges of the transition to the transnational way of life much easier, elite immigrant professionals still suffer emotionally from missing their families. It is understandable that “globalisation has made the world seem smaller by facilitating communication and by spreading a sense of familiarity through images and other media representations” (Williams, 2010: 3), but the emotional burden of missing the beloved ones still exists.

Above-mentioned migration theories reflected upon how transnational migration and its impacts are moulded by individuals' motivations, their social networks and changeable circumstances relied on advanced communication and transportation technology. These theories are found highly interrelated to each other because they help to explain how transnational migrants' lives change with their personal intentions and external factors. Yet, the role of language in shaping migration will be a plus to elaborate more on the specific contexts of present research because they are couples with mixed-nationalities and different linguistic skills. Thus, there is a need to find answers on how transnational processes and transnational migrants' experiences affect (are affected by) the individuals' linguistic repertoire in spousal and familial contexts, and individual's experiences while migrating.

## **2.2. The role of language in shaping spousal and familial contexts, and individual's experiences in migration**

To better understand the dynamics of the mixed-nationality couples' daily lives, it is important to consider the language diversity between the spouses since they are from different countries with a variety of linguistic characteristics. These mixed couples often tend to choose one of the two (or more) native languages as a common language in the first weeks of their relationships (Tseng & Streltzer, 2005), but sometimes a third language becomes the common language. At times, misunderstandings may arise because the couples have difficulties in communicating deeply personal and emotional thoughts due to the lack of clear translation from one language to the other. In order to avoid this situation, the importance of improving the language of one or both spouses may need to be encouraged. The advantage of knowing each other's native language(s) will increase their chance to express their deep feelings in the language of their mother tongue or the language which they know better. By doing so, the couples may create a better mutual understanding and sensitivity in their relationships. As Gaspar noted (2009: 6), in the transnational platform "not only nationality but also the cultural environment of a person's upbringing and language differences are criteria to be taken into account in order to evaluate how these partnerships are negotiated". Hitherto, there is another scenario when spouses use a third language as the main common language. Not all the members of couples master a third language or host language at the same levels. This inability brings about a "social disability" and forces migrants to depend on the assistance/support of partner or other family members as well as others outside of the family in the daily activities (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014: 173). Some spouses use this dependency to their own advantage if their spouse has difficulty in speaking the host language and understanding the

contexts of the new country, and they may even act like an “owner” (Heine-Wiedenmann & Ackermann, 1992: 111; cited in Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014).

Besides focusing on the acquisition of spousal native language and host language, it is important to shed a light on the role of family language practices, such as improving children’s linguistic skills, in a monolingual, bilingual or multilingual environment. The studies reveal that the choice of language while communicating with their children is still mostly depended on an intuitive basis, meaning that parents use the language which they know best and feel comfortable with (Gathercole, 2006). However, this cannot be said for all bi-national families. For instance, Brizić (2006) found out that the immigrant families’ and/or the immigrant children’s language preference tends to choose one of the parental languages and/or the host language in order to increase their chance of educational achievement. Parental decisions to encourage the children’s bi/multilingualism are largely influenced by the parents own migration, societal, educational and bi/multilingual experiences (King & Fogle, 2013). In doing so, the issues of how to select and teach not only for parents’ mother tongues, but also for the main language(s) and sometimes a third language have become a battleground for the couples who have globalized patterns (Gibbs, 1987; as cited in Tseng & Streltzer, 2005; Brizić, 2006). Still, many couples are recognized as rich resources of linguistic and cultural capital because they establish a family environment where bi/multilingualism, multiculturalism, and multi-channel communicative practices may be valued. As Hornberger (2007: 329) states that “children raised in transnationalized households, experience certain flows of people, money, labour, goods, information, advice, stories, languages, care, and love ... in either direction”. These diversified experiences in the life of transnational children may be essential to increase their ability to adapt to a new milieu. For instance, Kovacs and Mehler (2009) asserted that a multilingual environment may produce children who are more cognitively adaptable at absorbing different languages.

Turning onto the relevance of host language acquisition in the context of individual’s experiences in migration, numerous researchers indicated that the incentives for social and cultural integration can be through the symbolic tool of language, specifically while adopting the knowledge and proficiency in one of the official languages in host society (e.g., Lazear, 1999; Joppke, 2003; Norton & Toohey, 2011). Language proficiency is here seen as a pathway to socio-economic integration by finding better job opportunities as well as non-economic outcomes of social integration with an increase number of social networks, political participation and civic engagement including educational attainment, health and family life (Adsera & Pytlikova, 2015). Kramsch (2013) declared that language proficiency is a valuable

asset that is not only used to express, create and interpret meanings but also to establish and maintain social and interpersonal relationships. The reason is that language creates a two-way communication between locals and new comers, and between the different members of a migrant family. Extensive studies display that the ability to be fluent or to learn the language of a host country in a short space of time is vital for transferring human capital from the source country to another country and boosting immigrants' lives in a positive way at the destination countries (e.g., Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Bleakley & Chin 2004). In doing so, language may promote more access but not necessarily equality on the basis of cultural and societal needs of the migrants. Whether the migrants are fluent in the host language or not they are still considered second-class citizens since it is not certain if they will be seen as legitimate speakers or not. Although they are the citizens of same nation, migrants tend to be perceived as foreigners due to their different accent. Even having a different facial appearance and style of clothing can give a feeling of being an 'outsider' and not being fully part of the society, because these differences are prone to be labelled with a combination of stereotypes and prejudices in which society they live in (Trueba, 2004, citing Hornberger, 2007). Likewise, people who have foreign sounding names and surnames, tend to be categorised as a foreigner and be subjected to the questions about their origins (Battaglia, 2000; as cited in Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). This is the very reason that investing on learning the host language(s) is a sociological construct because not only about learners' motivation, but also the native language speakers' motivations and representations may change in terms of the contexts across time and space (Norton & Toohey, 2011). Apparently, the forms of estrangement and intentional or unintentional discrimination create endless boundaries and exclusion by hardening the process of integration or acceptance within society.

These circumstances show how learning, practising and transmitting a variety of linguistic skills are related to all individuals, families' choices and environmental factors such as prejudice and stereotypes. The next section will discuss how migration plays a role in forming family life, conjugality and gender roles.

### **2.3. Family, conjugality and gender roles**

Understanding bi-national and transnational couples' lives and practices in family and conjugality formation is important to make sense on how they lead a life in current times. Like other social phenomenon, the study of family and conjugality can be done making use of a diversity of conceptual frameworks and focusing different levels of analysis - macro, meso or micro. Theoretical approaches such as the socio-developmental, the structural functional,

the ecological and the interaction-constructionist or its combination bring useful contributions for the analysis of family and intimate relationships.

Following a socio-developmental perspective, on a macro level, family forms change across time and space resulting from historical and social conditions. The family as a social institution is in continuous flux and one of the bases of societies' structures. On the account of traditionalist family view, the family is stuck on the frame of a heterosexual conjugality unit with the basis of marriage and co-residence relying on mainly a male bread-winner income (Silva & Smart, 1999). Notwithstanding, many families are no longer intended to follow these rigid set paths of living, rather they are more fluid and diverse with changing household compositions and organization. The nature of intimate and familial relationships has been reformed due to economic and social conditions resulting alterations in employment motifs, gender relations and flexible mate-selection options in sexual orientations.

An important factor of these changes in family structure has coincided with the increased number of women participating in the labour force due to substantial growth in economic globalization. The studies revealed that women with higher education, mobility and cross-cultural skills have been counted as a credit for employment opportunities (Bergman, 1986; Abel-Kemp, 1994). This has had a dramatic long-term effect on reshaping family dynamics and organization by breaking traditional family norms, including the father's role as family head and sole bread-winner in the household. Scarr and her colleagues mentioned (1989), conservatives and traditionalists are concerned about new configurations in family and household arrangements because they believe family and gender roles are fading. Rather, according to the progressives and feminists, only their forms are changing by gaining personal satisfaction with egalitarian values as well as economic dependency (*ibid.*). Moreover, another factor about the globalization and the process of increasing economic integration, the labour movement and technological knowledge across international borders trigger social actions in order to recommit to human rights principles. Parsons (1949) declared that the terms of family and conjugality are prone to change in response to social, institutional and cultural adjustments since families are such social institutions intertwining with other social movements along with diverse lifestyles and cultures. In the search of social and economic rights, the civil rights movement inspired a collective action to help spur on a number of movements for social change, including women's rights movements, feminist movements and gay liberation movements (Moghadam, Franzway & Fonow, 2011). By doing so, family diversity is here to stay with the changes in terms, forms, and norms but still remain open questions. Scholars conceptualize 'families' in gratitude of various family

patterns containing marital couples (with or without children), couples 'living together apart', single parenthood, cohabitating heterosexual couples, and same-sex partnerships (Powell, Bolzendahl, Geist & Steelman, 2010). For some individual and collective opinions, still these new concepts of family norms are counted in greyness (Moore & Asay, 2013). Subsequently, it might require time to be socially recognized and accepted.

Last but not least, a third factor is related to advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) and transportation systems which are rooted in everyday life. In a synthesis report of OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2011), these recent technologies and innovations ease the process of mobility across countries, while facilitating the maintenance of personal relationships by social networking. This gives an idea of their power in revolutionising social interaction in recent as well as future times. Wright and Ellis (2016) state that leading globalized and mobilized way of life will play an important role in reshaping families and intimate relationships, for example; resulting in increased numbers of long distance relationships and commuter marriages that muddle distance through high-tech hyper communication tools. What seems to be happening is that these determinants take an important role in changing family profiles. The notion of a traditional family is losing force in the contemporary societies; meaning that family is being stretched to cover a variety of family arrangements. It is important to acknowledge how contemporary life patterns form families and intimate relationships.

Despite the changes in time, marriage and family values continue to be salient in contemporary life and influence families in terms of forms, functions, expectations and values. Today, the characteristics of the families are broad and flexible. The styles of families vary in accordance with individuals' interests, plans and goals throughout their life cycle. In a world of demographic, cultural and political changes, there are no longer typical family structures that fit into social norms. Along with different life trajectories, family configurations produce re-compositions for both the construction of a new conjugality and a social relationship (Guerreiro, Torres & Lobo, 2011). Acknowledging the diversity of today's families on varied family arrangements, there are "families of choice" consisting of cohabiting families, single-parent families, lesbian and gay male partners and parents, and 'living together apart' transnational families who maintain relationships and parenting across national borders that all represent some differences in family lifestyle and family practices (Weston, 1991; Maclean & Eekelaar, 1997; as cited in Silva & Smart, 1999: 9). Families are influenced by the surrounding environment, as stated by the ecology perspective (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2012). According to these authors, even though society does not regulate family

members' behaviour, social conditions change in ways that family life might be impeded or supported. Economic, educational, religious, and cultural institutions play an important role in families' lives, choices and future plans. Moreover, other historical circumstances specifically the effect of globalization and the development of immigration patterns have changed educational and professional patterns into more mobilized versions in which structures and opportunities are no longer just nationally framed but globally framed. On the one side, this international mobility combined with the advanced technology made geographical distances shorter. On the other side, the nature of immigration brings reflexivity and diversity into the lives of transnationals and all migrants because they may experience possible changes in their national, cultural and individual identification as the products of globalization (Bauman, 2001; Castells, 1997; as cited in Esteban-Guitart & Vila, 2015).

In contemporary times, the changed and changing world paves the path for greater possibilities and acceptance for new types of relationships with different dimensions. The reconceptualization of immigration has pushed for reframing the concept of home, family dynamics, identity and a sense of belonging (Huang, Yeoh, & Lam, 2008). The contextualization of the cultural and economic changes must be taken into consideration while providing a more global analysis on the changes of the context of families. When family members travel back and forth at different times, they create a specific way of life by reforming their relationship patterns and the definition of family over time and space. Floating between host country(s) to home country (or vice versa), experiencing linguistic diversity and cultures are part of the transnational way of life. For this reason, transnationals are no longer mobilized physically; the 'linguistic' apparatus of semantics in ecological views can be applied to understand ideas, thoughts, emotions, dreams and plans by the use of languages and expressions (Chakravartty, 2001; Chang, 2011). Besides ecological-based changes in family, the following theoretical orientation emphasizes the changes of function and structure of family.

According to Lamanna & Riedmann (2012), while analysing family functions from a structure-functional perspective it is possible to understand how gender changes in family, and gender balance are practiced addressing societal needs in a set of given or perceived social norms. Throughout the history, family role has been depended on the dutiful performance of social roles by providing necessary resources to fulfil the daily needs of its members. Prior to the industrialization, men were defined as bread-winning; and women who were seen legally and economically inferior to men, confined to household responsibilities such as remaining at home to bear and nurture children, and taking care of the domestic issues



(Moore & Asay, 2013). At those times, working class people were used to lead their own business as landowners and skilled hand-craftsmen in the countryside. This drastically changed when industrialization emerged; the new industrialized way of life seemingly had empowering, and at the same time devastating influences on families. During the industrialization period, women began to fight for their rights both inside and outside of the household causing movements to the perseverance on their civil rights (moving freely and working at an occupation in one's choice) and social rights (education, training, a decent standard of living and good work conditions) (Moghadam et al., 2011). Scholars who are in-favour of obtaining these rights indicated that women's advancement in education was an important factor to create social change while holding higher positions in society, whereas complementary views asserted the decrease in childcare activities and fertility rates (ibid.). These actions taken by women during the industrial revolution eventually lead to a rise in awareness in more equal arrangements between men and women roles.

With the effect of industrialisation, wider economic development and globalization resulted in opening the door for new jobs for women and most of the jobs were filled by the working class who wanted a better quality of life. They were not landowners anymore; people lost their properties due to the industrialisation. All family members, including women and children, were then put into factories to improve family economic resources. These transformations in women's contributions into the labour market and household resources have played a role in increasing their independence, and personal as well as professional autonomy at the same time restructuring traditional norms and intensive structural changes to society. Though women were accused of not continuing proper motherhood responsibilities, yet, women maintained their double duties as workers and mothers, meaning that women were faced with the double burden of factory work followed by domestic chores and child care as "second shift", since men did not have equal contributions into family needs (Hochschild, 1989). Nevertheless; understanding gender roles in both domestic and labour market spheres vary in terms of norms, attitudes and values at the national, societal and individual levels in the context of the specific countries (Crompton, Lewis & Lyonette, 2007).

On the account of family functions, all of the families are entrusted to be responsible for reproduction (raising children and transmitting cultural capital), economic support to meet basic needs of its members (food, clothing and shelter), and emotional security or support (affection and companionship) (Mitchell, 1984; Lamanna & Riedmann, 2012). As Lefaucher (1995) mentioned that male dominance wages in family income enables the maintenance and equipment for the home, however; creates an unequal interdependence of the conjugal couple

and a burden in women's lack of autonomy (as cited in Silva & Smart, 1999). Migrating into patriarchal societies from developing countries might increase the level of an imbalance of power relations in the marriage since the voices of immigrant wives might be diminished by male dominance inside and/or outside of their domicile. If immigrant wives obtained a less advantaged background of educational and professional attainments, it is inescapable for them to experience social exclusion and individual exploitation (King et al., 2010) because of the fact that their career plans are mostly depend on the husbands' decisions. Similarly, those who come from developed countries may experience greater decision-making exerted by their husbands due to the fact that in most cases the husbands would be the primary person to take care of monetary resources (Ko, 2012). In this case, the researchers are likely to encounter specifically women in unhappy marriages for those without jobs or training, and are prone to experience marginalization in the unfamiliar society in which they find themselves (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014).

According to Berger and Kellner (1970), the interaction-constructionist perspective stresses that everyday family practices and interactions, daily conversations and behaviours contribute to building family identity, traditions and commitment (cited in Lamanna, Riedmann, & Stewart, 2016). Recent configurations into family units have paved the way for re-evaluating and rethinking traditional beliefs, values and attitudes about gender roles or negotiating more flexible roles and relationships (Yorburg, 2002). The contexts of race, ethnicity, religion, politics, social and economic status have an influence on defining contemporary family terms and their relationships. Bearing in mind that globalization has dramatic influences on family roles as well as cultural norms; scholars demonstrated that immigration reconstructed family roles upon immigrating to the host countries (Wong, Yoo & Steward, 2006; cited in Lamanna & Riedmann, 2012). For instance, transnationals construct their interaction styles with their family while maintaining familial ties via electronic communication. The advanced technologies have played an important role in shifting face-to-face communication into "virtual intimacies" when settling in overseas; but still in troublesome times they search for closeness and actual presence of face-to-face communication (Wilding, 2006: 126). They re-construct their point of view and make efforts to experience their own world through their own procedures and practices. For instance, the developments in information and communication technologies such as video recording, calls, text messaging, webcams, e-mail, Facebook and Skype not only facilitate their communication with the beloved ones, but also create a stronger sense of a shared social field (Pries, 2007). This perspective sheds a light on the case of mixed-nationality and transnational

couples to explore how their cultural norms, social roles, and identity changes in terms of their interaction with the new environment motifs, and how they construct and/or re-construct their life course.

The dynamics of transnational migration in the host country have led to changes in family structures. Additionally, most of the transnational individuals have experienced distress within the familial relationships concerning spousal relationships during separation times (Pe-Pua, Mitchell, Castles, & Iredale, 1998). This longer period of separation creates conflict on the intimacy of spousal characteristics; likewise, their parental experiences and practices can be disrupted (Carling, Menjivar & Schmalzbauer, 2012). Bi-national, mixed and transnational couples are prone to have some alterations in their relationships in accordance with socio-cultural change, the creation of multicultural and transcultural identities related to transnational experience are one of the realities in the globalized world (Rodríguez-García, 2006). As Modood (2003) stated, transnational couples build mechanisms to deal with the complexities of the adaptation to multiple settings (here and there) while facing the difficulties relating to multi-ethnicities, multiculturalism and transnationalities (as cited in Rodríguez-García, 2006). The characteristics of maintaining ties of attachment and cultural patterns in both the home country “there” and the host country “here” is a learning process to create their way of a coping lifestyle through building hybrid and multiple identities of acquiring bicultural and multilingual skills (Vertovec, 2001; Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco & Todorova, 2008). This expresses the migrants’ voices and experiences of the world while knowing how they picture and negotiate themselves in the contexts of social, political and cultural circumstances in cross-border life. The subsequent section of analytical framework will give a brief description about the aforementioned phenomenological issues.

### 3. ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK

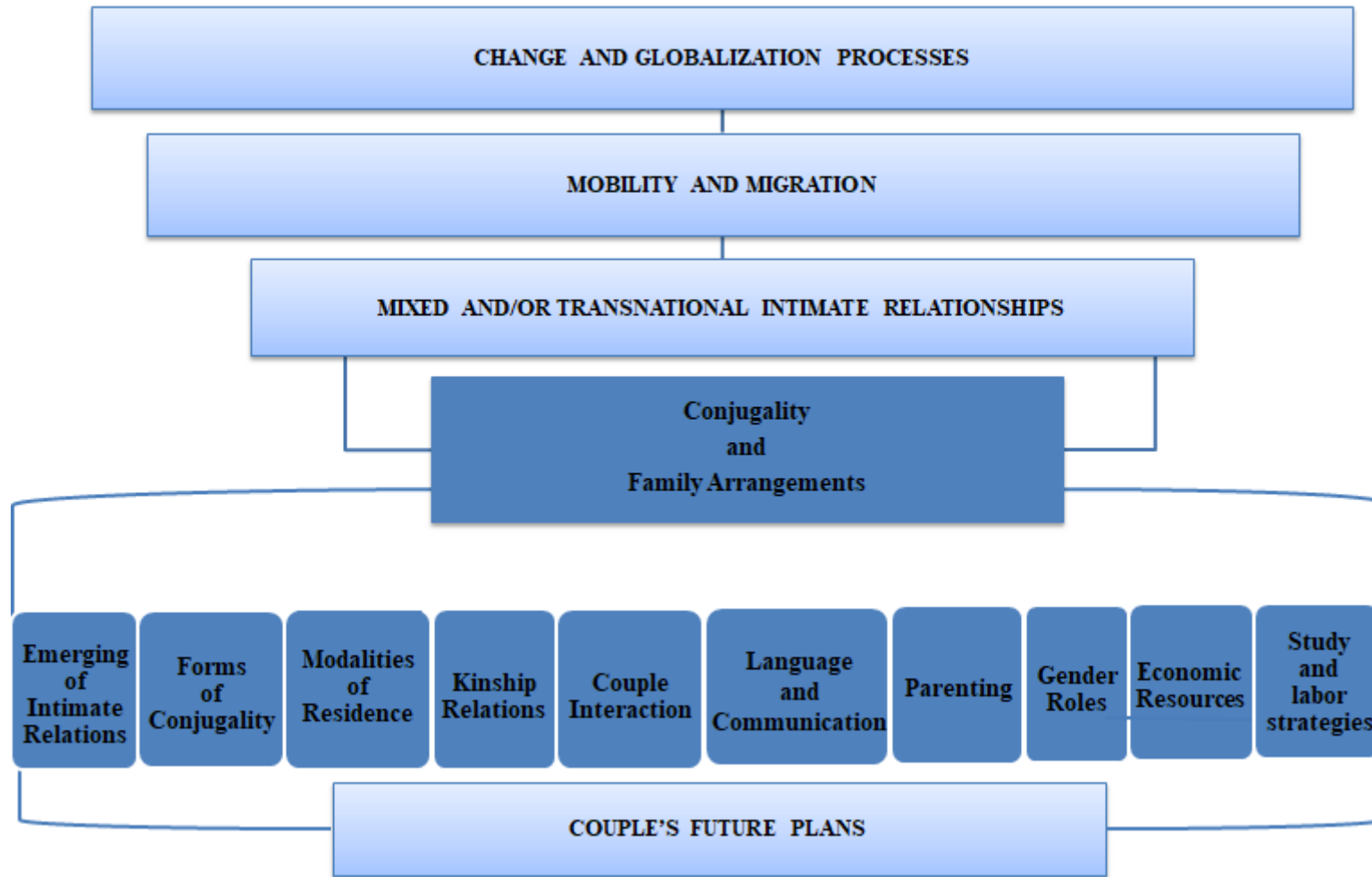
This section summarizes the problematic phenomena of the theoretical frameworks. The first level in this schematic (see Figure. 1 in page 17) reflects that the greatest cause of the changes occurring in the lives of individuals, couples as well as families with the impact of globalization. The second level of the schematic explains that the nature of international migration has been transformed both quantitatively and qualitatively, meaning that many individuals become highly mobilized via advanced technology and transportation within the globalized world. The third level of the schematic shows that the globalized and mobilized ways of life increase the chances of meeting international spouses. To identify the existence of different patterns within the specific sample of bi-national couples in this study, the terms of mixed-nationality and transnational couples will be used. Mixed-nationality unions refer to having a relationship with a partner of a different nationality to one's own, and Gaspar identifies (2012: 8) these couples also as "love migrant bi-national couples". Another type of bi-national couple emerges from transnational couples. Transnationalism is a process through living some time or majority of time apart from the beloved ones, mainly spouses and families; still these individuals keep their bonds with a collection of unity and solidarity to maintain "familyhood" (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 3).

The third level of the schematic breaks down into several subheadings about revealing information of how conjugality and family arrangements are applied in mixed and/or transnational intimate relationships. This means the emerging of their intimate relationships is both a source and a consequence of global worldview, and a creative way of understanding wider concepts of family dynamics and relationships among family members. Since they have international relationships, their forms of conjugality are based on specific differences. Many researchers have stated that mixed marriages emphasize varied differences in the cultural, ethnic, religious and social levels (Gorny & Kepinska, 2004; Rodríguez-García, 2006). Due to the bi-national way of life, the modalities of residence are quite changeable, i.e. between the spouses' origin countries or a third country. It is understandable that this cross border experience has influenced individuals' lives especially while maintaining kinship relationships. They maintain their multiple relations and take part in social relations across borders, e.g. ancestral, economic, religious, educational and political relations (Glick Schiller, Basch & Szanton-Blanc, 1995). Mixed-nationality and transnational families build their own perspective of family life while preferring to live in a foreign country in order to accomplish their future plans, dreams and goals. Moreover, they have sacrificed from their current lives

and end up being far from their beloved ones. Yet, “the success of these families, therefore, usually depends upon sacrifice” by the cost of leaving social circles of family, relatives and friends behind (Scott & Cartledge, 2009: 67). This brings about changes in their interaction and communication patterns with their spouses, families, and friends, while retaining ties in a more virtualized way.

Additionally, considering the specific feature of having a bi-national relationship, it is inevitable to observe linguistic and cultural diversity in spousal, familial as well as parental dynamics. Moreover, the gender relations in the intimate relations in and outside of domestic spheres are an essential factor for acknowledging family dynamics. It is also important to have an idea about how these globalized versions of living and loving change the individuals’ lives before, during and after the migration process. When ‘trailing spouses’ move overseas in the name of love, this seems to be a difficult choice for them to take the leap to leave behind everything to be with their partner because it might be challenging to start from the bottom in a new world. More specifically, when migrant spouses have a lack of language and professional competence in the host country, this can be a blow to their independence as well as their confidence. Not having financial independence and being reliant on their spouse may even cause gender imbalance especially in marital relations. In my research, I have found that in terms of study and labour strategies, transnational couples have established their lives in different countries across the world, for mostly different reasons such as working and studying. On the contrary, for some of the mixed-nationality couples, their marriage was the first step to migrate in order to enhance possible links between countries (their country of origin and host country). The last level of the schematic will reveal information about future plans of the mixed-nationality and transnational couples related to their professional, educational and residential plans as well as having children.

Figure 1. Analytical framework



## 4. METHODOLOGY

This section illustrates how the study was conducted. It describes research design, study setting, participants, sample and selection procedure, data collection and ethical considerations referring to ethical issues that I faced while conducting the research.

### 4.1. Research design

In the selection of the dissertation topic and the development of the research questions, Marx's sources of research questions maintained the significance of 'personal experience' which has triggered my decision to follow personal interest in accordance to my current life experience (Marx, 1997; as cited in Bryman, 2012). The reason why I chose transnationalism in the first place was because of my own transnational way of life that I was not even aware of before studying this specific subject. Since 2008, I have been mobilized in the purpose of studying and living abroad in Northern Cyprus and during holidays I used to take advantage by heading back and forth between Cyprus and Turkey. Cyprus had being replaced with Angola after I got married with my university lover. It is understandable that there is constant movement between Turkey and Angola after I experienced marriage migration. Additionally, having the privilege to be selected to the MFAMILY master programme turned my two-sided transnational life into a triangle. This endless movement made me question the context of 'home' while responding to others' inquiry of 'where will you end up?' Actually, I almost established a new life in Luanda, Angola with my husband, my house and half of my social network including a circle of family and friends. Nevertheless, this is only one stage of my life and it is difficult for me to feel a complete sense of belonging or to feel at home 'there'. The reason is that half of my life is settled in Istanbul, Turkey with my social networks of family, home and friends, my profession and my habitual patterns of career, language, religion, and cultural rituals which all have contributed to who I am recently. Apparently, being a transnational is a tiring, exciting, challenging and life changing experience. Hence, my own experience of living within a transnational lifestyle inspired interest in researching other couples' feelings and experiences in transnationalism. My research aim took shape when I recognized that there are many varying dynamics and considerations for couples within transnational relationships.

This study was established as qualitative in nature so as to understand the perspectives of participants and their meaning. The reason to choose qualitative research was related to

adopt a more comprehensive approach to seek answers for ‘why’, ‘what’, and ‘how’ questions in order to provide a different point of view on the same social phenomena (Jamshed, 2014). Using qualitative research also gives credit to identify, describe and explain related concepts, experiences and phenomena to develop knowledge about the specific topic (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shoghi & Cheraghi, 2014). The present study endeavours to shine a light on providing different experiences from the eyes of mixed-nationality and transnational couples so as to gain in-depth knowledge and understanding from the participants’ own perceptions of personal, spousal and familial in transnational world.

The qualitative methods are also established to obtain an in-depth and extensive understanding of the issues by means of their textual interpretation, for instance interviewing and observation are widely used ones. Therefore, these research methodologies are considered to be used in this present study as supplementary to each other in order to give the value of qualitative mixed-method. The procedures and techniques from two research orientations were based on a combination of ethnography (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007) and semi-structured interviews (Bryman, 2012). Sequentially, ethnography is a research method in which a researcher gains access to a particular group and makes regular observations about their “lives and experiences” from the eyes of the individuals being studied while taking a naturalistic stand “in their own setting” (Taylor, 1993: 1; as cited in Bryman, 2012). In doing so, ethnography may encapsulate participant observation that entails participation in the day-to-day activities while developing an understanding of participants’ behaviour within their context (Evans, 2012). With the help of ethnography observation, data collection is done in a collaborative way in offering opportunities to give a voice to the participants and allowing their involvement in the production of the data. As well as, ethnography is an interactive research that positions “the researcher as a person”, intends to develop special relations with participants and attempts to build a further connection with the reader (Reinharz, 1992: 240; cited in Ng, 2011).

Moreover, semi-structured interviews were designed to address the specific questions on the basis of a literature review on these issues in order to gain detailed information. The participants were encouraged to share their own thoughts and feelings within face to face interactions (Jones et al., 2010; as cited in Bryman, 2012). Also, “take the role of the other” is found as a key factor while conducting a qualitative research in order to gain social knowledge (Lofland & Lofland, 1995: 16; as cited in Bryman, 2012). Having semi-structured interviews also enabled to build reciprocal relationships between researcher and participants while controlling participants’ responses in a pre-proposed framework.



In order to contribute to the literature about the mixed-nationality and transnational couples' experiences, their difficulties related to adaptation to the transnational arrangements, and how their spousal and familial dynamics are shaped by transnational experiences over time and space were examined by following the main research questions: a) In relation to transnational migration, what are the experiences of mixed-nationality and transnational couples? (with a sub-question of "What are the specific situations that transnational couples face between two or more countries?"), b) What are the dynamics and characteristics of mixed-nationality and transnational couples' relationships and how do they change over time and space?, c) How transnational migration has influenced spousal and familial dynamics and future plans? (with a sub-question of "How do transnational couples maintain their relationship and their specific way of life across borders?"). These questions were conducted on the basis of prearranged questions developed by the researcher to define the area to be explored and interview guide contains a set of questions as follows (for the interview guide, see appendix 2 in page 96):

- Socio-demographic information about individual and his/her partner (gender, place of birth and nationality by birth, acquired citizenship(s), professional occupation, current residence, current relationship status, educational level, age and number of children) (see Table.1 in page 30)
- Background of the couple's life
- Previous expectations
- Friendship and socialization
- Family relations
- Couple's daily life
- Parenting
- Mid-term goals and plans
- Identity
- Suggestion

The transnational experience must be taken into consideration as an individual experience and as a highly personalized concept, since it is not a one-fit-for-everyone phenomenon. These qualitative methodologies address participants' experiences, understanding how experiences, attitudes and life circumstances influence behaviours. These specific cases of mixed-nationality and transnational couples will provide snapshots whilst showing how the world society makes its entry into normal families (who suit on societal

norms assuming as a common sense and natural). Additionally, these cases will exemplify how someone's destiny can be similar to the others while better understanding the world society and their private experience. Illuminating on some of the many complexities of what it is a bi-national and transnational, what their experiences are, can be started to explain through personal experiences with the hope of contributing a broader point of view on navigating the transnational as well as multicultural milieu of the world. This might give emphasis to the importance of building awareness on pluralistic and multicultural societies while considering the inner voices of minorities and immigrants who are residing in their host countries.

#### **4.2. Study setting**

Owing to personal mobilized condition between Turkey and Angola, the fieldwork was conducted both in Istanbul and in Luanda as the main territories of reference. Research settings also differentiated on the account of participants' current residence and mobility conditions. On the one hand, participants who resided in Istanbul or in Luanda interviewed in person and setting environment left to the participants' choice e.g. home visits, meeting for a coffee or tea and meeting for a dinner. On the other hand, participants who resided outside of Istanbul or Luanda interviewed online via Skype because it was the easiest way to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. In this case, participants also decided the setting environment in their own domiciles depended on their preferences and availability e.g. in a kitchen, in a living room, in the meeting room of the office, and their private rooms. After the interviews, missing points were covered in the second follow-up interviews either by messenger or Skype.

#### **4.3. Sampling and selecting procedures**

In the beginning phase of recruiting participants, I wanted to just focus on transnational couples, but the collection data directed me to also include mixed-nationality couples. Hence, I found it important to understand their reality and to make possible comparisons between these two types of relationships. I also considered the sex, age, nationality, location and whether the couples were married or in a long-term cohabiting relationship in order to provide a wider view of their transnational experiences. In doing so, I aimed not only to increase sample size but also to know the cross-cultural impact on this particular study.

In the procedure of sample selection, I searched for participants who are accustomed to the particular topics of 'transnationalism' and were willing to express their experiences and

inner feelings about being a bi-national and/or transnational couple. The particular participants were selected in accordance with the criteria mentioned below:

- One of the couples' fixed homes has to be either in Istanbul (Turkey) or in Luanda (Angola),
- Mixed couples in terms of nationalities and background,
- Living together and/or living apart,
- Regardless of conjugal civil status, couples who are in committed relationships.

Adding a point related to the dynamic of the reference territories is important to show how Istanbul and Luanda fieldworks were different from each other. There were different sampling procedures used. In the beginning, while residing in Luanda, five of the participants were reached by personal social networks of friends who were mostly both transnational and mixed-nationality couples. The second phase, while residing in Istanbul, seven of the participants were selected through a snowball sampling (Bryman, 2012) in which locating personal social networks (relatives and neighbours) to assist in recruiting potential research participants with the specific characteristics. With the referrals of my social networks, the recruitment of Turkish participants was outnumbered; the possible reasons can be related to staying a longer period of time in Istanbul during fieldwork. Also since the research has distinct criteria, it narrowed the opportunities to find other profiles and once the prospective participant met those criteria, they were treated in the style of 'first come, first in' due to short period of time. In addition to social networks, the advanced technology played a role in recruiting one participant through the personal membership in one of the expatriate social networks on the Internet, namely Internations: Community for Expatriates & Global minds. Last of all, the other was met by coincidence in Büyükçekmece Directorate of Population (*Büyükçekmece Nüfus Müdürlüğü*), Istanbul. In conclusion, most of the cases came from personal social networks, except these two cases in Istanbul.

#### **4.4. Participants**

Twelve semi-structured interviews were undertaken with 14 individuals in the study. As shown in Table 1 (see in page 30), the profiles of the participants have highly different socio-demographic information. In terms of variety of nationalities, the sample consisted of five males (one Dutch, one Portuguese, one Spanish and two Turkish) and nine females (one Angolan, one Kyrgyzstani, one Macedonian, four Turkish, one Ukrainian and one Vietnamese). Of the participants, ten were married and two were cohabiting couples who

explained their relationships as stable, serious and long-term committed relationship at the time of our interviews. Moreover, the ages for participants vary from minimum 24 to maximum 52. Their educational levels consisted of primary, middle and high school, university, master degree and PhD. Besides their diverse educational attainments, they also have different specialized areas in their careers including business controller, engineers (computer, electrical and petroleum), manager, textile distributors, travel writer, part-time nonqualified jobs, PhD student and some of them were not working at that time. The languages they spoke were Arabic, Creole (Cape Verdean Creole), Dutch, English, French, German, Kyrgyz, Macedonian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese, with nine of the participants presenting trilingual skills and others bilingual skills. Finally, only the two non-married couples did not have children, all of the married couples have children. Their children were raised in monolingual, bilingual or multilingual setting, and almost all children had both the father's and the mother's nationality (dual nationality).

#### 4.5. Data collection

As a researcher, I took a stance in some cases as '*participant*' and as '*insider*' of the couple's social networks (Kanuha, 2000), and in other cases more as an '*outsider*' of the couple specific networks. In both situations, obtained information was collected through my direct observation and our informal conversations done outside the specific context of the semi-structured interviews.

Taking into consideration of the specific characteristics of mainly transnational couples who live apart, at first the interviews aimed to be one-on-one interviews on the basis of the availability of the individuals. In general, I interviewed one person per couple consisting of 10 participants, 2 couples preferred to have their spouses take part in the interview, though prospective participants were told that it would be enough to interview only one person per couple during the screening process. In these cases, interviews turned into conducting joint couple interviews. Joint couple interviews unquestionably have their advantages and disadvantages affecting obtained data (Morris, 2001). That is to say, during the joint interviews, couples might hesitate to share their spousal problems or challenges within the relationship. In these two interviews, it was interesting to experience the atmosphere of interactions, negotiations and couple presentations relying on their spousal practices. For instance, there were times that spouses had a different recollection of, jogged the partner's statement or idea and displayed different power relations on the relationship between spouses.

Eight out of 14 participants (seven of them residing in Istanbul, Turkey and one in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE)) were interviewed in person. Moreover, two participants (residing in Luanda, Angola) started the interview in person and carried on via Skype. Last but not least, the rest of participants (composed of two residing in Lisbon, Portugal; one in Muret, France; one in São Paulo, Brazil) were interviewed through Skype. The interviews were carried out in English and Turkish, according to the language capacities of each interviewee. In the latter case, the questions of the interview guide were translated directly from English to Turkish during the course of the interview and their quotations were translated to English by the author. The semi-structured interviews lasted a minimum of forty-seven minutes to a maximum two hours and thirty minutes. Each interview was tape-recorded, with the interviewees' permission for further usage in transcription. To analyse interview data, each case of twelve interviews was first reconstructed aiming to make sense of their world and describe their point of view, and then analysed on its own by the usage of reconstructive and thematic data analysis strategies in order to do interpretation with the detailed themes on the base of a case-by-case analysis of each interview transcript (Flick, 2009). For further information, see in Appendix of the grid analyses of the couples.

#### **4.6. Ethical considerations**

Obtaining an official clearance from my supervisors, MFamily Erasmus Mundus Committee and University Institute of Lisbon-Department of Social Work and Social Administration was a necessary step before conducting the study. After ensured with official clearance by university authorities, there are ethical considerations processed in the course of conducting research.

In the recruitment process, the participants were informed about the voluntariness, anonymity and confidentiality of participation (Banks, 2006) and they were ensured that obtained information would be limited to study purpose. Ensuring anonymity of their identities was crucial since all the individuals and couples have delivered personal and sensitive information about not only their experiences but also social circles of their families, friends and societies they live in. In the beginning of every interview, I introduced myself to the participants, and informed them about the purpose of the study while receiving verbal consent from the participants to take part in the study. Additionally, following the ethical path of the research, the relation with participants was based on the highest level of respect for dignity, honesty and transparency while avoiding any potential harm that could be subjected to them (Bryman & Bell, 2007). In line with these indications, the participants as well as their

answers are regarded with the highest level of objectivity throughout the research. Also, emphasizing on taking a reflexive manner was important to build awareness and acknowledgment through the participants' own lens resulted in enhancing credibility and rapport in the relation between researcher and participants.

Though aforementioned ethical guidelines were necessary elements to lead a research, they cannot ensure to avoid possible challenges occurred while conducting the research. There were some ethical issues faced in different phases of the recent research. First, gaining access to participants was challenging especially during the settlement process in Istanbul. For the reason that some prospective foreign women's decisions to participate in the research were limited by male dominance power by their Turkish husbands. Even in the previous phase of recruitment, four prospective female participants asserted '*Ben bilmem benim eşim bilir*' [translation from Turkish to English: I don't know, my husband knows']. Still, this case cannot be generalized in the sake of all Turkish males in a similar situation. Nevertheless, this shows how an imbalance of power in spousal relationships was a cause of hesitation in the women's decision-making whether to participate or not.

Second, the language barrier was another ethical issue faced while doing interviews in Turkish with individuals who acquired Turkish as a second language, i.e. Kyrgyzstani and Vietnamese female participants. In the former case, she especially did not comprehend intensive knowledge-based and experienced-based questions on 'identity' section. In comparison to the latter case, even though her husband was a greater mediator to grasp and transmit the questions, still this was open to the several arguments emerging from lack of first speaker perspectives on the subjects during the couples interview. In order to overcome this challenge, the advance technology was helpful to fill up missing points from Vietnamese female's perspective by using Google translate from Vietnamese to English. For this reason her original Vietnamese quotations are kept as end notes in the interview grid analysis.

Thirdly, for methodological consideration, being an insider as a subject of the study brought about advantages and at the same time disadvantages. During the interviews, participants took a comfortable and open stance while delivering their ideas. This might be related with our friendships for those from my personal social networks, and also for others might be related to mutual honesty and trustworthiness. It can also be assumed that having a common understanding for the specific topic of transnationalism, and a feeling of trust that we built within each other were main contributing factors to embrace a comfortable and intimate environment during all interviews. Notwithstanding, Bryman (2012) mentioned that challenges may occur in the relationship between researcher and participant when access to

spheres of intimate life matters. This was highly perceived in one case when the questions turned into more personal aspects of 'being a couple', and -instead of denying to answer the question- the interviewee responded by projecting some prejudiced questions with ethnocentric view stating '*Why did you get marry with someone from Africa?*', '*Did you get marry because you cannot cohabite in Turkish norms?*' and '*Did you get marry only to show your family and to get approval?*' This ethical issue can be exemplified with two-sided challenge for all parties. In one side, interviewee was unpleasant to share his personal idea, and in the other side, interviewer had a challenge of being 'insider' when a dual role of transnational couple and researcher, because I was subjected to his way of generalization and his ethnocentric reflections. This challenge might also cause emotional burden on his wife. For this reason, the importance of treating participants in the frame of ethical guidelines is essential to ensure minimal risk of harm for all parties during the interview. Aforementioned benefits and shortcomings have helped me to analyse the cases in a broader perspective while improving negotiation skills in the course of interview and taking appropriate steps by having non-judgemental and reflexive approach, so as to maintain respectful and objective relationships with the participants.

Last but not least, besides the challenge of a face-to-face interview, there is another side of the medallion that the partial part of the research was depended on online interviews due to the participants' mobility conditions. Furthermore, interviewing via Skype was not a concern, especially for those who spend large portion of their lives on the basis of "virtual intimacies". However, there were some technical problems occurred during the interviews. Sometimes there were unexpected communication cuts handled with the repetition of questions and answers by both parties and blurred sentences were backed up in second follow-up sessions. Moreover, Markham's (1998) claim that online interviews cannot capture body language or other forms of non-verbal data from both interviewer and interviewee, to some extent, this was also a challenge. For instance, picking up puzzlement, anxiety, and stress was not completely observed by visual cues, but their tones on auditory cues such as breathing, stressing on words and sighs were observed. It is essential to add that differentiating from counterparts' point of having difficulty in establishment of rapport and engagement with interviewees, there was no difference found between virtual and face-to-face based interviews on the matters of authenticity and honesty (Curasi, 2001).

The emergent nature of qualitative research is accepted with its own challenges because guaranteeing the direction of data collection methods while conducting research is not possible. Assumingly challenges were handled smoothly by ethical guidelines and they

did not cause inefficiency in collected data. On the other hand, these unexpected challenges flourished qualitative study by creating different angles in order to have in-depth analysis.



## 5. RESULTS

This part of the thesis demonstrates findings depending on the given answers by five mixed-nationality couples and seven both mixed-nationality and transnational couples based on the questions of interview guide. In the analysis, the questions were evaluated by means of five main themes, including social characterization of interviewees, background of the couple's life, couple's daily life, sociabilities -divided into two categories of family relations, and socialization-, and followed by parenting.

### 5.1. Social characterization of the interviewees

The social characteristics of the interviewees were quite particular due to the fact that they were selected according to fieldwork criteria mentioned in methodology (see in page 22). In some cases, even if interviewees were living in other places one of their headquarters is based on a territory reference of either in Istanbul or Luanda. The ten of the interviews were done with one of the couple and the other two were done by a couple interview, meaning 14 interviewees including 9 females and 5 males. As collection of articles noted, the flows of international migration become more feminized (Cuban, 2010; Ho, 2006; Piper, 2008). This fieldwork also proved with more females than males because eight females moved to other countries as "trailing spouses", in other words wives are expected to follow their husbands' choices and plans due to the husbands' job mobility (Joseph & Lundström, 2013: 1).

#### *General socio-demographics*

The key interviewees have highly varied profiles in terms of their age, origin, professional occupation, current residence, current relationship status, educational level and number of children they have (see Table.1 in page 30). The ages of interviewees ranged from 24 to 52, mostly on their thirties (9 individuals: three males and six females), followed by those under thirty (two females), and those over forty (3 cases: one female and two males). The respondents' countries can be classified in three different groups. Macedonia, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Ukraine specify European countries; Angola an African country; and Kyrgyzstan and Vietnam two Asian countries. The interviewees are from different countries including Angola (1 female, 35 years old), Kyrgyzstan (1 female, 34), Macedonia (1 female, 33), Ukraine (1 female, 36), Vietnam (1 female, 36), the Netherlands (1 male, 52), Portugal (1 male, 33), Spain (1 male, 34), and Turkey (4 females from 24, 25, 39, 51; 2 males 35 and 52). Understandably, the participants' familial and cultural norms are quite differential due to their varied origins.

The interviewees have different academic histories and social backgrounds. In terms of their attended education levels, most of them went to tertiary education (10 individuals), from whom 3 dropped out in their 2<sup>nd</sup> year before graduating, six graduated and one was currently studying in a PhD program. This means that only four interviewees did not have attended tertiary education, as two went to high school, one from middle school and one from primary school. There are no specific nationality and gender trends in terms of their attended education, and though we may say that younger are in general more educated, the 51 year old Turkish female is one of the six graduated interviewees. In accordance with their present situation in the labour market, 6 of the interviewees were working in the course of the interview, 2 were retired, 1 was studying, and 5 were staying at home. For those who were working we found significant diversity in terms of their professional occupations: one as a business controller, one as a computer engineer, two as non-qualified workers in packaging, and two as textile distributors. For those retired, both were Turkish, a 51 year old female who formerly worked for Coca-Cola as a facility and procurement manager and a 52 years old male who was in charge of his own textile company before his bankruptcy. These two cases are overlapping situations of interviewees who were retired but choose to keep working - the female working as a travel writer and the male works as a store manager. For the ones staying at home, they were all females except for one case. Two females who had attend university but dropped out and had no previous work experience - a 24 years old Turkish and 36 years old Ukrainian-, and other three with previous working experiences - a 35 years old Angolan female who had worked before as a tender manager in an oil company; a 34 years old Kyrgyzstani female who previously worked in domestic businesses such as housekeeping, children and elderly care; and lastly a 35 years old Turkish male who worked at Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) as a journalist. For the one still studying PhD in History, there was no given information about his previous working experience.

#### *Couples' socio-economic status and previous migration histories*

The following paragraph will demonstrate how the couples are matching in terms of both partners' educational level, current situation in the labour market and their professional occupations, shedding a light on identifying whether the couples are homogeneous or mixed level in terms of socio-economic status. The analysis of couple's socio-economic status will be analysed in order to picture how the different breadwinning models have an influence on reshaping family functions, gender relations and roles in both domestic and outside spheres. We found three different types of couples' socio-economic status displayed.

Table 1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

| ID | Gender  | Place of birth and Nationality by birth | Acquired citizenship(s) | Professional Occupation   | Current residence                            | Current Relationship Status | Educational level | Age | Number of children                           |
|----|---------|---|-------------------------|---------------------------|--|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----|--|
| 1  | Female* | Turkey                                  |                         | Computer engineer         | Luanda/                                      | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 25  | 1 (5 months old)                             |
|    | Male    | Angola                                  |                         | Petroleum engineer        | Angola                                       |                             | Undergraduate     | 29  |  |
| 2  | Female* | Turkey                                  |                         | Stay at home              | Luanda/                                      | Married                     | High school       | 24  | 1 (4 years old)                              |
|    | Male    | Jordan                                  |                         | Civil engineer            | Angola                                       |                             | Undergraduate     | 30  |  |
| 3  | Female  | Angola                                  | Portuguese              | Assistant accompany man   | Lisbon/<br>Portugal,<br>Luanda/<br>Angola    | Cohabiting                  | Postgraduate      | 27  |  |
|    | Male*   | Spain                                   |                         | PhD student               |  |                             | PhD(continue)     | 34  |  |
| 4  | Female* | Angola                                  |                         | Stay at home              | Muret/<br>France,<br>Luanda/<br>Angola       | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 35  | 1 (6 months old)                             |
|    | Male    | France                                  |                         | Electrical engineer       |  |                             | Postgraduate      | 31  |  |
| 5  | Female  | Angola                                  | Portuguese              | Assistant accompany man   | Lisbon/<br>Portugal,<br>Luanda/<br>Angola    | Cohabiting                  | Postgraduate      | 28  |  |
|    | Male*   | Portugal                                |                         | Business controller       |  |                             | Undergraduate     | 33  |  |
| 6  | Female* | Kyrgyzstan                              |                         | Stay at home              | Istanbul/<br>Turkey                          | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 34  | 1 (5 months old)                             |
|    | Male    | Turkey                                  |                         | Boat builder              |  |                             | High school       | 53  |  |
| 7  | Female* | Turkey                                  | French                  | Retired and Travel writer | Dubai/<br>UAE,<br>Istanbul/<br>Turkey        | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 51  | →3 (27, 31, 32 years old)                    |
|    | Male    | France                                  |                         | Field service engineer    |  |                             | Undergraduate     | 58  |  |
| 8  | Female* | Ukraine                                 |                         | Stay at home              | Istanbul/<br>Turkey                          | Married                     | High school       | 36  | 2 (5, 14 years old)                          |
|    | Male    | Turkey                                  |                         | Generator repairer        |  |                             | Primary school    | 41  |  |
| 9  | Female* | Vietnam                                 |                         | Part-time in packaging    | Istanbul/<br>Turkey                          | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 36  | →2 (6, 7 years old)<br>→2 (11, 12 years old) |
|    | Male*   | Turkey                                  |                         | Retired and Store Manager |  |                             | Primary school    | 52  |  |
| 10 | Female* | Macedonia                               | Turkish<br>Turkish      | Part-time in packaging    | Istanbul/<br>Turkey                          | Married                     | Middle school     | 33  | 1 (12 years old)                             |
|    | Male    | Kosovo                                  |                         | Electrician               |  |                             | High school       | 41  |  |
| 11 | Female* | Turkey                                  |                         | Textile distributors      | Istanbul/<br>Turkey                          | Married                     | High school       | 39  | 1 (3 years old)<br>→3 (18, 22, 24 years old) |
|    | Male*   | The Netherlands                         |                         | (both)                    |  |                             | High school       | 52  |  |
| 12 | Female  | Brazil                                  |                         | Stay at home              | São Paulo/<br>Brazil,<br>Istanbul/<br>Turkey | Married                     | Undergraduate     | 35  | 1 (2 years old)                              |
|    | Male*   | Turkey                                  |                         | (both)                    |  |                             | High school       | 35  |  |

(\* ) will specify the interviewed ones (either pairs or per person); (→) will specify their own children from their previous marriage(s)

The first type is composed by 1 mixed couple and 5 both mixed and transnational couples, being 4 couples highly educated and professionally qualified and two couples middle qualified, but all 6 couples both individuals are the main breadwinners and they all had previous migration experiences for travelling, living, working, studying and family purposes. For those highly educated and professionally qualified, Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) mixed and transnational couple, both have a bachelor degree and work as computer and petroleum engineers and are the household breadwinners. Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) mixed and transnational couple, both have higher level of education and professionally qualified; sequentially she has a postgraduate degree and working as an assistant accompany man and he is studying in his on-going doctorate program (still there is no clear information obtained whether he receives scholarship from his PhD program). Though they are professionally qualified, seemingly the female tends to earn more since she works in overseas job. Likewise, Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) mixed and transnational couple, have both higher education and professional qualifications, in sequence she has a postgraduate degree and works as an assistant accompany man and he has a university degree and works as a business controller. Both are breadwinners but she is prone to earn more than him because of working in an overseas job. Turkish-French (*ID-7*) mixed and transnational couple, who both have university degrees are the household breadwinners, she works as travel writer and he works as field service engineer. To illustrate those middle qualified, Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*) mixed couple, who both have more or less equity in terms of their education and economic contributions to their households when they were residing in Istanbul, yet; since they recently moved to Brazil, they do not work now so they are both staying at home. Similarly, Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) mixed and transnational couple, who both have a high school degree, work as partners in their own company as textile distributors, meaning they have same economic resource contribution to the household.

In the second type, there are 3 mixed couples that females are more educated than males, but males are more qualified in current professional position being the main breadwinners. Obtained information revealed that only one individual had earlier migration experience for travelling, working and living experience before marriage. For example, Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple; she has a university degree in Economics in her country of origin, used to work in domestic business in different provinces of Turkey before she got married, but now stays at home. Her husband has a high school degree and works as a boat builder, hence; he is the main person who supports family financially. Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*) couple; she attended university but did not finish her degree in Computer Engineering and

now stays at home. Her husband has primary education and works as generator repairer and hence he is the main breadwinner of the household. Also, Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple; she has a university degree in Pharmacy in her country of origin, and he has primary education. They both work in the same store, she works part-time in a non-qualified job and he is a store manager. Though, she might contribute to the household, still he is the primary breadwinner.

The last third type includes 1 mixed and 2 both mixed and transnational couples, whom males are more educated than females, as well as more qualified in their current profession. The mixed couple has no earlier migration experience before their marriage, whereas both two mixed and transnational couples had earlier migration experiences for studying, working, travelling and living purposes. As the illustrations, Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) mixed couple, she has a middle school degree and works part-time in a non-qualified job, her husband has a high school degree and he is an electrician; she might have some contribution to household income, but still he is the main breadwinner. Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) mixed and transnational couple, she attended university but did not finish her degree in Mathematics, and he has a university degree in Civil Engineering and now works as a civil engineer. Her husband is the main breadwinner in the households. Last but not least, Angolan-French (*ID-4*) mixed and transnational couple, she has a university degree in Business Management, Communication and Tourism but now stays at home, and he has a postgraduate degree in Energy and Power Engineering and is working as electrical engineer. He is more qualified in current profession and the main breadwinner.

In addition, we should consider that the above-mentioned transnational and mixed-nationality couples have, though, significant social class distinctions. In the present study, transnational couples have tertiary-level education and higher professional attainments that make them fall into the category of “skilled” (King et al., 2010: 86) and “elite or cosmopolitan transnationals” (Bryceson & Vuorela, 2002: 11), who are Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*), Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*), Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) and Turkish-French (*ID-7*) couples. Even Nesteruk and Marks (2009) stated that the emotional burden of elite transnationals was taken for granted due to their higher privileged condition. Their higher educational attainments and the acknowledgement of foreign languages enables them to study abroad as well as work in the higher levels of transnational companies, and this surely has a great impact on their socio-economic status. The higher socio-economic status transnationals have, the more privileges they will have in terms of mobility with easier access to border crossing, resources, improvement of social capital and also their human interaction (Fligstein, 2008).

Still, for some transnational couples and families, the case might be reversed by experiencing inequality in having access to mobility, resources and a variety of social capital. For instance, especially Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*), Angolan-French (*ID-4*) and Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) couples' lifestyles are affected by social contexts in the host country.

The experiences of migrants and their availability to mobilize and access the resources change noticeably relying on class backgrounds and opportunities. On the account of mixed-nationality couples, obtained results maintained that mixed-nationality couples have a low level of socio-economic status in comparison with transnational couples. In the cases of Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*), Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*), Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*), Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) and Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*) couples, their lower level of economic condition triggers some difficulties and inequalities in their social, professional as well as familial contexts. Research by Costa, Machado and Almeida (2009) argued that structural inequalities are increased by low level of social and economic contexts attributed to class location structures (economic processes by employment opportunities) and classes of agents (socialization processes by acquiring a great knowledge of formal education based on higher qualifications, skills, competences and international standards of certification). Consequently, these inequalities have an impact on prospective individual opportunities and potential social development. Due to their economic difficulty, particular mixed-nationality couples do not move freely because they may not be able to afford transportation tickets as often as transnationals do, this may create an emotional burden in all parties of couples and their families back to home countries.

The majority of the interviewees refereed migration experiences beyond their current conjugal situation, as they had migrated before meeting their current partners (10 individuals). This was mostly for studying reasons (5 cases, all currently under 36 years old with no gender differences), four for working and travelling reasons (no gender and ages differences), and one for family reasons (because her family was used to live abroad). Only in 4 cases they probably did not migrate before their current conjugal situation, which remains their main reason for migration experiences in their lives, though the displayed information was not clear enough considering this issue.

### *Individuals' language skills*

The participants have reflected a variety of linguistic skills. Observing language contact was a plus to analyse dynamics between spouses and their children. In terms of language acquisition skills, nine of the individuals have trilingual skills and rest of them bilingual skills (e.g. the

spoken languages were Arabic, Creole -Cape Verdean Creole-, Dutch, English, French, German, Kyrgyz, Macedonian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Turkish, and Vietnamese). Before meeting with their current spouses, the participants have acquired other foreign language skills due to transnational reasons of studying and working abroad and also personal preferences. In the current time, while some of them were willing to learn their spouses' mother tongues in order to interact with their family-in-laws and to integrate better into host society, others were not. However, when foreign spouses are not capable of speaking the host language or when they are lacking educational and professional qualifications, especially foreign wives become dependent on their husbands' income. This situation makes them prone to have limited socialization areas. The chain of lack of language ability and social exclusion cause lower improvement in social capital of migrants and lower achievement of integration into the society. That is to say, this affects their economic earning and participation in social life in terms of employability and mobility.

#### *Current residence*

Twelve couples have different patterns for their current residence, for instance; two couples chose to live between both individuals' country of origin (Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) and Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*)); seven couples decided to live in one of the partners' countries of origin, meaning five females (Turkish (*ID-1*), Angolan (*ID-4*), Kyrgyzstani (*ID-6*), Ukrainian (*ID-8*), Vietnamese (*ID-9*)), and two males (Dutch (*ID-11*) and Turkish (*ID-12*)); differently, two couples moved to a third country of neither their nor their partners' country of origin (2 females: Turkish (*ID-2*) and Turkish (*ID-7*)); and last but not the least; one couple is living between a third county and one of the partner's country of origin (Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*)).

In sum, currently all interviewees were sharing their household with their current partner, and here the sample should be divided between mixed-nationality and both mixed-nationality and transnational couples, though we found no clear-cut variety. For 5 mixed-nationality couples living in Istanbul, they reside in one household for all the year and just one couple moved recently to São Paulo, Brazil. For 7 of those who are both mixed-nationality and transnational couples, 5 of them residing in Luanda and 2 of them in Istanbul as reference territories for their households. Five of these couples have at least two households and two only have one household, they are all separated between 3 to 6 months in average in the same year. This should add clear information on the complexity in terms of identifying individuals' country of current residence, due to their mobility situation on the basis of their different pull

factors of migration to the country of destination: studying, working or following their partners as a 'trailing spouse' and family of origin.

## **5.2. Mixed-nationality couples and transnational couples**

“In an age of migration flows there are more and more people whose family and life stories encompass so many different origins and roots that the idea of an ‘actual’ origin becomes a fiction” (Battaglia 2000; cited in Beck-Gernsheim, 2007: 275). All of the key interviewees have a mixed or bi-national relationship meaning that they are belonged to different national groups following social and cultural intermixing (Gaspar, 2012). There are some interviewees who have both mixed and transnational characteristics in their relationships, namely, these couples have different national backgrounds meanwhile have specific situation of higher mobility that makes couples float between two or more countries (Reynolds, 2008). In the first place, their paramount pull factor of migration motives for crossing national boundaries is related to the sentimental motives that are followed by working and studying opportunities.

### **5.2.1. Background of the couple's life**

This section will include the information about background of couples' lives while highlighting the points of how their romantic relationship started, which phases they have passed to become a couple, and how they ended up living overseas marriages/relationships.

*The transition patterns into conjugality and/or cohabitation: “just happened naturally”*

The length of their relationships varied between 3 to 15 years. These years specify the combination of their meeting, dating and marriage or cohabiting periods. Two couples are not married, currently cohabitated, are Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) and Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couples. Six married couples had cohabitated during some years before their marriages. They were Angolan-French (*ID-4*), Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*), Turkish-French (*ID-7*), Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*), Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*), and Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*). Four married couples did not cohabit before getting married - Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*), Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*), Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) and Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*).

Considering family ecological perspective when understanding the evolution of family configurations and functioning, the external environments of cultural, traditional and religious norms is highly important to analyse why some couples did not choose to cohabit before marriage, meaning that cohabitation before marriage was not necessarily an easy option in terms of expected social norms. For instance, even though the Angolan-French (*ID-4*) couple



cohabited, their cohabiting decision was not welcomed by her family as they have religious and traditional perspectives. In relation to this, a 35 years old Angolan female explained this situation as follows: *“In Africa, from the very religious family’s perspective it is not very well that when a lady goes to live with the guy without being married. Living together without marriage is a no no situation...”* Differently, in the case of Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple, her husband’s family (from Angola) proposed them to cohabit before marriage because of their lack of economic condition to do a wedding ceremony, but her parents from Turkey strongly denied on account of the fact that cohabitating was not found suitable in Turkish society in terms of cultural, societal as well as religious norms. These cases might reveal a contrast between Angolan families. Contrarily, Turkish family norms seemed to be more homogenous in this issue, for instance; the notion of cohabitation was not even mentioned in the case of Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple because of cultural, societal and religious motifs and also similar reasons applied to the Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couple. Lastly, it is sensible that this case was also similar to Vietnamese society because Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple had a traditional Vietnamese wedding ceremony in Vietnam before they got officially married in Turkey. In this way, they were announced as a soon-to-be couple in order to avoid possible moral judgments within her community.

*Meeting with their current partners: “I guess we had a magic powder”*

In order to know the changing dynamics of meeting places and their impacts on the patterns of partner choice, the couples were asked ‘how did they meet?’ The couples met with their current partners through their own social networks. Here we should distinguish family, friends, or colleagues while working or studying, as well as in terms of social, cultural or other events through own social networks or in cyberspace and social networks on the Internet. This section will also reflect upon how these social networks were essential mediators to merge couples resulting in lightening their possible migration decisions while creating bonds with a sense of shared trust, understanding and empathy.

For illustrating their social networks, those meeting through family networks can be exemplified as the “matchmaking via transnational family networks” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014: 88), for instance Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couple met through her transnational relatives residing in Istanbul. Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*), Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*) and Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) couples met through their friends in Istanbul. However, Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*) couple met while they were working as colleagues in the same restaurant in Canada. The latter case matches with the study of McLeod and Burrows (2014)

which states that many young adults build emotional intimate attachments in the same way before returning their home. The other four couples met with their partners in a social event, for example; Angolan-French (*ID-4*) couple was introduced by one of her friends in a party in Luanda, whereas Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple met in a party in Lisbon without a common network. Moreover, Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) and Turkish-French (*ID-7*) couples started their romantic relationships by the harmony and charm of salsa dance while they were dance partners. Similar to meeting through social events, Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple met with each other in one of the cultural events of Food Festival organized in their university, introduced by one of their studying colleagues. In a different way, the globalisation of marriage fields reflected that the Internet is a great facilitator for decoupling interpersonal relationships besides face-to-face interaction (Niedomysl, Osth, & van Ham, 2010). For instance, Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple met in an unspecified social media in Internet, while Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple met in one of the Facebook groups in Internet.

Noteworthy, the previous studies evidenced that getting to know each other abroad in the educational mobility experience in a third country was quite common (King, 2002) and finding a foreign partner was a consequence of their decision to be mobile at the time which increases possibilities to enter into the matrimonial market (Gaspar, 2009). The international mobility and gathering environments, for some cases in present sample, expectedly studying and working abroad in multinational and multicultural environment, and attending social and cultural events such as Food Festival and a salsa class, increased their chance to meet with their foreign partners. However, none of these couples have a random matching selection, on the contrary, during the interviews they highly valued on a personal attraction with common values, preferences and interests that made them fall in love when these special conditions were met.

*How they decided to start living together: “we thought we would be more powerful if we live side by side”*

From then on having a crush on their current partners, the probability of living abroad and/or settling down in another country had been accepted whether it was desired or not. Here I will focus now on the experiences of particular couples about their cross-border and long-distance relationships, ‘how the couples decided to start living together’ and how their decisions differentiate on the basis of emotional, economical, material and subjective reasons. Still, having a serious commitment to their partner was more important than other practical reasons.

For the couples of Turkish-Jordanian (ID-2) and Vietnamese-Turkish (ID-9) who united through the Internet, Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) who were matched by one of her transnational relatives, and Turkish-French (ID-7) who met through a salsa class, were inspired by their similarities and the feeling of sharing and ‘togetherness’. Thus, they made a decision to get married and start living together. In a different way, some couples were flexible to find the best way to satisfy both parties in the decision to start living together in the conditions of their subjective reasons, aiming to facilitate their lives and conditions on that moment. This was the case concerning the decision of Angolan-Spanish (ID-3) and Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couples, sparked by their rental house condition. The decision of Angolan-Portuguese (ID-5) couple was related to having their own privacy and organization in their own settlement; the decision of Angolan-French (ID-4) couple was related to the avoidance of traffic jams occurring in the early mornings while going to work; and Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple decided to settle down and live together for a longer period because he was frequently going back and forth between Turkey and the Netherlands.

Besides the desire of sharing the same household and having subjective reasons, some couples emphasized their decisions more based on the combination of economic and emotional reasons. After a long-distance love affair, those reasons were clearly mentioned by a 25 years old Turkish female: *“Since the long-distance is quite difficult, going back and forth has begun to disturb us and we made such a decision because we believed that this long-distance breaks our link and weakens the bond between us... tickets are really expensive and also to see each other once a year was not enough for us, even technology was not enough. Living together is a different feeling and we thought that we would be more powerful if we live side by side.”* Seemingly, the decision of Ukrainian-Turkish (ID-8) couple was depended on their first sight love. Ukrainian female said in Russian *“Пришёл увидел победил”* which means one of the famous quote of ‘I came; I saw; I conquered’ said by Julius Caesar after a victorious battle. It is sensed that she is happy to win their romance battle and she is proud of taking a decision to start living together with her husband. On the other hand, not all couples’ love stories have started with good circumstances. For instance, when Kyrgyzstani female came back to Turkey, she learned that her current husband cohabitated with a Russian female who died due to cancer. This traumatic event paved the floor for Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (ID-6) couple to build mutual sharing, understanding, and support, and eventually triggered their decision to be together. The following section will reveal how familial affiliations also play an important role in their union formation.

*Family approval about their union: “if you can share with us, we are going to be really happy”*

Since all of their romantic relationships are with international partners, it is necessary to be aware of personal and country of origins' differences such as cultural, societal and familial norms. Haandrikman's study (2013) on bi-national marriages found that these norms from the direct surroundings and their approval influence partner choice in the process of mating-selection, on the contrary, family involvement might decrease with increased level of individualism and autonomy (Van de Putte, 2003; as cited in Haandrikman, 2013). For instance, the possibility of constant movement between host and destination countries or third countries may change their emigration process from individual movement into a familial movement while welcoming opinions from family network (Shaw, 2001) when deciding on a new project of union formation. Though, in many cases of the particular study, the couples have their saying in the choice of selecting their partners and deciding about their relationship. Still, harmony between different opinions is not always the case. Meaning, the reactions of the couples' families distinguish in the scale of both of their families' approval, neutral stance, tension by one of the couple's family and tension by both families.

There are 5 couples whose unions were accepted smoothly by their families. For example, the couples of Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) and Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) gave high value in their parents' opinion in the beginning phase of their marriages due to being in their younger ages of 20s. Since they are young and inexperienced couples, their families took an initiative to inform them about married life while supporting their union and marriage emotionally. The latter couple's family approval made a distinction with their appliance to religious prayers in order to receive blessing by Allah in accordance to their Islamic religious faith. Additionally, the other families of the couples of Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*), Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) and Macedonian-Turkish (*ID-10*) accepted their union smoothly. The families of the couples of Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*), Turkish-French (*ID-7*) and Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) stayed on the side-lines about their union or their relationship. Their neutral stance might be related to the couple's characteristics such as their ages, previous marriage experiences as well as life experiences. Still the last couple differed in the matter of receiving approval, meaning for in Dutch culture there is no need to ask to family, but rather in Turkish culture it is necessary (by their own saying).

Three couples had experienced tension from their partner's family due to a variety of reasons. In the cases of Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple, his family accepted smoothly, but her

family had some concerns about their union; Ukrainian-Turkish (ID-8) couple, her family accepted without any problem, yet her father-in-law did not want the marriage because she was a foreigner and he thought she desired to get married because of his money; and the case of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple, her family had some concerns about Turkey due to unpleasant news in social media. Only Angolan-French (ID-4) couple had faced a great tension by both of their families. As mentioned earlier her family was against their cohabiting decision; and even after 8 months of cohabiting, their decision to get married was not welcomed by her family and they asked concernedly ‘Are you pregnant?’ While she took a strict stance, her statements also revealed being accepted and receiving their blessings was crucial for her: *“We decided getting married, and we gonna get married. There is no explanation, there is nothing to say, this is what we feel and we are going to do. If you can share with us, we are going to be really happy but if you cannot share with us this special moment, we gonna be really sad but our life will go on.”* The scene from her husband’s family was not that different from her family. She stated *“...his family was in France and they could not make to Angola. They don’t know our reality in Angola, they don’t know me well. They know this black girl coming to marry a white man, so all those are question marks they don’t know. And they wanted to justify what they didn’t know and they have to know...”*

In spite of all couples’ cross border, long-distance relationships, and family tensions, in general they seem to be in healthy relationships and marriages due to their serious commitment. Still, only love is not enough to keep these relationships because it may experience emotional draining and sacrifice of leaving beloved ones behind. Regardless of their type of relationships either mixed and both mixed and transnational couples, during the interviews they mentioned that their families do like the couples’ current dynamics in their marriages or relationships, and do not currently hold any negative attitude anymore. Still, they are very thoughtful about their long-distance relationship because in one side it hardens to create a common life and in the other side, this type of relationships creates distance between them and their offspring. Ten of the interviewees reflected that their families are indeed not satisfied with the distance, for instance; Kyrgyzstani female’s happy mood left its space to sadness when she reminisced on a past experience with her mother. She continued in tears *“...My mother took one month off from her work due to my delivery. I always remember her in the morning while having breakfast, we talked about everything for a month, we ate and we drank. Sometimes I think if I would be near to my mother, I would take my daughter once a month or once every two weeks to my mother if I would be living in Kyrgyzstan. However, now I can only speak on the phone, now sometimes it hurts me inside and my soul is aching.*

*The distance is so bad. I went to airport with my mother and I sent her. Then when I got home, the house was empty. I came with my daughter, my mum was not there and my daughter was only a 12-day-old-baby.”*

### **5.2.2. Couple’s daily life**

This section will provide snapshots about the twelve couples’ daily life in order to answer the questions of ‘how do couples cope with enforced separation?’, ‘what sort of life they lead?’ and ‘what binds them together?’ In order to understand the globalized perspectives of love, closeness, familial relationships and household, it is necessary to remind the types of couples and their relationships pointed in the present study: nearby love (mixed couples) and distant love (mixed and transnational couples) with foreign partners. This section also will include some clarifications how these two types of couples’ lives distinguish in terms of challenges, forms of development, constraints and resistances when they “have their feet in two societies” (Glick Schiller, Basch, & Blanc-Szanton, 1992: 5). Despite the inequality of the couple’s colour of skin, religion, country of origin, foreign-sounding names and faces and even geographical distances, separating lovers by countries and continents, love still finds its way to sprout new wings.

*The possible elements to maintain a relationship or marriage: “having a triangle combination of mutual respect, acceptance and love”*

Being a couple is no longer termed as a clear-cut definition. In contemporary times, the intimate love has a transition from singularity to diversity of the world, from proximate to distant love giving rise to geographical and cultural variation in the horizon of globalized love (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). This section will show the features of mixed-nationality (nearby love) and both mixed-nationality and transnational (distant love), forms of life and love that bind them together.

When the couples were questioned ‘what makes them to be a couple’, they also synthesised in their answers of ‘how to be good wife/husband’. In the study of Wissen and Heering (2013) about the trends and patterns in Euro-marriages reflected that accepting the other spouse is possible through one of the most tangible expressions: love. The feeling of love is accompanied by other elements in the present study. The interviewees commonly highlighted the importance of having a triangle combination of ‘mutual respect, acceptance and love’ found as fundamental factors to lead a relationship or marriage, meaning that there was no significant differences perceived here. The indication by 33-year-old Portuguese male

revealed this *“I don’t think there is a secret form... You have to love each other; you have to love the mind, body and soul of the person because if you lack one of these parts, it is not a healthy relationship... You have to have tolerance to the other person; you have to accept the worst part of the other person. Then you have to try to improve yourself and the other person by negotiation process, you have to accept each other.”* Most of the interviewees also mentioned about the significance of ‘having a good communication’ between partners so that they can feel free to talk and share their ideas comfortably. This is highly exemplified in a 33 year old Macedonian female’s following indications: *“My husband is very compassionate; even I found the longing for a father and the need of father protection with him. We have same thoughts, we talk and we share same ideas...”* Besides ‘having a good communication’, the factor of ‘trust’ was also emphasized. Similarly, in the recent research by King-O’Riain many participants declared “trust was a test of love” and also “was a signal” to maintain especially over distance relationships (2016: 11). Illustrated by a 35 years old Angolan female along these lines *“... We are human beings and everything and nothing can happen, just have to trust other person and accept as truth whatever the person is telling you because there is nothing that we can do besides accepting as a truth... When the person goes away, there are thousand and thousand pressures, and asking ‘Is he faithful?’ ‘Is he really doing whatever he is saying?’ ... We thought to maximize good times by talking nicely to each other rather than focusing on negative thoughts, we are still doing it and we communicate by truths.”*

Above and beyond these metaphors to sustain a successful relationship, two interviewees also expressed the necessity of having satisfactory intimacy in their romantic relationship; this is equivalent with Russell’s study (2002) stating that durable relationships exist with the mutual satisfaction between couple specifically the mutual sexual satisfaction. To illustrate, during the interview of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Dutch male stated *“For me most important, we respect each other, we can talk together, and we have good sex together is also important [wife was laughing]. Yeah, you can laugh about it but if you don’t have good physical contact with your man, forget about it. I think if you have these, you will have a good marriage.”* In addition to Dutch male’s opinion, a 34 years old Kyrgyzstani female also supported to have harmony in all the parts of relationship including even physical contact, she added as follows: *“Loving the sea, loving the water, having harmony in food, culture, everything, we have harmony in the romantic and in bed relationship, we are compatible with each other”*. What differs than other cases that two Turkish female interviewees mentioned about sharing same expectations with two different key factors. By the case of Turkish-Angolan (ID-1), she raised awareness to the importance of having shared

responsibility and gender equality both in household and child raising activities. For Turkish-Jordanian (ID-2) couple, she mentioned about having same expectations and humanitarian personality.

While maintaining their relationships, these aforementioned elements are preserved with communication. The following section will remark possible changes in communication over time and space in order to analyse how their relationships are shaped through mobilized and virtualized forms.

*The changes in communication over time and space: “day by day communication gets easier”*

Traditional family dynamics were narrowed in living together in same house, a face-to-face communication and direct interaction (Burgess & Locke, 1945), nevertheless; due to the impact of globalization, higher mobility and new technologies resulted in possible changes in family dynamics (Scanzoni & Marsiglio, 1993; cited in Moore & Asay, 2013).

There are varied forms of communication or exchange information has reformed over time and contexts as referred by interaction-constructionist perspective, and it was definitely observed in the life of interviewees in the current study. For instance, for two cases we may observe a layer of communication tools. This is the case of Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) couple, for whom it was hard and expensive to communicate via phone in earlier times but now the advanced Internet facilitated their daily basis communication when they are apart; or for Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple, whom the 35-year-old Turkish male told *“To be away from beloved ones is part of life for human beings. I have experienced since my childhood times because my father was a captain and I grew up seeing my father once in 8-months or sometimes once a year. In my childhood, we didn’t have a phone in our house. If my father’s ship was passing from the Bosphorus Bridge in those 8 months, he used to call by radiotelephone to the phone in another neighbourhood in order to let us know that he would be passing by. After setting a time, we would get ready by wearing our darkest t-shirts and we would go to the middle of the bridge where he would pass. While his ship was passing by we were waving our hands, this was our communication. After some time, technology developed and we had a phone in our house and he had a phone in his ship where he was working, so he started calling us frequently. Yes, day by day communication gets easier and though video-based communication makes people more visible, still missing and longing always stay inside us.”* Also he added that, today *“Earlier times, we used to talk in Skype but nowadays we talk through WhatsApp and FaceTime. We used to update each other with daily messages and in two days we used to talk via webcams but this changed quite a lot after our child was born.*



*Now we talk always by webcams and we share video recordings.*” This well-illustrated how advanced technology changed in accordance with time and also how people’s preferences change in accordance with circumstances, and it is indeed observed in particular cases.

As already mentioned, mixed couples fall apart from their spouses and children due to family visits, while differently; both mixed and transnational couples fall apart from their spouses/partners because visiting their families but also for studying and working. They have all referred the factor of ‘having a good communication’ has a really crucial role in maintaining their relationship when they are separated from each other. For the reason that it is a really necessary element to update each other on a daily basis while sharing emotions, needs, and desires. Indeed, all the couples while covering daily responsibilities in their agendas, they also check in with their partner’s daily activities and feelings. What I observed during the interviews was that it does not matter if they apply this exercise by face-to-face conversation, writing notes or sending e-mail or text, what matters they exercise or not even near or far from each other. In spite of geographical distance, the couples use recent virtual communication tools such as video messages, telephone calls, and emails in order “*not to grow apart*” is well-mentioned by a 33-year-old Portuguese male interviewee. In this way, they will keep maintaining their love, passion, affection and memories alive with the help of their own versions of transnational intimacy meanwhile they may avoid being ‘out of sight, out of mind’.

Indeed, since virtual communication promoted relationships on a daily basis, as seen in previous studies, like the case of many interviewees in Wilding’s study vocalized the virtual communication as a “*miracle*” (2006: 138) because it enabled an increase in the levels of connectedness and closeness with their beloved ones overseas. Similarly, the expressions of cyberia and cyberculture by Escobar (1994) invoked the new contexts and reformations in which people communicate. He also added that since new technologies are installed in automobiles, many distance-relationships currently begin continuing in cyberspace, and thus minimalize the necessity for only geographical proximity and interaction. Among my interviewees, the core of maintaining spousal and familial ties across time and space were based on the recent information and communication technologies (ICTs) through phone calls, WhatsApp, Viber, Facebook, Skype, FaceTime, Tango [messaging applications with video calling] and other social networks. For those that share more or less common time zone with their spouses/partners, exchanging information was based on more varied communication toolbox. However; this was not always the case due to the specific constrains experienced. For Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple whose communication was only based on written

communication along with sending pictures, voice and video recording in WhatsApp because of the fact that the time difference between Alaska, USA and Luanda, Angola limited a more spontaneous exchange of calls.

*Emotional connectedness through virtual communication: “to keep our souls together while our bodies fall apart from each other”*

As Skrbiš (2008: 237) added that globalized lives are built upon an emotional connection that “allows the generation and maintenance of kin connection to occur across space and time”. This emotional work is really vital to maintain when the relationships are settled or are fall apart at distance. Along lines will reveal how ICTs were found as a beneficial tool to sustain their long-distance relationship because social networks facilitate day-to-day communication among partners, a 24-year-old Turkish female told “...*contemporary technology: Skype and WhatsApp, they do not really make us very far away. They help us to keep our souls together while our bodies fall apart from each other. Thanks to the modern technology, we are always together...*”, and a 34 years old Spanish male mentioned as follows: “*We maintain our relationship by speaking to each other every day on the phone and on the social networks. Without them the communication would be much more limited and the communication is the main point on this type of relationship.*”

Even though virtual communication results in “death of distance” (Cairncross, 1997), of course virtual communication or “virtual intimacies” as called by Wilding (2006: 126) cannot be replaceable with face-to-face interaction and physical presence near their beloved ones. The reason is well-explained by a 33 years old Portuguese male, “*Face-to-face communication is a lot more quality than virtual communication... because ... a lot of our communication is not verbal, we have a lot of physical communication and even effect of touching to someone brings a lot of quality to the relation so I think that virtual relations are possible solution that we can have in distance relationship ...*” This illustrates the significance of conveying thoughts in verbal and non-verbal contexts while valuing the power of bodily contact in the relationship.

The interviews revealed that mixed couples tended to use new information and communication technologies (ICTs) less frequent than both mixed and transnational couples. The reasons of less frequent usage were mentioned by mixed couples that once they are surrounded with families and relatives back home or when they are busy with daily responsibilities, domestic activities and/or work, they hardly find time to communicate frequently with their partners. On the other hand, the mixed and transnational couples prefer

to communicate more often in order to maintain their relationship since they are far away from each other for a longer period. Regarding the types of ICTs, regardless of their age, gender, educational level and professional qualification, nationality and socio-economic-status, there was no specific difference found among those groups.

Irrespective of having face-to-face or virtual based communication is found highly crucial to maintain relationships. The following section will display how these forms of communication have a role in disguising the patterns of their relationships in daily basis.

*Daily life when being apart from partner: “we have to realize our relationship was built like that since beginning, we always knew there was a period we were separate by country”*

The interviewees described their daily life quite differently when they are apart from their partners. Here, it is necessary to analyse couples in their categorisations of being mixed couples or both mixed and transnational couples.

For five of mixed couples, the moment of separation from their spouses were counted as an advantage of seeing their family and enjoying their home country. For example, Kyrgyzstani, Ukraine, Vietnamese and Macedonian females visit their family and seemingly the experience of personal visit and physical presence are quite enjoyable for them. On one hand, they can be united with their biological families and be pleased with their company and support, and on the other hand; they have a chance to refill their inner self at their country of origin. A 36-year-old Ukrainian female indicated joyfully: *“It was so nice, I wake up when I want, the kids are dressed and they are fed so I’m at my mom’s house. I am doing what I want to do such as visiting my relative or going to the concert... Here, I cannot go away from Büyükçekmece and my husband does not allow me to go inside of Istanbul. Also, I cannot go to somewhere without children.”* However, those who stay may not share the same feeling because the happy emotion of heading back to home country may cause loneliness and sadness to the other left behind spouse. This was clearly sensed by the expression of a 35 year old Turkish male *“When my son was 3-months, my wife went to Brazil... On that moment, I met with my friends, whom I could not have a chance to meet because of work and marriage. I spared time to meet with them but those meetings ended up in a week. I felt a large part of my life was taken from me ... because my wife and my child were not near me... I felt incomplete but I still enjoyed the feeling of missing for my baby and my wife.”*

For those who are both mixed and transnational couples, they fall apart for mostly studying and working overseas and sometimes for visiting family reasons. In comparison to mixed couples, both mixed and transnational couples have quite longer period of separation

from each other about 3 to 6 months. To some extent, having aforementioned elements to sustain the relationship -mostly 'having a good communication' and 'trust' between spouses/partners- provides a solid base for their relationships while making a diligent effort to keep their relations alive. Since the beginning of their relationships, some of them were aware of their transnational condition and its prospective consequences, so they are well-prepared for the moments that will separate them from each other. For these couples, being apart was described as a "normal" phase in their daily lives. For instance, 35-year-old Angolan female and 52-year-old Dutch male mentioned as "*normal*" reflecting that they continue the same lifestyle in their daily agendas, and Dutch male exemplified further "... *we have to realize our relationship was built like that since beginning. So we used to it, we always knew there was a period we were separate by country...*" Although 34-year-old Spanish male mentioned "*normal*" as well, he told when they are together "*I feel relaxed although I try to do the same schedule, keep working the same way, but in some way I feel like I was in vacations.*" Probably, the notion of 'togetherness' gives him a feeling of safety and relaxation. Likewise, 33-year-old Portuguese male described not only as "*normal*", but also "*incomplete*" and "*sacrifice*" due to lack of her presence, and obviously her absence creates fluctuation in his psychological and emotional mood as follows "*It is normal that when you love someone, you want to be with that person, want to share main life ... I lack her presence so that is the sacrifice part for me. So that's why I have a very normal life but it is incomplete because in some situations her presence is very missing although I don't want to be with her every single time... Sometimes I feel alone because I miss her and I don't want to be with my family or friends, I want to be with her...*" Differently, a 51 years old Turkish female takes advantage to spare time for her as she said that "*I use this time for my personal development such as reading book, writing, doing sport and meeting with friends.*"

For the couples' daily life when they are apart from their partners, touching differences after migration by observing the dynamics of spousal and familial relationship significantly contribute on analysing how family functions, gender relations and roles have been reshaped in both domestic and outside spheres. The answers would be given through the synthesis of a structure-functional perspective and family ecological perspective to describe how external environments evolve family configurations and functioning. A 35 year old Turkish male well-demonstrated how perceived complexities in host society caused great difficulties in migrants' life stating that "*Just imagine, before coming to another country the person who is well equipped with educational and professional skills, has been able to provide his/her own livelihood with their own survival skills and life experiences.*"

*Nevertheless, one day s/he moved to a country that cannot speak the host language, cannot tell about feeling they experience, end up being unemployed due to being a language handicapped. This circle of inability and difficulties diminish the demonstration of survival talents and it may result in commencing a feeling of homesick that might comorbid with some psychological effect; for sure, later on transmitting these problems into the relationship. I did not want it to happen... In a new country, I am her friend, mother, father, family, girlfriend, and I am also the one that she will be crying, being angry, and losing her temper to, this is a very difficult situation for both of us. That is the reason why, I wanted to make such a preparation to deliver all the information about Turkish culture... in the hope of facilitating the process of adaptation.”* In accordance with Ko’s research (2012) about marital power relations and family life in transnational marriages declared that encouraging foreign wives to learn the host country’s language resulting to find outside employment is the best way to maintain power balances in cross-cultural marriages at the same time is to resist isolation and marginalization. This case clearly demonstrates how he plays a really important role as a culture broker and facilitator while helping his wife in the adaptation process.

In the case of three female individuals, Kyrgyzstani, Ukrainian and Vietnamese females are all married with Turkish males, and currently live in Istanbul at the time of the interview. It is understandable that their social and professional lives are quite limited due to facing specific complexities in the host country. For specifically the Kyrgyzstani and Vietnamese females, not having language competence in Turkish and not having equivalent university degree certifications for their specific departments (sequentially for Economics and Pharmacy) harden their opportunities for positions in the labour market and contribute to the household economy. In order to exemplify, Kyrgyzstani female unpleasantly stated *“If I were in Kyrgyzstan, I would be working in my textile job or I would be an accountant. If I would go to Russia, there were many job opportunities ... I like Turkey is very beautiful but I am really regretful because I cannot find a job. I am very sorry about the business here, I cannot work anywhere here. My daughter, my husband, my family, is the only thing that really holds me here, otherwise I have nothing here. There's nothing I can do for myself here, no space to show myself... I want to work; I don't want to stay at home.”* Another case of Ukrainian female, though she is well competent in Turkish compared to other foreign wives residing in Istanbul, her case is completely different because her husband extremely limits her decision-making especially on education and career plans. Coinciding with the source of Blood and Wolfe (1960), partners who contribute greater resources in terms of income, education, status or social capital to the marriages, they have a tendency to exert greater control and power in

relation to decision making (as cited in Ko, 2012). This is extremely obvious in the Ukrainian females following statement reflecting how she is totally under his sovereignty: *“I wish I could have completed my education and have a career but it is impossible because my husband does not allow me, I respect. If he lets me work, I can work in everywhere and I believe I can be successful. He doesn’t say ‘don’t work’; he says ‘you cannot work!’ He doesn’t say ‘don’t study’; he says ‘you cannot study!’ I still have a hope.”* She continued *“I am a believer, I have faith and I have hope. I believe I will resist to his dominance and sovereignty. My name means hope. I don’t lose my hope, I believe until the end.”* These cases also demonstrate a similarity with the result of Esteban-Guitart and Vila’s study (2015: 22) which discovered that the decision to emigrate was a life changing event that created disruption in the job and career opportunities and preferences when “origin-destination comparison” was made for migrants. In the receiving society, migrants might be stuck at the bottom. By way of illustration, one of the interviewees who was a psychologist in his home country currently became a waiter in the host society mentioning that *“...in the host society, you stop being what you were, you stop working in what you used to work in ... then what are you left with? A plan? Well, yes ... the dream that tomorrow will be better”* (ibid: 20).

In a similar way but in different countries, foreign wives also face some complexities that limit their social lives. For two individuals of Turkish females who are recently residing in Luanda, it is sensible that their daily life without their spouses is quite limited due to specific complexities of the country. For instance, in the case of Turkish-Jordanian (ID-2) couple, she does not stay alone with their daughter in Luanda because of security concerns and when she stayed her experience was not satisfying, declaring as follows: *“I’ve stayed twice, I was so bored and I felt alone. It was really hard those two days for me. I felt I could not do anything if something happened to me. I do not even know what the police number is or I do not even know how to explain in proper Portuguese. Since he’s always with us, I trust him.”* Rather than staying in Luanda, Angola, she prefers visiting her family back in Istanbul, Turkey. Her following reflection also shows a really big contrast between having a limited and boundless daily life *“... My daughter and I go out more, I take her to more social activities but this is not related to his absence. Conversely, it is related to have more opportunities and facilities in Turkey.”* Additionally, for Turkish-Angolan (ID-1) couple, when he works overseas, she stays in Luanda, Angola since she works there. However, she faces with some difficulties in her daily life while having access to the services and facilities when her husband is not around. She specified that *“I am more connected to the home since*

*there is a security problem. I cannot keep the distance quite long, for this reason, I have a social life in both shorter distance and restricted environment.”*

Still, it was observed that migration from developed to the developing country was an overwhelming experience, and in some cases how migrated individuals can be unintentionally dependant on their spouses. This may create stress and tension on foreign wives' lives. In the above-mentioned circumstances, the husbands might be seen as facilitators, providers and even “culture brokers” while helping their wives in the adaptation process since they are prone to serve and take care of all matters outside of the domestic sphere regardless of having language barriers or having difficulty in the complexities of the country (Breger, 1998).

*Daily life when being together with partner: “is quite delightful because of having common pleasures, hobbies and feeling of ‘togetherness”*

There are some differences found in mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples particularly because the latter spend more quality time with their spouses due to having more flexible time out of work.

For mixed couples, they usually spare time with each other on the weekends because their weekdays are occupied with working. When they are together, they engage in a variety of activities such as visiting their friends, going to shopping malls, watching TV, cooking, talking, having coffee, and travelling. In summer, the activities are more related to outdoor activities such as swimming, fishing and having a picnic. Two couples mentioned specifically allocating their Fridays to each other; these are Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple for pairing wine and fish, and Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*) couple for preparing snacks and watching movies together. For the latter case, the Turkish male added that “...*As a matter of fact, we are doing a lot of things such as childcare, housework and everything, but I realize just now while answering the questions... I think doing the things together is the real pleasure...*” Seemingly, the notion of ‘togetherness’ gives pleasure to him while doing responsibilities and leisure activities. Reminding that Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple does not have a common language, for this reason, they highly value spending time on studying Turkish besides other activities. Yet, the notion of ‘togetherness’ gives power to them as same as other couples so as to cope together with the challenge of their language barrier, depending on observation of their relationship it seems to work quite well so far and their love helps them to talk heart-to-heart and soul-to-soul.

For both mixed and transnational couples, a monthly gathering with their spouses counted as secluding themselves from work, responsibilities and social circles. Daily activities

change depending on their preferences, for example, they do domestic activities such as (organizing the home, cleaning, eating, cooking and watching TV), and sometimes travelling to different places, visiting friends, swimming, going to the cinema or restaurants and going to concerts and exhibitions. A 51-year-old Turkish female mentioned happily that *“my daily life is quite delightful because of having common pleasures, hobbies and feeling of ‘togetherness’”*. As mentioned earlier, a 33-year-old Portuguese male defined his daily life when he is apart from his partner as *“normal but incomplete”* whereas when they are together he told that *“Full. We do have a normal life when she is here. We do a lot of things together...”*

The notion of ‘togetherness’ is observed as an empowering tool in their relationship. Regardless of engaging different activities, all the couples seem to enjoy being surrounded by the spirit of ‘togetherness’ while spending quality time with each other when they are off or on holidays.

### **5.2.3. Sociabilities**

This section will contain information regarding the couple’s social circles of firstly family relations, and then their social networks of friendship and socialization.

#### **5.2.3.1. Family relations**

The answers for the questions of ‘whether they receive advice from their families about their relationship’, ‘in what way, their families support their relationship’, ‘whether families intervene into their relationship’, ‘whether the couples build bridges between families or separate familial relationships’, and lastly ‘how they maintain close relationships in each territory’ will be covered.

*Receiving family advices: “but at the end the final word is ours”*

When they were asked ‘whether they received advice from their families or not’, their answers can be categorized into the scale of having no intention to receive advice, receiving advice and a neutral stance taken by their families. They have changed in accordance with their family dynamics, culture and individual differences related to their personality and ages.

Due to their personal preferences, the couples of Angolan-Spanish (ID-3) and Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) did not pay attention to received advice from their families. Also the couples of Turkish-French (ID-7) and Vietnamese-Turkish (ID-9) gave no particular attention to their families opinions due to their age-related factors that make them mature



enough to decide their future plans regarding marriage (because they even had previous marriage experiences). Conversely, there are two couples in which their families opinions played an important role in pressing the start button for their relationship and even their advice was taken into consideration by the new young couples. For the instance of Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple, Turkish female shared advice given by her family *'Don't give up! Be patient, be savvy towards each other'* and she also added that her husband received advice from his mother related to some adjustment skills into marriage life such as *'being patient and being calm'*. What's more, the couple of Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*), Turkish female told that *"My husband's mother constantly tells him 'you are in the distance and she is entrusted to us, take care of her and your child, do whatever they want and respect'* and she complemented that *"My father always tells me 'be respectful to your husband and his family. Don't do anything wrong'. In order to have a healthy marriage, he always recommends 'love and respect'*. This illustrates that all parties play a central role in supporting the couples by advising them to *'love and respect each other'*.

In some cases, the families did not have a directive attitude in the decisions of the couples, but they were present when they were asked. For example, a 35 years old Angolan female told *"Even today, whenever we do something of course we will consult our family, but at the end the final word is ours"*, a 33-years-old Portuguese male said *"in difficult situations when we have arguments or when we are sad, they say 'you need to talk with her; you need to solve the issues with her'"* and a 36 years old Ukrainian female was told *'listen to the voice of your heart'*. In addition to that, for the Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple, the mother of the Kyrgyzstani female alerted her about the possible challenges of a long distance marriage rather than giving advice, and the brother of Turkish male counselled them *'Don't think about age difference, take good care of your husband and your baby, pay attention on each other, don't do harmful things, don't eat harmful things'*.

Counting on cultural considerations, different cultural norms, values and familial requirements are met through either collectivistic or individualistic perspectives (Hofstede, 2001). There were two cases that individualistic perspectives were observed while receiving advice from their families in the present study. For Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) couple was perceived that an individualistic perspective was comorbid with European cultural values in the Dutch male's saying *"it was not appropriate in the Dutch culture"* and his Turkish wife added that *"even though I did not asked, my uncle and neighbours told me that 'since this will be his second marriage and he has 3 children from his first marriage, it is going to be hard so you cannot accomplish'*. Nevertheless, she determinedly added that *"I am stubborn, I can do*

*whatever I want and I become deaf in front of these people.*” In the case of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple, after living abroad for many years, Turkish male has recognized the differences between host cultures and his Turkish culture with the realization of becoming an ‘other’ in regard to both the home and host cultures (Trueba, 2004). Turkish male declared that *“I believe the notion of ‘privacy’ was not understood clearly and families do not realize its importance. Instead of receiving advice from families, we try to teach our Turkish family the importance of having privacy by letting them know that they are welcome to our home when we are available. This was a hard step to take for us and it was also hard for my family to accept it.”* His action was also illustrated as ‘bicultural eclecticism’, meaning that individuals pick and choose the elements of two cultures that best suit their particular circumstance, preference or personality (Paulston, 1992).

Even though receiving advice from families has changed in accordance with several conditions including family dynamics, culture and individual differences related to their personality and ages, there were no significant differences caught for mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples.

*Support from family networks: “we are always supported by our families”*

This part will turn into the question of ‘whether the couples receive support from both of their families and in what way they support’. Even some of their families had earlier hesitation about their unions, now all of the couples are fully supported and well-accepted by their families. Currently, the families do not create any obstacles towards their relationships and try to do their best for their offspring. Obtained information by interviews revealed that both of their families are good emotional supporters because they always do their best to create comfortable zones in each territory. By doing so, the couples do not feel alone and rather feel well-treated and well-respected. Some couples are supported via informational sources of help (financial), for instance, Angolan-Portuguese (ID-5) couple has been supported financially by their families, e.g., living in parents’ house and receiving household items by both families. Likewise, Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (ID-6) couple is also well supported by her husband’s family in the ways of helping the couple with child care and material support. She even indicated *“they supported us financially a lot, when we got married, when our baby was born, when I was at hospital. I am very grateful; they support us both by delivering money and gifts.”*

Seemingly, receiving moral, psychological, emotional and even financial support by families is considered vital for couples. Echoing that especially one of the spouses is foreign

in the host country, for this reason, families are mostly seen as facilitators in the stages of adaptation and integration into society since they would be the first ones to be entrusted.

*Family general interference: “family can be all over you, trying to rule your life”*

When interviewees were asked ‘how both of their family intervene their relationship’, almost all of them understood and articulated their answers in negative ways -except for only two interviewees responded in both positive and negative ways. In order to exemplify, for Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple, continuous family gathering activities and the constant feeling of family and relatives in Turkey are sensed as negative family interferences to their relationship, whereas grandmothers share their opinions and functional resources of help about looking after their baby is accepted as a positive family interference. The second case of Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple, Turkish female said that her family might have a say but they do not interfere into their relationship while alerting the role of distance in possible interference. She explained along lines *“my mother-in-law intervenes by saying ‘to make another baby’ so that my daughter will have a sibling. Our families do not interfere much into our marriage maybe because we are far away.”* The possible family interference might occur if the couples lived near their families which might be counted as true for a particular sample size. To give an example, Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couple lives in a family house which includes her and her husband with their son, her brother-in-law and her co-sister-in-law with their daughter, her mother-in-law and father-in-law before he died. This collective way of life, on one hand, might be seen a beneficial way to invest money to buy their own houses. On the other hand, it would cause having less privacy in their own individual, spousal and familial life especially for their wives. This situation may also create family interferences in a negative way as mentioned by Macedonian female: *“My husband’s mother and father interfere into our relationship by saying ‘you don’t know because you are inexperienced, this is a mistake’.”* The study of Blood and Wolfe (1960) reflected that traditional social norms were minimized when informants do not co-reside with their elderly parents or in-laws but the present study reflects the contrast case.

Some couples do not perceive any family interference in their relationships, these are Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*), Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*), Turkish-French (*ID-7*), Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*), Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) and Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couples. For the latter couple, Portuguese male mentioned the possible reason of not having family interference into their relationship as follows *“... because both of them give us a lot of space about our decisions, choices. I think it is related the fact that we are both independent in*

*terms of life and economic matters, and our families are not traditional. These are two main factors: being independent grown-up adults and not having traditional family.”*

There are two couples who set their own rules in order to avoid emerging family interference in the beginning of their relationship, for instance, in the case of Angolan-French (ID-4) couple, Angolan female stated that *“from the very beginning we have settled that rule and it is quite working for us because coming from an African family can be very very veryyyy, family can be all over you, trying to rule your life.”* Another case of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple, Turkish male asserted that *“I’m sure they wanted to interfere into our relationship, but this is something I do not like about Eastern cultures. I don’t know why maybe after a certain age or maybe I have lived abroad quite longer time or maybe those countries in which I have lived brings something to my life. So we decided that we should not have let them intervene in any stage of our life. At first my mother was the first one to experience all of our boundaries, get sad to us and also she was the first one to get used to.”* According to Madison (2006) mentioned that reverse culture shock exists for some transmigrated individuals, their own culture becomes unfamiliar to themselves. The occasion of being experienced as a “stranger in a familiar land” as pronounced by Madison (2006: 248) might be connected with their recognition that social identity for themselves is not seen any more equivalent by the eyes of their group members. In order to combat the situation of being labelled as ‘others’ even by their families, these two couples vaccine the concept of privacy to their families that was not well properly acted or practiced in Eastern values due to a collectivistic perspective.

Still, territorial or cultural values should be taken into consideration with a non-judgmental attitude in order to avoid overgeneralization. To give an exemplification, in the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, the Dutch male responded *“I am from Holland and Western European culture; they don’t mix in marriages or whatever unless I ask for it of course. And she is of course from Turkish culture but she is a very strong woman and also they don’t intervene with her marriage. Don’t think like Turkish people, like your mother will say something for your boyfriend or your father will also beat you for being with this man. We are both European in this matter. Turkish people do that a lot spontaneously but Dutch people don’t do that a lot.”* His aforementioned statement represented his cultural clash and misunderstanding with the mother and father’s role in Turkey. Bearing in mind, he took an ethnocentric or Dutch centric stance while making a generalized assumption about Turkish society.

Though there was no significant result captured for mixed and both mixed and transnational couples. It is essential to note that the role of distance between couples' and their families' settlements diminishes the level of family interference into their relationship especially while the cultural and traditional norms increases the chance of perceiving family interference either in a positive or negative way.

*How couples maintain their familial relationship in each territory: "virtual communication solves the distance problem"*

The questions of 'whether the couple makes a bridge between families or separates familial relationships' and 'how they maintain close relationships in each territory' were responded by interviewees quite differently. Although there was no significant result captured for mixed and both mixed and transnational couples, an interaction-constructionist perspective is considered to show how their interaction and communication with families turn into the form of "virtual intimacies" while considering family ecological perspective to analyse how distance factors alter their configurations and functioning in cyberspace reality.

For six interviewees it was important to make a bridge between families, even one of each couple took a role in translating the conversations. For instance, in the case of Turkish-French (ID-7) couple, Turkish female mentioned "*even after marriage, I acquired French language skills and this facilitates communication with my husband's family. On the contrary, my husband understands Turkish but he has difficulty in speaking.*" It seems that her mission of being a translator plays an important role in making the bridge between families. Still, even though individuals might have good intentions, distance can be an obstacle while maintaining familial relationship across two countries. This is well-illustrated by the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Dutch male said "*I don't separate, if possible I bridge*" and his wife proceeded "*since our families are in two different countries, it is not possible to build bridges. If they would live in here, we could gather 2-3 times in a month.*"

On the account of maintaining familial relationship, some of the couples have different point of views based on personal preferences. In the case of Turkish-Jordanian (ID-2) couple, even though there is no clear-cut answer if she combines or separates, her husband takes a moderator role between families. Turkish female explained "*my husband makes a bridge between our families and he does very well. I usually have the idea of my family and your family but he says 'we are all families'. Maybe I see in my family like this, and that's why I think in this way. He really connects them very well, for example; even he takes a role as a translator and makes our families talk with each other in Skype.*" Differently, for the case of

Angolan-Spanish (ID-3) couple, Spanish male's view on the basis of the family domain is closer to that of individualistic rather than familistic perspective. He told *"I do not do it at all since I do not live in familial terms; I still live alone and far from my family. Even holding or maintaining close relationships is a complicate question for me since it has been a while I moved from my house and lived with limited contact with them. I would say I try to have a close and equal relationship with all from my family house."* Living far away for a long time from his family creates changes not only in his personal development regarding being more independent and learning how to stand on his own feet but also in his point of view about familial terms. This similar result was also found in the study of Van de Putte (2003); family involvement might decrease with increased level of individualism and autonomy (as cited in Haandrikman, 2013).

Regarding the question of 'with whom maintaining close relationships in each territory', the result reflected that the couples mostly keep in contact with nuclear families either in their or partner's country of origin, only a few cases mentioned about keeping contact with extended families. To illustrate by the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Turkish female articulated that *"In family visits, my husband drinks Rakı (Turkish traditional alcoholic drink) with my father and he enjoys eating my mother's meals. My parents used to live in Germany so they can communicate with him in German, however; because of language barrier he cannot communicate with my siblings."* It is comprehensible that for some couples it is an enjoyable experience to be surrounded by their families once they are united with them. Nevertheless, it may not be the case for the others, especially Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) couple, Macedonian female alerted *"for my husband is easy because his entire family is here but for me is really hard. Everyone's mother is here, I wish my mother would be here to help me out. I and my co-sister-in-law don't have any family here so we support each other. I visit my family in Macedonia every year and I talk everyday on the phone. I had to get used to in time."*

In terms of describing face-to-face communication and virtual communication while maintaining close relationships with their families, they prefer to communicate side by side with them. They ended up using virtual communication due to the geographical distance between countries and even continents. Thanks to advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs), distance is no longer a huge problem. Illustrating that Portuguese male sees virtual communication as a solution to maintain his social networks as follows *"I would say that virtual communication solves the distance problem but it is not same quality as face-to-face communication. Virtual communication is a solution and phase and it is useful for the*

*distance relationships but I always prefer face-to-face communication.*” It is understandable that interviewees greatly value face-to-face communication and side-by-side experiences with their families because they believe the virtual world produces a dry and superficial conversation. This is well-demonstrated by the following phrases of the 52 year old Turkish male mentioning “*Although advanced technology shortens the distance and filling the gap that absence brings, still it is not replaceable with face-to-face communication*”, a 51 years old Turkish female saying “*virtual communication cannot go beyond the superficial matter because talking face-to-face, being side by side, sharing valuable time with people is priceless and both of these communication styles cannot be comparable with each other*” and a 36 years old Ukrainian female’s complaint about the advance technology gives and takes many things from individuals by stating “*Even when my family come here or I go to Ukraine, there is nothing to talk about. In the past, we were sitting and talking for several hours, we were trying to catch up our missing time with each other but the Internet damage these patterns. Still, I prefer face-to-face communication because it is intimate and sincerity.*”

Considering bi-national backgrounds of mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples, the couples are mostly bilingual but this case does not apply for their families. Hence, knowing the native language of their partners can be an advantage while maintaining familial relationship. Additionally, the advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) even counted as a possible solution for maintaining familial relationships at a geographical distance; though it is not found as equal to face-to-face interactions due to lack of emotion and physical contact.

#### **5.2.3.2. Friendship and socialization**

This section will provide answers to the questions of ‘how would they describe their social life?’, ‘are they making new friends?’, ‘are they still keeping in contact with their old friends (back home)?’, ‘how do they distinguish face-to-face communication and virtual communication while keeping in contact with their friends?’, and lastly ‘do they receive any advice from their friends regarding their relationship?’

*Describing social life: “normal” or “poor”*

Creating social networks was not a problematic issue for some individuals; even they described themselves as a social and adaptable person clearly seen by their following statements. For illustrations, Spanish male stated “*I am a social person, I do not have problem to talk and socialize with different people and it is easy for me to make new friends*” and

Portuguese male *“It is very normal. I have a lot of school friends, some friends from work, friends from my dance classes, I attend social activism such as involving association about racism, and I have poetry sessions.”* Similarly, in the case of Turkish-French (ID-7) couple, regarding social life and friendship, she takes the initiative to create social networks when they are settling into new countries by finding different associations and reaching people from their own countries, and then they attend different events.

Analysing social life in accordance to the contexts of time and space is a supplementary point. Somehow mixed and both mixed and transnational couples have experienced the same circumstances in the exact moment of their life while they are residing in a host country. By way of illustration, some interviewees’ social life has changed with specific conditions in time, those are Kyrgyzstani and Vietnamese females (who are recently living in Istanbul), and Brazilian female (who is married to Turkish male used to live in Istanbul, currently returned to her country). Kyrgyzstani female said that her social life is narrowed after her delivery as she explained *“I don’t go out, what a socialization! We used to go to beach in Büyükdere, or we used to explore new places... but now our child is so small to go out.”* Additionally, the lack of host country language skills was also an obstacle for their social lives. For Vietnamese female, her social life is quite limited due to her language barrier, even her husband mentioned that *“we don’t have activities like going to the theatre or cinema because she doesn’t know Turkish. I am telling her ‘let’s go’ but she says ‘I won’t understand’ so we end up not going. We go to the cafes and restaurants or we do what she likes such as shopping... she meets with her Vietnamese friends either in our home or their homes; they cook, eat and talk to each other...”* In the case of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple, the scenario was almost the same as before she improved her language skills in Turkish. Her husband mentioned that *“At beginning, I, her and my family was her social life. The reason was that she was not adapted to Turkey, and that’s why she always wanted to be with me... When she acquired Turkish language skills, she started working and then her social life circles spread.”*

Migrated interviewees who currently reside in Luanda and Istanbul had also experienced some changes in social life because of the context of space about specific complexities in the host or in a third country. Sequentially, two Turkish females who are currently living in Luanda have quite limited social networks with their own friends or common friends with their husbands. The specific complexities in Luanda, Angola which contain not being safe to drive alone, lack of transportation system (and also not preferring to take bus, taxis and candongueiro [translation from Portuguese to English: minibus] ) and



security problem make particular interviewees' social lives stuck in shorter distance and limited environment. Following the case of foreign spouses who reside in Istanbul, their social life seems to be limited for different reasons that can be related to complaints of not having access to different events mentioned by Ukrainian female "*There is not so much place to socialize in Büyükdere. Sometimes I take the child to the theatre and I go to my friends. Since our childhood times, we engrain in our culture to go to opera, ballet and theatre, I went there a lot (referring to Ukraine)*"; can be related with the availability of the husbands time referred by Macedonian female; and can be a personal choice to limit their social life as sensed in the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple. Dutch male mentioned "*we are more like cocoon, we don't go out much. There are some places in Istanbul, you can feel safe or comfortable such as Yeşilköy and Şişli where we live in, but in other places I don't feel at home... I am here for 5 years, it is a big town, and you could go anywhere. Because of the political situation, I am not feeling comfortable outside of my own situation. When I am at company or home, I am ok but I don't like to go out. Because I feel I could make a big fight with people on the street so I don't go out to the street.*" Seemingly, the current political situation in Turkey created discomfort in his life but his generalized indication about barbarism and/or savageness in the streets is far from reality.

Obtained information demonstrated that creating social lives with different social networks was not a difficult matter for some individuals. In opposition, some of their social lives have been challenged by specific conditions in their life and the specific complexities of their host countries both in Angola and Turkey in the course of the interviews (for further information, see in Appendix 1).

*Making new friends: "I make friends regardless of their countries, languages and religions"*

Most of the interviewees specified that they can easily make new friends. For instance, a 24 years old Turkish female is open-minded and respectful to diversity in her selection process of making friends can be recognized by her indication of "*Since I am a humanitarian person, I can be friends with everyone I meet, unless a person is truthful and positive. I am not just looking for Turks here; I have friends from different countries. I usually meet at the markets or restaurants. If we have eye contact, I can go directly to their table and say 'hello'... For me, I make friends regardless of their countries, languages and religions.*" Likewise, Ukrainian female makes new friends at the children's playgrounds and school, and through neighbours, she also added "*I like people very much regardless of their status, colour, and clothes.*" For other Turkish female living in Luanda, even though making new friends can be

easy for her, she gives clues of not having permanent friendships with people who have a transnational way of life, explained in her further indication: *“I try to meet with new people because each of us are not permanent here, some of them stay around 6 months or 1 year and they constantly go forth and back to their home, that’s why I don’t have only one friend. The more people I know, the more I can spend my day fully.”*

The channels of creating social networks are different through relatives, friends, neighbours, working colleagues, activities, and cultural events organized by Embassies. Among all individuals, who have higher competence in personal, professional and lingual skills combined with or without higher socio-economic status, are better adapted and blended to the host society. Most importantly, once individuals master the language and social norms of the host country, they will have more chances to establish wider social networks that might result in experiencing greater social protection.

*Keeping in contact with old friends: “in distance, some friendships continue and some don’t”*

As an exceptional case, Dutch male has maintained and highly preferred face-to-face communication with his friends back home, his frequent mobility between Turkey and the Netherlands facilitates face-to-face communication. For other cases, due to their own and/or their friends’ transnational mobility to other countries harden to maintain face-to-face communication, but advanced technology helps to shorten distances by facilitating their communication with a variety of social networks on the Internet. Even though interviewees prefer face-to-face communication - *“I like real talk”* said by Vietnamese female-, they all use virtual communication in order to maintain their friendships. Still their following statements revealed that virtual communication cannot be replaceable with face-to-face communication because some believe that virtual world is deprived of sincerity, reality and intimacy. To cite instances, Spanish male considers that delivering verbal communication with body gestures is an important matter in face-to-face communication. Besides the lack of body gestures, some believe that virtual communication is lacking in sentimentality as well as physical contact; Macedonian female stating *“of course face-to-face communication is better because it is more sincere and more comfortable whereas virtual communication is fast and superficial”*, followed by Kyrgyzstani female *“it is not possible to transmit emotions on the phone”* and lastly ensuing by Ukrainian female *“I do not want to talk sometimes on the Internet; face-to-face communication is more warm and intimate. The Internet has broken the bonds between individuals. I prefer a face-to-face communication with warmth/intimacy, hug, and touch”*. It is clearly comprehended that individuals found face-to-face communication useful to

convey thoughts in terms of verbal and non-verbal contexts because they highly value the power of bodily contact in relations.

Indeed, these aforementioned statements demonstrate that ICTs cannot be comparable with face-to-face communication. Nonetheless, there are some cases that having virtual connectedness was necessary at a point to organize meetings with their friends. For instance, 51-year-old Turkish female complemented that *“unfortunately virtual communication is the result of modern world and I have to use it to communicate with my friends and let them arrange face-to-face meeting as soon as possible but I’m trying to set the dose.”* The case of Portuguese male is pretty similar that he contacts with his friends who are abroad to organize face-to-face meeting to catch up. He explained that *“... I have a lot of friends that they are not here, we talk only by message and I don’t see them face to face. And I have also some friends, they come to Portugal every three or four months and we arrange meeting to have face-to-face conversations...”*

The interviewees talked about how their communication changed over time and space with their friends. Three interviewees told about changes in their communication styles with their friends either when they are near or far away. That is to say, their expressions revealed that side-by-side talks became replaced with writing messages in WhatsApp, clearly exemplified by the statement of Macedonian female *“now people closed themselves and they become cold and they talk via messages”*, and by the declaration of Portuguese male *“nowadays, WhatsApp is the main communication, I talk a lot through WhatsApp and in every two weeks we usually meet with my close friends...”* Also, 24 years old Turkish female said that they only send greetings message to each other via WhatsApp, and she explained further *“I rarely keep in contact with even my best friends in Turkey, maybe at 3%, because I have to allocate my time to my marriage, my daughter or myself.”* Some interviewees pointed out that how geographical distance has also played a crucial role in changing the dynamics of their friendships back home. To illustrate, for two Turkish females who are residing in Luanda, distance was a determinative factor whether their friendships will continue unconditionally or not. A 25 years old Turkish female explained *“in distance, some friendships continue and some don’t. When it doesn’t, I understand that this is not a lifelong friendship.”* Moreover, a 24 years old Turkish female highlighted the distance factor by vocalizing her experience with one of Turkish proverbs *“Out of sight, out of mind. Perhaps, the physical distance creates emotional disconnection in the friendships.”*

For particular cases, on one hand, the advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) is necessary to maintain their friendships when they are far away. On the

other hand, the maintenance of friendship loses the power of intimacy because of the geographical distance and the frequent usage of virtual based communication. Still, their statements reflected that virtual communication cannot be replaceable with face-to-face communication since it is deprived of sincerity, reality and intimacy.

*Receiving advice by friends: “Everyone has a different way to start and precede the relationship, everyone has a different story”*

In terms of receiving advice from friends, interviewees responded as yes, rare and no. For those receiving advice from their friends value their friends’ opinions and suggestions showing in their statements; a 24 years old Turkish female *“I ask not only those who are married to a foreigner, but also those who know the marriage life. I respect to their opinions and suggestions and I asked them 'how it should be, what would you do if you were in my place?’ Being married to a foreigner doesn’t change the reality of the person is a man. Sometimes, even if you are married with someone from your own nationality, you may not get along well. You can’t judge a book by its cover”* and for a 35 years old Angolan female told that they receive advice from their friends, still they will be the one to say a final word. For Kyrgyzstani and Vietnamese females, their friends warn them rather than giving advice because their husbands are foreigners or they will be foreign in their husband’s country. In sequence, Kyrgyzstani female was warned by her friend *“you are a foreigner, he can leave you. Don’t trust in your husband %100, put aside some money”* and Vietnamese female was cautioned at earlier times by her friends *‘there are fighting groups, if you go there (referring to Turkey) they will leave you among those groups’*. These phrases might reflect that their friends are concerned about safety and the reality of their relationship resulting in unconditionally biased attitude towards their union. Some of the interviewees asked for advice only at the moment of emotional crisis, and their friends are there to give emotional support. For instance, a 33-year-old Portuguese male was told *‘you need to calm down, you need to talk and find a middle point’*, and a 25-year-old Turkish female was told *‘relax don’t make too much stress, everything will be alright as it used to be’*.

There are other cases that the couple does not prefer to receive advice from their friends. In the case of Turkish-French (ID-7) couple, Turkish female added *“even if I didn’t ask their opinion before getting married but some of them do share their opinion that ‘this marriage was impossible!’”* Similar to the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Turkish female was told *‘since this will be his second marriage and he has 3 children from his first marriage, it is going to be hard so you cannot accomplish’*. Hearing these demotivating

opinions did not change the couple's opinion, on the contrary; the couples were aware that this could happen because of individual differences. The possible reason of not being willing to receive advice might be described by a 35 years old Turkish male *"The concept of having mixed marriages with a combination of two different nations, learning the sociological side of this alerts us rather than personal or private relations side. Everyone has a different way to start and precede the relationship, everyone has a different story."*

Though welcoming friends' opinions and suggestions change according to their personal choices, there was no specific difference found between mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples.

#### **5.2.4. Parenting**

In parenting section, the observation and questions mostly depended on child raising patterns considering multilingual and also assumedly multicultural environments. These questions were related to 'how parenting is done', 'in which language(s) parents speak with their children' and if observed whether languages have a role in transmitting their cultural, lingual, ethnical and emotional domains, 'how parents' views change about future planning regarding which country to raise their children in', 'in which type of school they want them to be registered' and 'which profession they want them to follow', and lastly 'children's current nationality'.

##### *Having children*

Only the two non-married couples have no children. All of the married couples have children but they differentiate in respect to having their common child/children -ages varied between 5 months to 14 years old- (8 couples) and/or having their children from previous marriages (3 couples). In general, the latter are older. These three couples also differentiate among themselves, meaning two couples have no common children with their current partners, and only one couple has a 3 year old common child with their current partner.

##### *Caregiver roles: "The relationship becomes fission like a help, we counted on each other"*

Most of the couples are quite attentive to child raising activities and their caregiving patterns change on the scale of equal, partial and sole caregiver models. Those who have obtained or are going to obtain equal caregiver roles are mainly younger couples, even an earlier study by Gerson (2011) found that younger generations, regardless of their gender differences, are willing to share childcare and housework responsibilities. Although fathers' roles in domestic

responsibilities come after mothers, the studies reflect that the gender gap is lessening (Sullivan & Coltrane, 2008). Likewise, Gaspar's study on mixed marriages (2009: 14) points out that there is an increased dedication to the children's necessities such as clothing, playing, and sleeping that men now present new parental roles and values in childcare, "with a more supportive investment and more emotional ties being made by contemporary fathers".

Two non-married couples of Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) and Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) do not have children yet. However, it was interesting to hear their plans regarding parental matters for the future and they both vocalize their intention to share all the tasks equally. Furthermore, in the case of Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple, Kyrgyzstani female explained that they share all the duties except for changing diapers as follows: "*He looks after the child while I prepare breakfast or meals. If baby cries, he keeps on cooking and preparing the table. In the beginning, he was afraid to hold the baby, now he gets used to and looks after pretty well except he doesn't change the diapers. All other tasks we do together, we play, and we wash her together. He prepares the water, then my husband hold her and I wash.*" In the same way, in the case of Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*), a 35 years old Turkish male stated amusingly "*We certainly share caregiver roles, we don't have other choice. Generally, for instance, who sees a dirty diaper, will be the one who cleans, and this is same for other tasks but of course it is a humorous part of it. Usually we are able to do every task; when we do not have patience or do not have enough power physically, we divide the tasks to each other...*" Correspondingly, I had a chance to observe Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple during fieldwork in Luanda while both parents were sharing child-raising activities in every matter, such as preparing formula for baby, cleaning month, and calming the baby by singing songs in their mother tongues. In the latter case, the flexible way of working provided by her employer was quite helpful for her to have a work-life balance in labour and domestic spheres, and the same scenario was observed by her husband's overseas job schedule.

For those who partially shared parental tasks it may depend on personal preferences and availability. While seeking for answers to how societal needs are practiced in a given or perceived social structure, and how family functions and gender roles are shaped accordingly, it is essential to recall the structure-functional perspective (Lamanna & Riedmann, 2012). As the previous studies asserted that gender was socially conceptualized into two different modules of work and family, in which men's role was seen in the labour market as 'breadwinning' and women's role as 'housewife and caregiver' (Walls, 2010). Also, in my research, especially males who work as sole breadwinners partially help their spouses rather than sharing all the parental tasks. This is somewhat related to the parents' availability

because of their longer working hours in the labour market may not allow them to fully take part in both child care and household activities. Regardless of being mixed or both mixed and transnational couples, Turkish-Jordanian (ID-2), Angolan-French (ID-4), Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (ID-6), Ukrainian-Turkish (ID-8), and Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) couples told that they share responsibilities for child care activities and all these females found that their husbands were really helpful in some responsibilities (e.g. preparing food, feeding, dressing, riding to and picking up from school, and going to barber/hairdresser). To illustrate, during our interview their baby was crying, the statement of 35 years old Angolan female displayed how she entrusted her husband *“baby is crying but he is here. It is good that he is here otherwise I go crazy. The relationship becomes fission like a help, we counted on each other... when he comes to home even all day working, he still helps me out at home e.g. taking care of the kid while I am cooking, or sometimes he cooks and I take care of the kid. We are always complimentary to each other and thank to that.”* These cases might also clarify that increasing the presence of fathers in child-raising activities can be possible if childcare flexibility is promoted through a work-life balance in terms of domestic and workplace spheres.

Three couples have their children from their previous marriages so their parenting can also be counted as a partial caregiver model, it is important to mention that all the couples welcome each other’s kids into their life as their own. To illustrate, Turkish-French (ID-7) couple, there is no possibility to have common children because of their ages and her husband has three children from his previous marriage (at the ages of 27, 31, and 32), and she mentioned *“they completed their education, now they are working so they are already adults. Whenever they need something, we will do our best to help and guide them. After this time, we might have a role in the development of our grandchildren.”* The following two cases exemplify how parenting is processed in a boundless context because Dutch father and Vietnamese mother left behind their children at their countries, but still they keep supporting their children via virtual communication at distance. In the case of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, besides their common children he also has three children from his previous marriages (at the ages of 18, 22, 24). As understood in the interview, he and his current partner partially take a role in child care in terms of social, emotional and financial support. The latter case might be different from the prior in the sense of comprehending and coping with the context that the children left behind are still pretty small (at the ages of 6, 7 years old). In the study by Falicov (2007), the mother who was forced to leave her 7-year-old son in Chile expressed her emotional state as “cancer of the soul”. The emotional cost of leaving behind was not so different for the case of Vietnamese-Turkish (ID-9) couple, she was emotional while

explaining her feelings *“I miss them so much. I see and talk to them every day. Anything young children call me. I give them the feeling that I’m always with them everywhere and they are the same.”* The frequent talks and exchanging information helps them to produce a strong sense of shared space and time even within the reality of differences in geographical distance and time zones. The information received in the interview revealed that the ex-husband of Vietnamese female, who was unemployed and not attentive to the children’s needs, also had alcohol-related problems comorbid with gambling. Besides a lack of financial support, this might reflect that her ex-husband was not adequate for giving emotional or psychological support to the children. In this case, she is the sole caregiver to provide forms of long-distance care (moral, psychological and emotional support), at the same time her current husband becomes the main provider for the child’s allowance by sending remittances -\$400 monthly- in order to cover their expenses (e.g. education or other needs in Vietnam).

In terms of child care activities, the case of Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) couple, Turkish mother was detected as a sole caregiver. This was confirmed in his statement of *“I don’t help too much, if you will be asking my wife, she will say not too much”* and his wife continued *“I always do these things: making him sleep, changing his diaper and feeding him. If I say something, he tells ‘you wanted a child’ so I don’t say nothing back. The man are different either Turkish or European; they withdraw themselves once they become a father. Also, mothers are looking after much better. For instance while changing his diaper, I am washing him, wiping and putting a cream, but he doesn’t know how to do, he looks after more superficially (e.g. giving Ipad to the child while looking after him). He is right I am looking after our child, even when he is away for 10 days, I am totally in charge.”*

Though there were no significant differences discovered between mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples, equal caregiver roles were mainly obtained by younger couples. Also, having a work-life balance in labour and domestic spheres was encouraging for the couples to have equal caregiver roles. Another outcome was about how parenting has been processed in a boundless context when the parents continue supporting their left behind children via virtual communication at distance.

*Creating monolingual, bilingual or multilingual environment to their children: “when a person speaks another language, a person becomes another”*

This section will cover the questions of ‘which language(s) parents speak with their children’ and ‘which language(s) parents would like their children to learn’. While understanding the linguistic atmosphere in the household, it was noticed that parents address in four different



ways while communicating with their children: a) transmitting a same speaking language (exception), b) transmitting both of the parents' native languages to the children, c) one parent transmitting a native language and other parent speaking in a third language with the children, d) transmitting a host country language/third language to their children.

The first way of language transmission was through a same speaking language. The exceptional case of Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couple will be speaking with their children in Portuguese since both are from Portuguese-speaking countries. Yet, Portuguese male interviewee intends to learn the traditional language of his father, and also wishes his partner to learn her parents' native language so that they might convey to their children. He explained further “... *I would like our children to speak Portuguese, English because it is international language and I would like them to know our parents' languages including Creole and her parents' language -Yaneka... My opinion is that you need to know where you come from; you need to have more or less knowledge of your origin to build your own identity. You don't need to be same as your parents but you need to know the history of your country, your traditions. You don't need to follow them but you need to know them.*” His excerpt demonstrates that he values transmitting traditional languages in order to transmit traditions, customs and cultures which belong to the origins of their parents. In the study of He and Xiao (2008), one of the bilingual children' quotation of “... when I think of Chinese, I think of my mom, dad, and home. It is the language of my home, and my heart” revealing that identity formation is closely link with ethnic, cultural, and linguistic investment while learning the parent's language (as cited in Norton & Toohey, 2011). Fishman (2006) also considers the link between language and ethno-linguistic identity similar to the sense of being at home because language not only plays an important role in communication but also cements historical, psychological and emotional elements for individuals.

The second way of language transmission process was addressed by those parents who transmit both of their native languages to the children, whilst there are some alterations in creating a bilingual or multilingual environment for their children during the language transmission process. One pattern, are cases that both parents keep (or intend to keep in the future parenting project) their native languages while communicating with their children, these are Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*), Angolan-French (*ID-4*), and Ukrainian-Turkish (*ID-8*) couples. The other pattern, in which parents preserve their native languages at the same time the child/children, is exposed to the other third language because of being a couple's common language or being a host country language. As an illustration by Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple, they transmit their mother tongues to their daughter, meaning Turkish-speaking

mother, Jordanian father speaking in both Arabic and Turkish with child, and even during our interview daughter was called as ‘mushamash’ in Arabic [translation to English: apricot]. The diversified language transmission in their household setting was demonstrated by her indication of “*We usually speak Turkish, and my husband also speaks Arabic to our daughter. We sometimes articulate some words either in English or in Portuguese... For example, when my daughter wants water, she says in Arabic ‘ma’an’, she says ‘horse’ in English or when she want to say let’s go, she says ‘vamos’ in Portuguese. In this way, she uses in her daily life the vocabularies that she has acquired.*” Another example comes from Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Dutch male declared “*I am speaking Dutch, and his mother speaks Turkish. We decided it would be better to know two languages.*” Furthermore, German is a common language for the couple and his wife mentioned “*apparently the kid is exposed to German language, and now he started saying ‘Schatz’ [translation from German: darling]. Also, he comprehends Dutch and he fulfils the commands given by his father.*” Likewise, Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple is very pleased with their decision of raising their son in a multilingual environment because they think this environment will better facilitate his comprehension skills for learning other languages. Turkish male mentioned “*... when a person speaks another language, a person becomes another, meaning another combination emerges within that person... The feeling of richness, diversity, variability, and the capacity of the person are really nice, and I would like my child to grow up with these feelings. Of course, we are happy that he will grow up in multilingual environment resulting in having different language skills.*” Various neuroscience and biology studies also indicate that a multilingual environment may have an influence on forming children’s cognitive skills resulting in improvements in their capacity for absorbing different languages (Kovacs & Mehler, 2009).

The third way of language transmission was related to one parent transmitting a native language and the other parent speaking in a third language with the children. In the case of Turkish-Angolan (ID-1) couple, Turkish mother keeps her native language and Angolan father speaks in the couple’s common language in English rather than his native language of Portuguese. Turkish female stated that “*I thought I cannot purely teach English, I want to transmit all emotions so I speak in Turkish. We thought that our common language is English, thus the child should know English.*” In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up session, when asked about her husband’s proficiency in English, her husband mentioned as follows: “*I have been speaking English for 10 years, I am not a native I can fail sometimes but I can explain every emotion or situation in English*’. The consequences of this decision is not certain whether adult speaking

style in a couple's common language will be enough or beneficial for the baby while transmitting feelings, thoughts, emotions, and ideas with a non-native language. Just to keep in mind that acquiring English language skills might be different than being born in an English language environment.

Last but not least, for parent(s) who choose to talk with their child/children in the host country language, supposedly there might be perceived limitations in the social context or suppressing a dominant language in the house. Recalling the model of family ecological perspective by Lamanna and Riedmann (2012) is essential to analyse how these external factors played a role in evolving family decisions on language transmission. For Vietnamese-Turkish (ID-9) couple since their plan is to bring her children to Turkey, they will acquire Turkish as a host language but learning Vietnamese is not mandatory for his children, rather, it depends on their wills. Following two cases might reveal how social context and actor played a role in shaping the language transmission process. To give an example of Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (ID-6) couple, she knows Kyrgyzstani, Russian and Turkish and declared *"I speak Turkish at the moment, on occasion I say Kyrgyzstani to my daughter such as 'ukdasana' you say in Turkish 'uyu' [translation from Turkish to English: sleep] or 'geldim' [translation from Turkish/Kyrgyzstani to English: I came]... Sometimes I confuse and I say some words in Russian, but... I started forgetting because of lack of practice... We haven't decided with my husband but I decide to speak with her in Turkish until 1-2 years old, at least she can be fluent in Turkish... It is written in the internet that until 2-3 years old only to speak in Turkish, then slowly start to teach Russian. At least the child will acquire one language at that time. They told if we teach all the languages at once, the child's mind will be puzzled..."* Though she tries to create a monolingual environment for their child, her Turkish-speaking husband tells her to preserve her native languages of Kyrgyz and Russian so that they can raise their child in a multilingual environment. Another similar case of losing native language was observed in the case of Macedonian-Kosovon (ID-10) couple. They speak Turkish at home due to the perceived force or suppressing attitudes by other actors and the Macedonia female illustrated *"I wished to teach my language (Macedonian) to my son so that he could communicate easily with my family when he goes to Macedonia. In earlier times, I spoke with him in Macedonian and the kid started speaking in Turkish (my kid started to speak late, at the age of 2). When he heard me speaking in Macedonian, and others and him speaking in Turkish puzzled his mind. For this reason, my mother-in-law told me 'let him learn Turkish first because he will be living in Turkey otherwise he might have difficulty in language. Then he can learn Macedonian'.* In both of these cases, we can assume that there is

a loss of language from one or two sides of the parents. This may also cause a possible communication loss in the relations of parent-child as well as grandchildren-grandparents because especially in mixed-nationality and transnational relationships, couples are usually bilingual yet it does not mean that their families would be a bilingual like them (Wessendorf, 2007). Especially mother tongues will help to convey original ideas, imagery, rhythm, and feelings, meanwhile to maintain familial ties and generational links between grandparents and grandchildren.

While understanding mono/bi/multilingualism in the household, parents who have different backgrounds in languages and cultures play a central role to transmitting their languages as well as their origins to their children. The observation and answers obtained in the fieldwork highly revealed that most of the couples preserved their native languages in child-raising activities. Notably, for some couples who were brought up within multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious motifs emphasized the importance of conveying native languages to shape their children's identity while transmitting family relations and cultural values.

*Educational and professional plans for their child/children: "we are really open-minded and we will always support their choices"*

This section will contain information about 'the views of parents related to their children's future educational and professional plans'. Their views changed quite a lot in accordance with their national, ethnical, habitual and personal attributions.

Regarding the selection of the school, the school-aged children are already registered in the public school and the same will be applied for the small ones when the time comes. With exception of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12) couple's choice for their child will probably be home-schooling, as explained by Turkish male *"It doesn't matter whether it is home schooling, following the curriculum from home, or never have to follow it. There are a lot of unwanted things that a child has learned at school until the age of 10-15. Whatever the name is, we do not want him to be an experiment."*

On the other hand, when analysing the views of two individuals about the educational system it was observed that it is quite different from the others. These are Kyrgyzstani and Ukrainian female interviewees who shared a common complaint about the Turkish educational system while making comparisons between their origin countries related to the lack of state-based crèche system and a lack of varied extra-curricular activities for children. To cite an indication by Kyrgyzstani female *"There are not state-funded kindergartens, or*

*there are not low-paid state kindergartens. For example, in Kyrgyzstan we have low-paid state crèches and very few private kindergartens while here they are very expensive. Additionally, in Kyrgyzstan, there are sport activities in which children have gymnastics training and ballet at the schools. There is not much here.*” Then she supplemented *“I want my child to be a doctor, but I want her to develop personal and social abilities in music, dance, and sports. In Kyrgyzstan, we send our kids to the ballet to form the child's posture smooth and the girl should walk like a girl and walk to the edge of her feet. But then I see the kids here, our children are different because they have more activities.”* Their concern sheds a light on the importance of improving social and personal abilities besides their academic achievement for child development.

Even though several couples might have a shared decision for their children’s educational plans, social contexts of the country itself might limit those plans. To illustrate, Angolan-Portuguese (ID-5) couple intends to send their children to public school in Portugal because they believe growing up in a developed country will bring better opportunities into their child’s life in terms of improving their well-being and quality of life. On the other hand, his following statement expresses his concern about the future of their children in regards to being a minority and being exposed to possible discrimination because of their colour. He detailed *“The reality is that racism exists in Portugal and the fact that being minority of the race and colour, sometimes you don’t have access to certain opportunities. In Angola, they are all the same race although there is racism as well; they have a lot of similarities than here in Portugal. There they wouldn’t face these kinds of obstacles but if you put in balance we would have better quality of life and better opportunities to raise our children... if you go to public school, you have contact with every type of person in the social structure of the society... For example, I went to public school and I am not less or I don’t have less professional success, but one thing I do have is a lot of tolerance to other persons’ belonging to other races, cultures, educational backgrounds and other social positions...”* While one interviewee thinks of sending their children into public school in order to raise awareness of social diversity, the other interviewee does not have same thought. For example, Turkish-Dutch (ID-11) couple, Dutch male asserted *“in Holland, that is a basic school has three types: Christian, Catholic and without religion. This choice will be without religion for us but we will see. I would like to send to Catholic school but I think my wife would like to send without religion school. The problem is without religion, it is mostly Islamic people because they don’t want to be in Christian or Catholic school”*. In this point, it seems that the couple puzzled their mind with their religious backgrounds, and they are concerned about whether

their child would be imposed by religious affiliations either with Catholic or Islamic manners in the school. It is necessary to consider that schooling might differentiate with names of Christian, Catholic and without religion under the same educational roof; still children are educated in the secular framework (Vermeer, 2013). These aforementioned cases demonstrate the importance of promoting the tolerance of diversity particularly for children with different backgrounds of nationality and language. For this reason, it is important to provide specialized training programs to the instructors at schools in order to teach how to meet with the necessities of this particular group of children. Even this issue was emphasized in the study of Shao-Kobayashi (2013), if school personnel gives special value on racial, ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversities with the collaboration of children's family, this will have a long-term impact on children's social identities and relationships even further will be guidance of their life wherever they settle down.

On the account of professional plans for their child/children, received information revealed that all of the couples take an unbiased stance on their children's choices and decisions, and all of them will support their children's interests, wills, capacities and talents. Nevertheless, some of them want to guide their children to specific departments. For instance, Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple wants their children to become an engineer like them as she stated *"our child will be constantly exposed to engineering matters and this will facilitate her future career"*. Similarly, in the case of Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couple, Portuguese male stressed on specific professions of administration, business, and engineering by specifying as *"liberal professions"* and he continued *"I would love them to follow some path that I know the chances of success are in need and higher than other jobs... I would be more tranquilized if they would choose those areas but still we are really open-minded and we will always support their choices."* Contrarily, there are some cases that they want their children to specialize in language and literature. To give examples of Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) and Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couples, Turkish and Macedonian mothers want to direct their children into any language and literature programme in order to keep up their bilingual and multilingual skills. Turkish mother exemplified this in her following statement *"She will learn different languages from us and she will have a head start in her life. If she selects to study language and literature, it would be a great advantage for her future career because she would be speaking in different languages."*

The views of parents about their children's future educational and professional plans have changed in accordance with their national, ethnical, habitual and personal attributions, still there was no difference captured between the two specific types of couples. In terms of

school choice, almost all of their children will be registered in the public school system, with the exception of one family's plans of home-schooling. They all regard their children's choices and decisions, while encouraging their interests, wills, capacities and talents. Only some of them want to guide their children to the specific departments of administration, business and engineering due to parents' profession, and language and literature in consequence of being exposed to bilingualism and/or multilingualism in the household environment.

#### *The citizenship of their child/children*

Almost all of their child/children have double nationalities. The answers revealed that none of the parents had a problematic stance while receiving nationalities, residence permits and passports for their children. On the contrast, for Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple, the process is still on-going for their child to receive a Kyrgyzstani nationality from mother's side because their marriage was not approved in Kyrgyzstan yet.

#### **5.2.5. Future plans**

This section will cover the questions of 'how they see themselves in 5 and 10 years in terms of their professional careers, educational plans and having children' and 'where they see themselves becoming old'. It is essential to analyse this section in accordance to the two specific types of couples.

#### *Future plans in the case of mixed couples: "if we build our home 'there', it is enough"*

The mixed couples tend to make more fixed plans in terms of time and space. Their future plans are mostly related with the investment on their children's education and life, and some combined with establishment of their own houses and their own organizations. To give an instance of Brazilian-Turkish (*ID-12*) couple, Turkish male told about their pull factor of migrating from Istanbul to São Paulo was to maintain a better living condition for their son while raising him with sun, beach, beautiful creatures and natural beauties, and to have a better work-life balance so as to spend quality time with his family. In the same way, Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple already started preparing the necessary documents to bring her left behind children to Turkey in order to improve their well-being and education. In addition to that, Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couple wishes to send their son to university in Macedonia in the dream of receiving a good education, and keeping bonds with the native land because they will have a reason to often go to Macedonia. Moreover, they wish to build

or buy their houses in Macedonia and Turkey so that they will be well-connected to both of the countries. Likewise, Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (*ID-6*) couple has land in Keşan and wishes to build their house there, and Ukrainian female wishes to live in a two-story or one-story house located near Aegean Sea.

In terms of both their professional career and educational plans, their views changed from person to person. As the illustrations, acknowledging the major social and personal changes in their life, Macedonian and Ukrainian females want to return to their studies in hopes of achieving greater economic independence, but their husbands act towards their wishes in different manners. To be precise, the former female is well-supported by her husband whereas the latter is constrained by her husband's attitudes relying on male dominance and sovereignty. Contrarily, on behalf of the Vietnamese-Turkish (*ID-9*) couple, Vietnamese female plans to learn Turkish so as to continue her job in the business sector because she is aware that being able to speak in the Turkish language will open the gates for her to socialize and gain individual independence as well as economic independence. Alike, her husband did not mention anything about enlarging his education and professional plans supposing that since he is retired, he might think that he has everything he wished for.

Regards of having children in nearest future, none of interviewees have planned to have more children, contrarily; in the case of Macedonian-Kosovon (*ID-10*) couple, Kosovon husband wishes to have a daughter.

*Future plans in the case of both mixed and transnational couples: "A challenge of not knowing temporary or permanent place where to live for long-term plan"*

For those are both mixed and transnational couples, their plans are tended to be more fluid, even unexpected and ambivalence due to having a mobilized way of life. The following cases will help demonstrate how this uncertainty of not knowing a permanent and/or temporary country creates a burden on their life and challenges long-term planning. In the case of Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple, Turkish female told that she is not sure about long term plans because her ideas are quite variable since it is hard to settle down in a country with ambivalence or unclear conditions. Supplementary to Angolan-French (*ID-4*) couple, Angolan female told "*For permanent place is France, but for a temporary place either Angola or either another place we don't know and we cannot know because we are depending on opportunity. This is actually a challenge of not knowing temporary or permanent place where to live for long-term plan.*" For the case of Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple, the scenario was not so different either. Spanish male has his worries about living conditions in Angola



because of the unclear conditions of the country and the lack of professional opportunities. Apparently, these conditions in Angola create difficulties in his decision of moving and living there. This is well-illustrated in his following statements “*I may have to move to an African country which is something that influences my family, my job opportunities and my way of living. I will find the merging point when I understand that my life there (referring to Angola) has the conditions I am looking for in my life namely a good social and professional status.*”

In terms of educational and professional plans, there was a significant difference of age but not gender. For educational plans, particularly, younger individuals who are in their 20s and 30s want to continue studying. These are Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple wishes to be done with their masters - Turkish female intends to do her masters in Management of Engineering or Business Management but no clear information obtained about which master program her husband wants; in the context of Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple - a 24-year-old Turkish female wants to continue her bachelor degree in Mathematics or in a different department; following the case of Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple - a 34-year-old Spanish male wants to have a degree on a different subject besides History; in relation to the case of Angolan-French (*ID-4*) couple, there is no available information; and last but not least Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couple has identical desire to obtain a MBA degree. For those over thirty, two Turkish females and Dutch male did not even mention about educational careers imaginably owing to their ages.

In a similar manner, the professional career plans changed variedly among younger individuals while older ones want to continue their current business and/or do plans regarding their retirement. In order to clarify the circumstances, for Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple wishing to have clearer and conceptualized positions in their fields; for Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple valuing the accomplishment of her dream to finish her studies rather than working; for Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple hoping to have a stable and satisfactory job; for Angolan-French (*ID-4*) couple waiting possible relocation for him and planning to be back to work for her; lastly for Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couple again has same plans of working as line managers. Quite the opposite, the couples of Turkish-French (*ID-7*) and Turkish-Dutch (*ID-11*) want to continue in their current business; referring that 51 years old Turkish female wishes to continue writing travel books, and after 3 years her husband will be retired. Hence, the couple will travel around the world more comfortably, and expectedly resulting her to produce more travel books. The latter couple shares the same opinions to continue to do their textile business.

In terms of having children, an age-related difference was detected but not gender. For those younger expect to have child/children in nearest future while for over thirty ones even did not consider as an option.

On account of viewing themselves in which ideal place to retire to, they have different opinions and feelings about it. While some wish to return home, other couples highly adopt the transnational way of life and wish to continue having this lifestyle, which is very clearly present. For instance, Turkish-Angolan (*ID-1*) couple wishes to be in Northern Cyprus or in another country; Turkish-Jordanian (*ID-2*) couple wishes to settle down in Turkey; Angolan-Spanish (*ID-3*) couple wants to become old in any European country; Angolan-Portuguese (*ID-5*) couple imagines themselves floating between Angola and Portugal; and for Turkish-French (*ID-7*) couple is further specified with a combination of countries and even cities Turkey (Istanbul/Alaçatı), France (Dinard) and Morocco (Agadir), and also squeezing other countries in this triangle.

#### Final consideration

Since transnationalism is accepted with its constant movement across borders, transnationals are willing to create new social networks wherever they move. In my particular research, transnational couples are found to be more flexible and tolerant to new environments and they build their own coping mechanisms to integrate into new environments. For transnationals, living abroad can be an opportunity to blend into different networks, nations, religions and languages. On the contrary, mixed couples have difficulty in integrating into all parts of society due to several reasons such as language barrier, lack of professional competence and a gender imbalance of power in marital relations. These factors not only limit their integration process, but also put them in the category of marginalization in the society.

In accordance with living in diversity by having a relationship based on mixed-nationality or transnational context, establishing a family as well as raising children in multilingual, multicultural and multi-religious contexts require enormous efforts that those particular couples take into consideration. During my research, there were some facilitators observed for this specific way of life which are essential to point out. To begin with, the couples who had experienced mixed-nationality and transnational relationships before being with their current spouse, were more adaptable while leading this specific type of relationship. Another facilitator point was that some of couples were raised in multilingual and multicultural environment while highly valuing to preserve their traditions, customs and languages by their parents. Thanks to their parents, they are in the position of a head start in

the concept of bilingualism and cultural sensitivity. Probably, for this reason, these particular couples take their parents as role models to keep up transmitting bi-sided and multi-sided while they are raising their children.

Another important matter was related to maintaining relationships through ICTs. There was no significant difficulty observed in having access to advanced information and communication technologies to maintain their cross-border relationship, they keep in contact easily with their beloved ones behind by using the Internet and several applications on their phones. Some cases demonstrated transnational communications change over time and contexts by expressing the changes in layers of the communication tools from past to present. Still, indeed the impact of advanced technology on people's daily basis cannot be minimized; at least for particular individuals in my research it is highly important in generating and maintaining networks and relationships across transnational fields. Since their lives stay in line of floating from one space to another and/or continue at distance, their daily basis communication is dependent on the virtual world. As understood by the experiences of the interviewees, "*virtual communication is the result of modern world*" and it is seen as "*a possible solution to have a distance relationship*".

## 6. CONCLUSION

Transnational mobility, immigration and globalization processes shape the mind-set and life of individuals since they “work in a cosmopolitan way, make love in a cosmopolitan way, marry in a cosmopolitan way, live, travel, go shopping and cook in cosmopolitan way” (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2014: 70). Notwithstanding, the particular cases of the bi-national and transnational couples’ experiences and the sentimental side of their migration has been absent within social science literature. Expectantly, the analysis of mixed-nationality and transnational couples’ portraits presented here offer insights into the mixed-nationality and transnational couples’ experiences, their difficulties adapting to transnational arrangements, and how these experiences shape their spousal and familial dynamics over time and space. These were the main issues probed while addressing the following research questions: a) In relation to transnational migration, what are the experiences of mixed-nationality and transnational couples?, b) What are the dynamics and characteristics of mixed-nationality and transnational couples’ relationships and how do they change over time and space?, c) How transnational migration has influenced spousal and familial dynamics and future plans? These questions were conducted qualitative in nature on the basis of ethnography and semi-structured interviews with a set of questions on interview guide: socio-demographic information about individual and his/her partner, background of the couple’s life, previous expectations, friendship and socialization, family relations, couple’s daily life, parenting, mid-term goals and plans, identity and suggestion. The sections of previous expectations and identity were eliminated in the analysis due to lack of information received from all participants, however; glancing into the topic of identity and sense of belonging shaped by the transnational experience is found unquestionably interesting for further research. The emergent nature of qualitative research is accepted with its own challenges because of the difficulty in guaranteeing the direction of the research. There were some ethical issues occurred in the course of face-to-face interviews in relation to gaining access to participants especially during fieldwork process in Istanbul, language barrier, and challenges in the relationship between researcher and participants. Furthermore, the partial side of the research was based on an online interview; an unexpected communication cut and less input by body language or other forms of non-verbal data were to some degree challenging point, though they did not cause a great disturbance while collecting the data.

Moving to the analysis, their socio-demographic status helped to picture how different breadwinning models have an influence on reshaping family functions, gender relations and

roles in both domestic and outside spheres. Meaning that dual breadwinner were sharing responsibilities and resources equally whereas sole breadwinner created gender imbalance power especially in marital relations. There were significant social class distinctions found between mixed couples and both mixed and transnational couples. For mixed couples, their low level of socio-economic status triggers some inequalities in their social, professional as well as familial contexts (e.g. difficulty in affording to buy expensive tickets resulting emotional burden on both parties due to not seeing their beloved ones back home). On the contrary, for mixed and transnational couples, who have higher educational and professional attainments followed by the acknowledgement of foreign languages, are more privileged in terms of mobility with easier access to border crossing, resources, and improvement of social capital.

On the basis of their past trajectories how they reframe themselves and create new forms of living with diversity when they acknowledge their self, their partner and/or family members in cross-borders, it was essential to know the background of the couple's life. Some of the couples choose to cohabitate before getting married with their current partner while this was not an option for some due to the expected social norms. Meeting with their current partners was through their own social networks including their family, friends, or colleagues while working or studying, as well as in social, cultural or other events through own social networks, or in cyberspace and social networks in Internet. Their decision to live together differentiated on the basis of emotional, economical, material, and/or subjective reasons, still the matters of having serious commitment and being surrounded by the spirit of 'togetherness' with their partner covered other reasons. However, love was their primary motive to migrate and to follow their partners to the "ends of the earth" (King-O'Riain, 2016: 13) followed by working and studying opportunities. Familial affiliations were present in the process of their union formation. Although there was no significant difference among these two types of relationships, there were personal and country of origins' differences detected in terms of cultural, societal and familial norms. Especially younger couples gave high values to their parents' opinion in the beginning phase of their marriages; other couples' families took neutral stance due to the couples' ages, previous marriage and life experiences as well as cultural difference. Due to a variety of reasons, some couples also experienced tension from their partner's family or from both families. Right now, all of their families do like the couples' current dynamics in their marriages or relationships, and do not hold any negative attitudes anymore. Nonetheless, they do have unpleasant feeling about their long-distance

relationship which they believe hardens creating a common life and at the same time limits their attachment with their offspring.

Turning onto the present time of the couple's daily life, it was found that the transnational way of living, loving, thinking and acting is not autonomous and stable for the couples. The results revealed that particular couples create their own way of intimacy, privacy while reconsidering the globalized perspectives of love through the lens of bi-nationalism and transnationalism. When they are together with their partners, their feeling was mentioned as "full", "normal" or "relaxed", whereas when they are apart, their feeling was described as "incomplete" or "sacrifice". In order to maintain their relationships, indeed their love comes first but is conveyed with other elements of a triangle combination of 'mutual respect, acceptance and love', 'having same expectations', 'humanitarian personality', the necessity of 'having satisfactory intimacy in their romantic relationship', 'having a good communication', 'trust', and especially for those both mixed and transnational couples the latter two elements were found really important to keep their relationships alive. Their communication form becomes more mobilized and virtualized when they are far away from their spouses. Layers of communication tools were observed because of the fact that hyper-fast technology tools changed in time and people's preferences reformed in accordance with circumstances (e.g. transition from expensive international telephone calls to using Internet applications on their own mobile phones, from radiotelephone to the home phone, from Skype to WhatsApp and FaceTime). Regardless of having mixed-nationality (nearby love) and/or transnational (distant love) couples, all referred that advanced information and communication technologies (ICTs) was important in order "not to grow apart" while they are away. Worth mentioning that both mixed and transnational couples used ICTs more often because they are mainly far away from each other for a longer period. Still all couples emphasized that transmitting all information and emotions was not possible with the cross-border communication, but rather it was "a possible solution" that connects individuals in a daily basis while sharing the contexts of love, intimacy and family. In my research, their intense representations also addressed that all migrants try to manage "the complexities of belonging both 'here' and 'there' simultaneously" (Suárez-Orozco, 2001; as cited in Warriner, 2007: 202) while bridging between cultures, languages, and lifestyles by living in globalized inequalities with names, faces, rights and duties. Especially for some 'trailing' wives, negotiating the power hierarchy within marital relations and the enormous inequalities between men and women roles were discovered as determinative factors while analyzing the dynamics of their intimate relationships.

There were also some alterations discovered in the present life of the couple's social circle of family relations. Regarding receiving advice from their families about their relationship has changed in accordance with their family dynamics, culture and individual differences related to their personality and ages. From the analysis shown that even some of their families had earlier hesitation about their unions but now they fully support and accept, presumably this makes foreign partners build better adaptation and integration into society. To the question of family interference into their relationship was generally understood in negative way (e.g. continuous family gathering activities and being accused of inexperienced in decision-making process) and except for only two answers received from positive side (e.g. looking after their baby and wishing to have another grandchild). Even though there was no significant result captured between the two types of couples, the role of distance between couples and their families was reported to reduce the possible interferences because cultural and traditional social norms would be minimized at distance. While sustaining familial relationship, knowing the native language of their partners was considered as a plus because considering the bi-national backgrounds of particular couples might comorbid with bilingual or multilingual skills, but in most cases this was not similar for their families. Also, their interaction and communication with their families transformed into cross border communication while building "virtual intimacies" (Wilding, 2006: 216), but for them "*it was not replaceable with face-to-face communication*".

In addition to their family relations, the emigration process has also played a role in transforming their social networks of friendship and socialization activities. For some individuals, creating social networks was not problematic, but for some their social life has narrowed in time and space in terms of specific complexities during their settlement in a host country (for example, in the context of Istanbul: baby delivery, language barrier, lack of access to different events and current political condition; and in the context of Luanda: lack of transportation system, being insecure while driving alone as foreign driver, and general security problem in the country). The channels to make new friends were through relatives, friends, and neighbours, working colleagues, activities, and cultural events organized by Embassies of their countries. When individuals have higher competency in personal, professional and linguistic skills with or without higher socio-economic status, they have adapted and blended better into the host society. While keeping in contact with their friends, it was informed that ICTs was beneficial to keep in contact with their friends at distance while others believed that their friendship loses its sense because of geographical distance and the frequent usage of these technologies. Even if they use a virtual communication they reflect

that it creates a dry and superficial conversation because it lacks sincerity, reality and intimacy.

Moving to the subject of parenting, younger couples have engaged in equal caregiver roles regardless of their types of relationships. Noteworthy, work-life balance in labour and domestic spheres facilitated to take equal weight in caregiver roles. Due to the geographical distance, some of the parents became partial caregivers. Yet, their caregiver roles have showed that parenting is a never-ending concept because they provide endless support for their left behind children through virtual communication. Moreover, the findings admitted that their household was blessed with the gift and achievement of modernity by multilingualism and multiculturalism. Almost all the parents try to teach their children how to feel diversity by leading them to an adventurous journey full of discoveries while living in cultural, linguistic, racial as well as religious patterns. In terms of the views of parents about their children's future educational and professional plans, it varied with their national, ethnical, habitual and personal attributions. Still there was no difference captured between these couples. In the context of school choice, almost all of their children would be registered or already registered in the public school, except for one in home-schooling. When it comes to the selection of a professional career, all of the parents and parents-to-be individuals respect their children's choices and decisions by encouraging their interests, wills, and talents. Only some intend to direct their children's choices to the specific departments of administration, business and engineering in the aim of following the parents' profession, and language and literature because they are already exposed to the concepts of bilingualism and/or multilingualism in the household.

About their future plans, there were significantly different results obtained from mixed and both mixed and transnational couples. Those mixed couples tend to make more fixed plans in terms of time and space which were mostly about the investment on their children's education and life, and some were about establishing their own houses and organizations. Foreign wives intend to improve their educational and professional skills, yet their husbands act in different manners (i.e. some were empowering but one was exerting male dominance and sovereignty over his wife). Regarding having children, mixed couples do not have a plan in nearest future. In comparison, both mixed and transnational couples have a tendency to embrace their "liquid life" as tackling the unexpected changes (Bauman, 2005) due to having a mobilized way of life. By doing so their identities, attitudes, beliefs, ideas and values may no longer be in fixed or rigid terms, they use their skills to construct more flexible personal as well as national identities, and while they are "learning to live 'floatingly'" (Yeoh, Willis &



Fakhri, 2003: 213). For some, not knowing a permanent and/or temporary country was a burden on their life while for others it was an adventurous experience even wishing to continue their transnational way of life. For their educational and professional plans, there was a significant difference of age but not gender, mainly; younger individuals who are in their 20s and 30s plan to continue their studies while older ones want to continue their current business and/or plan about their retirement. Again due to the age-related factor but not gender, younger couples expect to have their child/children soon while for over thirty couples was not even an option.

With the aforementioned results and analysis, this study wanted to highlight how the transnational experience requires endless reconfiguration to build a new sensibility and to position one's self in accordance with conditions and how their spousal and familial dynamics were changing shape. If more and more people work in a transnational way, the distinctions of identity loses its sense because people have started pertaining more than one country and native land, speaking more than one language, raising their offspring in multilingual and multicultural atmosphere, growing up in different countries and even maintaining ties through the virtual communication (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2014). For this reason, these findings by the experiences of particular interviewees might be helpful to recognize the circumstances and to act upon with possible interventions for these globalized way of relationships with the mixed and/or transnational patterns are awaiting in the journey of love.

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## 8. APPENDICES

### 8.1. Appendix 1

#### **The complexities of the countries: In the specific incidents of Turkey and Angola**

##### *The current complexities in Turkey*

Analysing the current Turkish political system and continuing concerns about the reform of the Turkish constitution, it is necessary to have a look at the certain period to understand the trajectory of the political overview in the Republic of Turkey. In 2002, Islamist-based Justice and Development party (AK) won the election and secured majority of seats in parliament with promising to keep the secular principles of constitution and take steps to maintain economic and political stability (BBC News, 2017). Between 2002 and 2012, by holding their promise, Turkey had dramatic improvements in urbanization, foreign trade, finance, increased employment, incomes and expanded access in public services, however; since 2012, there are raising concerns about Turkey's conditions related to deteriorating geographical/geopolitical circumstances in its border neighbours and political developments in 2015 and 2016 triggered further social, economic and political challenges (The World Bank, 2017).

The Justice and Development party started applying policies in increasingly authoritarian tendencies and their position was out of the democracy truck; even though secular protests/demonstrations exist, they are repelled, silenced or impede disproportionately by government. New restrictive laws created tension and contributed a highly polarized climate and political pressures on the media and human rights. Turkey has deteriorated alarming rates in press freedom and freedom of expression while dozens of journalists and writers are imprisoned due to criticizing government with political opposition views in recent years; this clearly shows Turkish judiciary started to be disciplined by the state and the rule of an all-powerful man (Freedom House, 2017). These dark incidents expand the patterns of "nepotism, corruption and sycophancy within the ruling the elite" and Turkey turns into a "case of illiberal democracy, where ballots rule but free speech and the rule of law are fading" (Akyol, 2015: 3).

Recently, parliament discussed about constitutional reforms suggested by the government with the statement of making Turkey more democratic than ever, however; these attempts were related to holding more power in the one hand and seeking more control over the secular judiciary, in other words; the power of three legislative bodies would be given into one executive president (BBC News, 2017). In the current referendum on 16<sup>th</sup> of April,

Erdoğan expanded the powers of his presidency while opponents left with fear that Turkey is slipping into a dictatorship.

These aforementioned concerns from the imprisonment to the bygone referendum tell how the current climate has effects on individuals and their lives in Turkey right now. Including my participants -regardless of local nationals or expatriates- living in Turkey or living abroad but keeping their bonds with Turkey raised their concerns related to political situations affected by Islamic force and non-stop terrorism attacks in several provinces. The crackdown on expression affected their daily life on account of compromising their free speech by adjusting their way of life what to say and what to do about governance. Also, their future plans concerning living and raising their children are highly influenced by these specific complexities in Turkey.

#### *The current complexities in Angola*

Angola is an oil-rich country which its growth mainly based on oil field, the country still at risk of economic crisis since the ended of civil war in 2002 due to constant government oppression, unsolved problems with the culture of corruption, poor governance, mishandled public funds, and political control over institutions (The World Bank, 2016). Low oil prices sharply hit the economy but there are other problems strongly impacted on people's life in the levels of personal, social and societal.

One of the major problems is that governmental investments on mainly human rights and human developments including healthcare, education and living standards/conditions of the people are extremely slow; for instance, in healthcare system, medical facilities and services do not hold international standards and lack essential medicines to prevent from malaria and yellow fever vaccines (Human Rights Watch, 2017). The government may find several excuses related to health budget cuts not to provide basic necessities, but they are responsible for delivering essential medicines and medical supplies even in times of economic crisis. Furthermore, education is at alarming point for Angola with illiteracy rate of 26%; quality of education is very hard to come by in Angola today to achieve educational and professional qualifications (Euronews, 2015). Further efforts are necessary to tackle inequalities and to develop the quality of education because it is a key for economic and social wellbeing of the population in the long-term effect for the country.

Another problem is that the country's worsening economic condition and related criminality continues to be a serious threat to safety and security in Angola containing robbery, assaults, carjacking and sometimes homicide recorded throughout Luanda (OSAC,

2016). In terms of road safety and conditions, walking and driving outside after dark is not advisable because of being in danger of attacked and robbed in certain areas of Luanda; in addition to that drivers face hazardous conditions concerning inexperienced drivers, drink driving, increased traffic jam, few intersections with traffic signals, potholes in the roads, and vendors and other pedestrians regularly dart in/out of traffic (ibid.). For this reason, having alertness and patience are necessary for all drivers.

It is obvious that preventive measurements are not enough and make inhabitants are inevitably in danger regardless of local nationals and expatriates. In order to make effective change, financial resources should be used for the needs of the majority. Especially, my participants who are/are going to be expatriates in Luanda have shaped their future plans while considering the specificities of the country and they take further steps to prepare their own life standards mainly in their own home. To live in a safe and healthy environment, expatriates living in Luanda create their own coping strategies and form their own zone.

## 8.2. Appendix 2

### INTERVIEW GUIDE

#### **Demographic information** (Both of couple)

Age, Gender, Educational level (qualification), Occupation, and Nationality

Are you working, studying or staying at home?

#### **A. Background of the couple's life**

How long are you together?

How did you meet your current partner?

How did you make the decision to start living together?

How did you decide to live in this country? And why?

Did your family approve your union? What about your partner's family?

What did the members of both families like more or like less in your union?

Did you receive advice from your family regarding your relationship? What about in your partner's family?

In terms of living condition in this specific country, what are the challenges?

How these challenges affect your spousal relationship?

How do you cope with these challenges?

What are the differences you face in your relationship? How do you find a merging point?

#### **B. Previous expectations**

What did you expect from your future life before you met with your current partner? Which similarities can you draw when comparing your previous expectations with the current situation? Which differences can you draw when comparing your previous expectations with the current situation?

What did you expect from your future education and professional life before you met your current partner? Which similarities can you draw when comparing your previous expectations with the current situation? Which differences can you draw when comparing your previous expectations with the current situation?

#### **C. Friendship and Socialization**

How would you describe your social life?

Are you making new friends?

Are you still keeping in contact with your old friends?

How would you describe face-to-face communication and virtual communication with your friends? How would you distinguish face-to-face communication and virtual communication?

Do you receive any advice from your friends regarding your relationship?

#### **D. Family relations**

How do family support your relationship? In what way?

How do both of your family intervene your relationship?

Do you build bridges between families or do you separate familial relationships among your family and partner's family?

Among your family, with whom do you maintain close relationships in each territory? How often? For what kind of issues?

How would you describe face-to-face communication and virtual communication with your families? How would you distinguish face-to-face communication and virtual communication?

#### **E. Couple's daily life**

What makes you to be a couple?

How often are you separated and how often do you meet your partner in the same year?

When you are apart, how do you maintain your relationship?

Which tools do you use to communicate with your partner? Do you think they are helpful for your relationship?

How would you describe your daily life when you are apart from your partner?

How would you describe your daily life when you are together with your partner?

When you are together with your partner, are you both usually working or enjoying leisure time out of work? Does one work and another is off from work?

Are there other activities that you attend besides work and holidays?

What do you usually do together with your partner?

#### **F. Parenting**

Do you have children? If so, how old are they?

How about parenting, do you share caregiver roles? In what ways?

What languages do you speak with your children? How did you decide on it?

What languages would you like your children to learn? What about your partner's view?

What educational plans would you like your children to follow? What about your partner's view?

Do you have a preferred country to raise your children? In terms of school choice, do you prefer a particular type of school and/or education?

What professional plans, in terms of career building, would you like your children to follow?

In terms of citizenship, which current nationality do your children have? In case they have only one, are you planning to apply for other? Is there any particular reason, why?

### **G. Mid-term goals and plans**

How do you see yourself in 5 years from now? And in 10 years from now? What about your partner's view?

In terms of:

- Both of your professional careers?
- Both of your educational plans?
- Having children?

Where do you see yourself becoming old? In which country? In which circumstances?

### **H. Identity**

How do you identify your nationality?

After all this going back and forth between foreign countries and your country, how did you specify yourself?

How does life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures shape your identity and sense of belonging?

In terms of:

- identity as a couple
- identity as a member of a family (as a member of the individual's biological family; as a member of the partner's family)
- identity as a citizen of the country where you live in

### **I. Suggestion**

What would be your suggestion/advice for new couples with same experiences as yours?

### 8.3. Appendix 3

#### Grid Analysis of Turkish-Angolan couple (ID-1)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** Actually, I am the person who introduced the couple to each other in International Food Festival at our university, unintentionally had a role in their relationship as a matchmaker. I am glad to see that everything works out and they are happily married couple now. After graduated from university, we keep in contact and still we receive advices from each other on the basis of several issues concerning life conditions in Angola, preparing documents for public services either in Turkey or in Angola (in the contexts of marriage, visa, and currently obtaining double nationality for our children etc.), and updating and helping each other for other necessary matters. I got in touch with my particular interviewee from my social network; we are both friends and neighbours living only 5 minutes far from each other in Luanda. While I was in Luanda, we visited each other. In home visits, I directed some of my questions related to life conditions in Angola, their parental roles in child raising practices and language acquisition of their child. During the interview, their baby and our husbands were present. While I was talking with her, our husbands talked about household repairs/maintenances and they guided each other with necessary information. Hence, home visits gave me a chance to observe their relationship in the matters of spousal, familial and parental roles. Baby crying might be a pause rather than disturbance in our interview since I could benefit on observing their parent-child relationship as well as collaborative nursing patterns such as helping each other to change diaper and preparing formula, etc. For the rest of questions, we had 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up session by Skype meeting. Although she arranged a private space in her office, other colleagues' voices was in background (in the last minutes of our talk) so sometimes we had to repeat if we did not hear properly. During our talk, she was comfortable and open while delivering her ideas. This might be related with our friendships, mutual understanding of the specific topic about transnationalism, and a feeling of trust that we build to each other.

**Individual background of Turkish female:** She was born in Turkey. She studied abroad in Northern Cyprus. After her graduation, she started working in Cyprus. However, she had to quit her job in order to accomplish her dream to be with her spouse by getting married and starting living together. In terms of acquiring foreign language skills, she learned English in her university as the language of instruction was English. When she arrived to Angola, she attended Portuguese courses and now she is more confident to speak Portuguese.

**Individual background of Angolan male:** He was born in Angola. He got scholarship from BP to study in Ankara, the capital city of Turkey. BP scholarship holders had a different procedure, namely, the preparation year located in Ankara and once the students were successful and passed their proficiency exam, and then they were referred to Northern Cyprus for their further bachelor years. As for learning other languages, he acquired English language skills in his high school, following the intense English course given by BP and in his university. Now, he continues to experience and acquire English language skills because he works in international market. Due to his overseas job experience, he has been travelling and living in different countries for assigned months/years.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple can be defined as transnational couple living apart from each other for 6 months in the year. In the precise moment, the couple lives in Luanda, Angola. In the first phase of interview, the couple was together. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow up session of interview, the couple fell apart as a consequence of his job, currently he works in Alaska, USA. When he is on holidays, he travels back to Angola to be with family. She works in Luanda, Angola and she is in charge of looking after their baby when he is apart.

#### Demographic information

25, female, bachelor's degree in Computer Engineering, working as a computer engineer, Turkish

29, male, bachelor's degree in Petroleum and Natural Gas Engineering, working as a completion engineer<sup>1</sup>, Angolan

#### Background of the couple's life

The couple is together for 7 years. They met at Middle East Technical University Northern Cyprus Campus. She felt same excitement while memorizing their first meeting and she articulated that "*actually our love was first sight. I have met with him firstly in a dormitory kitchen at Christmas day. They were cooking and singing songs. I have just seen him and felt that I*

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<sup>1</sup> Completions engineers ensures that the well is installed with the proper equipment so that the productivity and longevity of the well is maximized (further information is available at: <http://www.bp.com/en/global/bp-careers/students-and-graduates/graduate-opportunities/engineering.html>).



*know him very long time. He says he felt the same because we smiled each other at that moment. After that he says he looked for me everywhere in the campus and firstly we knew each other thanks to one of my friend who is YOU! You told me 'Do you want to meet with my friends?' and I said 'okay' and I found myself in front of him at food festival that was great!"*

In the beginning, their decision to start living together was based on economic, emotional and subjective reasons, clearly seen by her statement: *"Since the long-distance is quite difficult, going back and forth has begun to disturb us and we made such a decision because we believed that this long-distance breaks our link and weakens the bond between us. Both emotional and material reasons affected our decision. Since the distance between countries is quite long, tickets are really expensive and also to see each other once a year was not enough for us, even technology was not enough. Living together is a different feeling and we thought that we would be more powerful if we live side by side."*

In the first time, she had difficulty in adjusting and she did not think to live in Luanda until she went back to Turkey. Then she realized she missed Angola, and adjusted there as well. She added that *"if I would not move to Luanda, I would be working in Turkey. If I would be working in Turkey, I would sign a year or two-year contract for work and this time again we would be apart from each other so I would be postponing my dreams. My dream was relied on us and actually I had my job in Cyprus but I quitted because of him. We wouldn't start a common life and both of us would not accomplish career goals unless we were married and living together. In order to avoid ambivalence or unexpected conditions, we decided to live together and start from same point by wishing more permanency in our life and professional careers."*

In terms of family approval from families, her mother played an important role in decision-making phase to clear her mind for taking a step of gathering/living together in order to avoid ambivalence situation of being in between. In addition to that her father made her realized not to be stuck in life while waiting for better conditions and he encouraged her to try even it would be hard. Her husband's family was happy with their decision but they were in favour of cohabitation since they were not able to do wedding because of their lack of finance. However, the idea of cohabiting was not a welcoming concept for Turkish culture so it was denied by her family and both of family did their best at the end. Their families gave some advices to the couple and also reminded them for some related matters: *"Even it is hard keep on going, be patient and be savvy towards each other. You have chosen a difficult way; you will endure the consequences of it, you are responsible for future and if you are happy or unhappy it is your decision. That's why, take your own responsibility and don't say us this is our fault. This is your decision, you wanted so we are doing this."* What's more, her husband received advices from his mother related to some adjustment skills into marriage life such as being patient and being calm. Since they are young and inexperienced couple, their families took initiative to inform about marriage life and they supported emotionally their union and marriage. Both of their families are happy with their union because they have seen the couple has a capacity to establish their own way of life, get into labour market, feel attached to each other and increase their personal development. Establishing their own way of life and increasing personal development by becoming independent and standing on their own feet were important matters for families. Still, long distance is quite challenging for her family because of different reasons including not being able to do family visits in special days, difficulty in travelling due to her father's health condition, and material difficulty in buying expensive tickets.

In terms of living condition, the couple faces different challenges in each territory. When she started mentioning about challenges in Luanda, she took a deep breath and we both ended up laughing because we have same difficulties and she said *"countless complaints: firstly security, hygiene, water shortage (laughter), traffic jam, sometimes cultural differences. Apart from these, I don't have difficulty in their cuisine, I pretty get used to their food. In general, three things: security, traffic and hygiene."* In addition to that her husband has difficulty in adjusting to Turkish customs. For instance, continuously family gathering activities and visiting families are extreme for him. He also believes there is less private life in Turkey because some Turkish people curiously asked him about personal matters (his salary, their home condition and etc.). The obtained challenges in Luanda create a great tension in their spousal relationship still the couple take a stance together clearly seen by her statement: *"They affect sometimes negatively, sometimes positively. When we wait so much in traffic or if I get angry at someone at work; when I come home, I get nervous and I cannot be patient. The water shortage drives me crazy, and this situation causes tension between us and we can be very angry to each other. If we look from positive side, it is neither in his hand nor in mine, but we will change this situation together. This gives a feeling to achieve something together, and to fight together with a common goal so negative situation turns into positive."* She continued in the case of Turkey: *"Although there are many possibilities for entertainment in Turkey, there is a constant feeling of family, relatives and so on. For instance, even though you are old and married, still need to inform when you will return from shopping or even when you go for holiday. Since many people surround you, you cannot be yourself. Coming for a dinner, visiting relatives, this collective way of life causes inconvenience in the relationship. There is more freedom in Angola while there are restrictions in Turkey because there are always family activities, e.g. if a weekend is not planned, a plan will be definitely made for you. Continuous family interference makes us irritated."* The couple develops some coping strategies in each territory. For instance in Angola, for traffic jam they pretend to be at home by drinking juice and eating some snack while talking to each other; for hygiene having assistant to help in housework, taking off shoes like Turkish custom and selective choices for

restaurants; for security she never stay alone at home when her husband is away, taking taxi instead of using public transportation, avoid of wearing gold jewellery and taking a lot money with her. In Turkey, the couple takes initiative to make their own plans and leaving the rest of times for their family. These circumstances make couple more adaptable, conscious and determined.

They face differences in their relationship mainly depended on personality differences. She explained that *“both our cultures and our characters are so different. Actually we don’t have much cultural differences, we have many personal differences. For cultural situations, I or he is very open-minded so we almost have no problem about cultural differences. Also, we are not so traditional people and that makes everything easier. For instance, I am very social but he is asocial. I love to travel a lot, like to go somewhere while he likes to stay at one place and sit calmly and we enjoy different kind of food. He is more patience, organized, disciplined than me. I am more religious than him and I have closer relationship with my relatives.”* Although there are differences, the couple has their own way to find a midpoint. This was specified in her further statement: *“We know each other’s minds so well that we usually compromise. For example, if he wants to meet with his relatives, of course we are going but we stay for a short time. I want to visit somewhere, we visit 5 of them instead of 10 in the list because he doesn’t like on the move all the time. If we go out at the weekend, we will be one day out and one day at home. Since we know what we don’t like, we compromise and we try to balance.”*

### **Previous expectations**

*“Before I met him, I had the idea of living abroad after university; I never wanted to live in Turkey. I don’t know why but I didn’t want to live in Turkey throughout all my life and I always wanted to travel. I always did not want to be attached to one place, and I wanted to do a job that I loved. After marriage, I am living abroad and doing the job I love, I am not attached to somewhere again because we are here now but we are not sure where we will be tomorrow, so this is the way of life that I want.”* These phrases demonstrated that although living abroad suits with her previous expectation before marriage, still she wishes to live in Europe. In her further statement revealed though she doesn’t feel attached to Luanda, she is happy to start their life from there. *“I have always been thinking to work abroad, learning and experiencing different countries, if I would be in Europe, maybe I would not know how to give value to the things, now I think I am more aware of everything. Maybe it is better for us to start from here (referring to Angola) because of creating awareness.”*

Her previous expectation for future education and professional life, she wished to work in more active job relying on leadership and business. Comparing to her previous experiences as a computer engineer, writing codes from home to job or vice versa and working as a robot was not satisfying her. For this reason, she mentioned her current job is highly suitable with her expectation and her career interest. She also added *“when we met first time, I was thinking to do master in management or leadership, currently I haven’t given up, I still think of doing master in Management of Engineering or Business Management but I don’t have a hurry because I have to have very good experience to do management so it was good to start working as soon as possible. If I would do my master now, it wouldn’t make any sense at all.”* She believes the only difference is postponing to do master but working will give her chance to acquire more management skills that would be helpful in her master degree.

### **Friendship and Socialization**

Moreover, in Luanda her social life contains her Angolan friends from university, her husband’s colleagues and their wives, business activities, and one of her friend from Expat Group inviting her to different events. Making new friends can be easy for her, but she gives clue of not having permanent friendship with people who has transnational way of life, she explained this in her further indication: *“I try to meet with new people because each of us are not permanent here, some of them stay around 6 months or 1 year and they constantly go forth and back to their home, that’s why I don’t have only one friend. The more people I know, the more I can spend my day fully.”*

As for keeping old friendships, distance was determinative factor whether friendship will continue unconditionally or not. She explained *“in distance, some friendships continue and some don’t. When it doesn’t, I understand that this is not a lifelong friendship. The thing is, we really don’t see or keep in contact with some friends anymore. That person withdrawn from my life and others take his/her place, but some of my friends still continue unconditionally. Even we are far from each other, we know what we are doing in terms of health, job...”* Apparently, she keeps in touch with her few of closest friends while she is away, she communicates with them virtually, still she prefers to have face-to-face communication when she is in Turkey. Instead of receiving advices from friends, she gives advices to them. Also, her friends give emotional support by saying ‘relax don’t make too much stress, everything will be alright as it used to be.’

### **Family relations**

Both family support in material and emotional issues to make them feel comfortable in each territory so that couple do not feel alone and feel well-treated and well-respected. Even though she mentioned there is no mediating or seeking advice from families, in the beginning of decision to start living together in Angola was precisely directed by her family. Currently, the

couple does not seek any advices related to their private life but families do have a say for whom looking after baby among grandmothers. Her role was to combine familial relationships as she said that *“when I am in Turkey, I talk with my mother-in-law via camera, showing her granddaughter, making her talk with my mother.”* The family relations are only among her parents and his parents. Families communicate via Google translate (Portuguese to Turkish and vice versa) and sending pictures to each other by WhatsApp.

### **Couple’s daily life**

What makes them as a couple is defined by *“we have a common dream for life. The image of family and marriage in my mind is completely identical with his one. Whatever happens, we ask each other first and we give priority to each other. We enjoy together and we have a common sense of humour. We always back up each other by covering each other missing points. We are actually opposite characters, but he completes me and I complete him.”* She also declared her image of being a good wife and husband *“I think without any judgment letting each other to be who we are comfortably together. I don’t want flowers, gifts, and romance etc. but I want to enjoy the life together. As long as he is happy, positive, respectful he is the best husband for me. Also now we have a baby, so we have huge responsibility, one of the most important things is sharing this responsibility. I am lucky because my husband believes the gender equality so he can cook, clean, and change diaper. Whatever I do, he can do as well or vice versa so that is amazing. For instance, he can call and ask me to stop and buy fuel for our car or I can call and ask him to cook before I cook. Everything in life we share, we give whole credit to each other.”*

This couple is an example of transnational couple as 6 months separate and 6 months together. In order to maintain their relationship, they prefer written communication since they have a time difference for 10 hours between Luanda and Alaska. They send pictures, voice and/or video recording while baby is playing, taking trip pictures, and writing about daily life via WhatsApp.

In her daily life without her husband, she feels to have social life in shorter distance and more limited environment because of security problem. Moreover, when he is far, she had difficulty in doing everything alone such as preparing food, taking care of baby, doing household things, taking care of bills and salaries of their assistants, going to hospital, pregnancy control and baby vaccinations. She mentioned that even it gets harder and longer while doing alone (observed stress, tension, constantly breathing, and mutual laughing). In her daily life with her husband, it is more active with different events such as going out to eat after work or at the weekends meeting with different people. It is also more comfortable when he accompanies her to share responsibilities and dividing works.

The couple tries to enjoy their leisure time together out of work, yet there are times that he helps her to solve some programming issue related her job. And if he needs to study at home, she keeps silence. Her flexible way of working is quite helpful for her personal development and sparing time for herself and in off days she spends time with her husband and baby. They usually eat, drink, take a walk at the beach or in the nature, swim, go to cinema, restaurant, and cook and set the table together. Besides working and holidays, they attend one of the weekly events of Luanda, exhibitions and concerts. Later on, she wishes to attend activities with baby.

### **Parenting**

They have a child -5 months- and child has double nationality (Turkish and Angolan). I had chance to observe their child rising from mother and father in Luanda especially in home visits at our home or their home. Both parents are quite attentive on their kids and they help each other with every matter such as preparing formula for baby, cleaning month, and calming baby while crying by singing songs in their own mother tongues. The child is raised in multilingual environment: mother speaks Turkish, father speaks English and mother-in-law speaks Portuguese. The couple will encourage her to learn other languages as well. For language acquisition, she stated that *“I thought I cannot purely teach English, I want to transmit all emotions so I speak in Turkish. We thought that our common language is English, thus the child should know English.”* In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up session, when asked about her husband proficiency in English, she was near her husband. She directly delivered his speech as follows: ‘I have been speaking English for 10 years, I am not a native I can fail sometimes but I can explain every emotion or situation in English’. The consequences of this decision is not certain whether adult speaking style will be enough or beneficial for the baby while transmitting their feelings, thoughts, emotions, and ideas with a non-native language. Just to keep in mind that acquiring English language skills might be different than being born with English language.

In terms of educational plans, the couple respects their daughter’s choice and her interest can be social, scientific or artistic but they want her to be educated academically. In terms of professional plans and career building, they wish their children to follow engineering path like them, even she mentioned *“our child will be constantly exposed to engineering matters and this will facilitate her future career”*. In terms of school choices, the couple prefers to raise their children in USA because he has been working in several cities in America so he had chance to observe life conditions and well-equipped education for

engineers. She added *“Turkey is not in their list because of the current political condition such as turning into Iran, additionally she won’t to have a beautiful future in Turkey without favouritism and/or nepotism in work life.”*

### **Midterm plans and goals**

She is not sure about long term plans because her ideas are quite variable. After 5 years, she wishes to be out of Angola. In terms of professional career, she wishes to have clearer and conceptualized positions in their fields. In terms of educational plans wish to be done with masters. Also, they have a dream to have one more children. After 10 years, she wishes to be in another country with her partner and child.

She doesn’t have a preferred county to become old yet as a couple they want to turn back to their university in Northern Cyprus as academicians.

### **Identity**

She believes going back and forth between Turkey and Angola shaped her personality every day. She specified herself as follows: *“My personality changes every day. If you had done this interview before the pregnancy or before going to Turkey, you would definitely do it with someone else. I feel differently, I am really changing every day, I get used to something every morning: the water, the distance, the missing. For example, this interview may change after 2 years or even 10 years. Now, I become a person who adapts very quickly. I transformed into a softer and relaxed character. I can give an example that I was used to be very solid in the past, and I am more liquid now. I am constantly changing.”*

Identity and sense of belonging was referred by her: *“I miss Turkey, but I miss here too. I think there must be Turkey as well as there must be Angola. I can say I would definitely live in Turkey but at the same time I wouldn’t dare to say that I would never ever live in Angola. The reason is that I have my habits in both places. When I go to Turkey, I miss Angola especially my home, my space and my organization. And when I am here, I miss and search for things about there. I am Turkish but I feel that both of the countries are my home. While in Turkey, I also miss the tastes of Angola, and I got used to the Angolan cuisines. I think both places have a big place in my heart now.”* In the contexts of time and space, her identity has shaped by two countries. Seemingly, building her own home, space and organization gave a sense of belonging because she can feel accepted, welcomed and comforted.

Life across two countries, languages, and cultures shaped her identity and sense of belonging. She referred that *“when he is away, my mother-in-law and his cousin stay with me and I am more surrounded by his family, our friends and children. There are constantly guests so that I don’t feel alone and we watch Angolan channels, instead of watching CNN or English channels. By doing so, I learn what’s going on in the news. At my home, they are free to cook if they want. Thus, when I open our refrigerator, there are lots of cultural meals. I visit relatives, paying bills, going out for shopping and I talk constantly in Portuguese so I found myself more into society. That’s why, when he is away I feel more Angolan whereas when he is here I cook more Turkish food, I feel more Turkish.”*

This also elaborates that she feels more Turkish as a couple as well as a member of her family; she feels more Angolan in her husband’s family especially when her husband is not around. Last but not least, she feels well-treated, welcomed and accepted in Angolan society. Obviously, her language acquisition in Portuguese gives credit to be productive in social as well as in professional life.

### **Suggestion**

*“Nothing. My solutions or experiences might not work for them. They will find their solutions and way. Only I can say it seems too hard to happen but it happens as long as they don’t give up!”*

## 8.4. Appendix 4

### Grid Analysis of Turkish-Jordanian couple (ID-2)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with a particular interviewee from my social network. Two years ago, we met with each other in Istanbul Atatürk Airport while going to Luanda, Angola. Since that time we keep in contact, we visit each other, give advices and exchange information about life conditions in Angola, also when we are in Turkey we help each other to bring our necessities. The couple used to live in same surrounding but was in different house in which they had a limited personal zone and this made her not feeling comfortable. Now, the company has given a house that has their own bedroom, child room, having playground for a child, guest bathroom, in short having more standardization and wider aspect of privacy. For the interview, I met with her in their house when I was in Luanda, and she was happy to host me in their new house. This gave me a chance to observe their familial, spousal and parental reactions in their own settlement. The half of the interview held in their living room and he was present in the questions of ‘differences in their relationship’ and ‘limitations of living in Luanda’ and he was playing with their daughter. Their presence has flourished our conversation and my observation regarding their father and child attachment. In addition to that our second part of the interview was held on online interview via Skype because it was the easiest way that helping us to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. In both interviews, we had pauses due to some child-rearing activities such as boiling milk, taking her to the toilet, and helping to wash her hands. This supplemented to observe mother and child attachment. During the talk, she was friendly, excited and comfortable while conveying her thoughts and ideas.

**Individual background of Turkish female:** She was born in Turkey and she studied in Turkey. After 5 years of their marriage, she will be entitled to have Jordanian citizenship. After they got married, she moved to Angola since her husband works in there. Besides her mother tongue -Turkish-, she has acquired other language skills, for example; she developed her English skills at university, Arabic language skills with her husband and basic level of Portuguese language skills due to being in Portuguese-speaking environment.

**Individual background of Jordanian male:** He was born in Jordan. He has received family residence permit in Turkey and he will be entitled to obtain Turkish citizenship after 3 years of their marriage. Due to his overseas job experience, he moved to Angola. Besides his mother tongue -Arabic-, he has acquired Turkish language skills with his wife, English skills at his university and his workplace and Portuguese language skills with the help of Portuguese-speaking environment and Portuguese and Angolan social networks.

**The couple’s specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple has a characteristic of transnational relationship that living together but sometimes falling apart due to his job. Specifically, in the time period of interview, they live in Luanda. In their holidays, the couple travel back and forth between Angola, Turkey, Jordan and Dubai to visit their families. During family visits, the couple also takes advantage to take care of documents related to obtain residence permit and citizenships in each other’s countries. The couple is married for 4 years, they have a 4-year-old daughter and they want to have more children.

#### Demographic information

24, female, university dropping out 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Mathematics, stay at home, Turkish

30, male, bachelor’s degree in Civil Engineering, working as Civil Engineer, Jordanian

#### Background of couple’s life

The couple is together for 4 years. They met with each other via one of the Facebook groups. They spoke with each other, and learned about the common characteristics of each other. When love naturally takes its turn, they decided to live together and she moved to Angola after their marriage. She told that *“My partner has already been working in Luanda since 2010 and he told me about his situation that he was working here, continuing his life here. I accepted it so we are in Angola. Still, we do not know what the conditions will be and where the next stop will be for now. I came here because I love him and also I didn’t want to ruin his plans because he had a regular life.”*

In terms of family approval, since couple-to-be individuals and families did not know each other so she took initiative decision to talk with her family. She mentioned that *“I felt encouraged and I told them directly. Firstly, I share with my mother and within the same hour I had the courage to tell my father. At first, he was surprised and he could not make sense of it, but later I told them, I explained. I said I believe he is the person of my life. They listened to me and afterwards they talked to each other. They said, ‘Tell him to come, we want to meet’. Of course, this is only one side of the story. Before talking to my partner and letting him to come to our home, we have some prayers in Islam that we have to believe in it. Namely, after we perform duties of worship, we sleep in the hope that Allah will speak through a dream. It’s just a spiritual*

feeling. We -me, my husband and my family- all had positive feelings when we wake up, that's why; nobody hesitated their decision and they accepted our union. I do not know what his family did, but my husband is their children and when he did this prayer, probably they all respect and accept. In reality, they had no idea that he actually would marry. But when my husband was determined to say 'yes, I want to marry this girl', they wondered and came. On the day they arrived, I met them and we were betroth/got engaged." When asked about what the members of both families like or dislike about their union, she answered "I can talk on behalf of my own family because I rarely see his family, so we do not talk about negativities. For example, my father has an idea or thought, and he wants to say, but since there is a language factor he says 'I don't say right now, he might misunderstand'. In fact, if he would be a Turkish, he would understand directly. I think the language factor can be a negative factor because it causes a disconnection in communication." In the account of receiving advice from their families about their relationship, she told "In the first day, there was a person who could speak both Arabic and Turkish translated our conversations. And my husband's mother said, 'Do not worry about your daughter, first entrusted to Allah then to me. She is also my daughter now'. The biggest support I have received from other side was this sentence; still when we have a difficulty or problem my husband's mother is always in my side. Likewise, my father and my mother treated my husband as like their son because my husband lost his father and their family was very good. For this reason, even my father did not apply any sanctions during the preparation of wedding and he didn't say 'let's get this or do this'. At the same time, I also had some wishes 'let's take this or do this', but my dad agreeably told me 'there is no need because the kid works alone and stands on his feet'. I don't know if my husband understood, but my father thought on him". This illustrates that all parties play a central role in supporting the couple and they advices to the couple to love and respect each other. She complemented that "My father always tells me 'be respectful to your husband and his family. You don't need to call us, call them every day. Don't do anything wrong'. It was recommended this way for my marriage to progress in a healthy way. In order to have a healthy marriage, he always recommends 'love and respect'. My husband's mother constantly tells him 'you are in the distance and she is entrusted to us, take care of her and your child, do whatever they want and respect'.

In the first interview, her husband told some challenges about living conditions in Angola "There is lack of transportation, and the safety issue. I do not feel comfortable, when my wife and child travel alone for such a long time (around one day travelling) due to lack of direct flight. Even there are dangerous conditions about driving such as no light in roads, unexpected movement from other drivers or passengers." He raised also the concern of being Muslim in the majority of Christian community. Even he gave an example of having beard in his first arrival to Angola, he was targeted some questions of 'Are you terrorist as well?', 'Why are you putting bomb?' 'Are all Muslim terrorists?' After these questions, he had to cut his beard to maintain low profile and currently he does not have beard. She also admitted her husband's comment about living conditions in Angola. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting, she supplemented "I don't think he has a lot of difficulties because he works here and has a circle of friends and colleagues. For me also there is not much difficulty in this country, I love the people of this country. I wish the possibilities were a little better, for example when we go to the markets; I wish we could find everything as in Turkey regarding food and beverages. This is my only problem. Apart from this, of course the cleaner country is important both in terms of our health and their health but I think we should accept this way. We have a security problem, we are afraid to go out after a certain time. When we go to the markets, we always have to hold our bags tight." These challenges do not have influence on the couple's life; she even said "The problems are related to the country not to us." She explained how they coped with these challenges "For security, we're trying not to be late at night. We are getting some money near us, not all of it. Anyway, there is no guarantee of life safety in everywhere. Apart from that, the solution of the hygienic condition of the country is not in our hand, still I behave as same as in my country; I do not throw garbage here on the streets either. For food and beverage, I bring it with me, or if we find our food styles, we get and stock them. But I wish that the fruits and vegetables coming from the outside would be natural, but I think there are hormones in food supply here."

When it comes to differences in their relationship, she mentioned that "I do not think this is just a Turkish-Arabic culture, but I think family education is very important as well. For some subjects I feel myself softer, for example, what a doctor tells is important and I prefer to open and read about it right away, but my husband says, 'No, you do not need these things. If you do your worships, there will be solutions for everything'. Moreover, I feel more relaxed and natural towards men and women and I do not have any bad intention towards the other side. However, my husband says 'all kinds of evil may occur from the opposite side and that it is better to keep a distance'. These differences do not occur because my husband is Arab and I am Turkish, on the contrary; they occur by reason of having differences in our family education and personalities." She carried on "I am very pleased with my own Turkish culture; I love our customs, traditions and customs. It is not related to me and my husband, but what I observed the Arab people whom I met, their own personal care is good such as their hands, feet, hair, nails, but I cannot make same comment for their houses. For instance, they do not take off their shoes and they do not care about it; but this is very important to me because we believe you take outside dirtiness into your house. At first, these hygienic situations made me very uncomfortable, but then I started getting used to when I am there. Even at our home, my husband sometimes doesn't realize that he got in with shoes but those times I come after him and warn him, 'what have you done, what are you here?' Now, we take off our shoes in front of the door and take them in. In the beginning, when I put the carpet, I told him 'you can step anywhere but not to the carpet'. At least the carpet would stay clean, the floor can be cleaned

and wiped easily but I cannot wash the carpet all the time. Now he got used to so he doesn't do, or he knows what to do when he goes to a Turkish house." She continued "When he crosses my cultural border or he takes an unusual stance, I warn my husband and he is a moderate person so he changes his actions and vice versa. For him, at first times when I was cooking chicken in the way I learned from my mother or my family, but he said 'the chicken should not be cooked in that way, I don't like it and if you continue to do so, I cannot eat'. So I ask him how to do it, sometimes he shows himself and sometimes I open on YouTube. Now, I do as they do, and he eats. There is a difference in our cuisines; really Arab and Turkish cuisines are very different." In the beginning of their relationship, the couple had difficulty in language because she speaks in Turkish, he speaks in Arabic and their common language was English. At those times, the couple took their time to listen and understand the core of the problems by explaining everything in detailed. Hence, she believes this brings happiness to both parties and everything solved smoothly. Also, she added that "I had to learn Arabic, I can speak and understand, and still I don't understand fully because I didn't study or take course in Arabic, I learned by the conversation with my husband. On the other hand, he learned more quickly and he can also understand while reading Turkish." Besides of these differences, the couple has a commonality in religious faiths and affiliations in Islam. Though the couple still face with some differences in their religion, she added "I thought even while praying now and I always think, we are both Muslim Alhamdulillah. Yet, after I met him I realized that I didn't know anything at all. I used to do my prayers without questioning myself, but now I feel like whether I did my prayer properly or not. He knows more than me because they have more religious education. This always pushes me to investigate and I question whose is right, his or mine? I try to do my best." Even though the couple might have several differences including family education, personalities, hygienic condition, culture, cuisines and language, they try to find a midpoint. He responded as follows "The importance is to talk when there are differences, try to find the merging point. Since this is an international relationship, there will be more differences to discover day by day and every day is another journey" and she continued "When I see a difference, I always say, 'this is not the case, this will be consequences of your actions' I explain this way. If two different nationalities have got married, you shouldn't be tired of talking with each other. When you act in the way of 'let's not say to him/her, I can do alone', you cannot change anything. If you rather sit down and talk openly and explain everything, both sides find the middle point easier and they will get along better."

### **Previous expectations**

Before she met with her husband, she expected from her future life "My current life is just opposite now; I wished to finish my university and become a Mathematics teacher. Nevertheless, I directly became a housewife instead of becoming a teacher. Also, I never thought or imagined to get marry a foreigner." In terms of her future education and professional life, she stated "I was already studying at the university. I was really working hard and my grades were the highest at that time and even I had a friend who was the first at school was helping me. Since my family moved near me, they supported me a lot. Everything was going well but I had to drop out because of my marriage. Of course, I had my expectations and dreams, for this reason, I was studying in Mathematics department and I would be a teacher. I do not know if it was the profession that I wanted but preferences directed me to this department because I would not study in Literary Arts but I believed I would study in Mathematics yet I could not finish it. I still want it, I just took a break. After I got married, I understood it better. Every woman may not necessarily have to work, but they must have a profession, having a profession is a really good. When I am asked about my education level, it is really difficult and disturbing me to answer 'high school' after studying in university. Hopefully, when I go to Turkey and settle down, I'm planning to continue my department of Mathematics or maybe chance into Teaching and my husband supports my plans and decisions." This visibly reveals that she sacrificed her education in order to get married, but this decision was not satisfying for her. Still, she is lucky that her husband instead of being an obstacle, he is a good supporter for her decisions and plans in the nearest future.

### **Friendship and Socialization**

She is really open-minded and respectful to diversity in her selection process of making friends regardless of national origin, race, sex, and language. "Since I am a humanitarian person, I can be friends with everyone I meet, unless a person is truthful and positive. I am not just looking for Turks here; I have friends from different countries. I usually meet at the markets or restaurants. If we have eye contact, I can go directly to their table and say 'hello'. If I make friends, they come to my house or I go to their house. For me, I make friends regardless of their countries, languages and religions." She rarely keeps in contact with her old friends; they only send greetings message each other via WhatsApp. She mentioned "I rarely keep in contact with even my best friends in Turkey, maybe at 3%, because I have to allocate my time to my marriage, my daughter or myself." Moreover, due to distance and her life changes, she does not have any face-to-face or virtual communication with her old friends back to Turkey and she vocalized her experience with one of Turkish proverbs "Out of sight, out of mind. Perhaps, the physical distance causes emotional or creates disconnection in the friendships." In regard to receive advice from her friends about their relationship, she declared "I ask not only those who are married to a foreigner, but also those who know the marriage life. I respect their opinions and suggestions and I asked them 'how it should be, what would you do if you were in my place?' Being married to a foreigner doesn't change the reality of the person is a man. Sometimes, even if you are married with someone from your own nationality, you may not get along well. You can't judge a book by its cover."

### **Family relations**

The couple is supported by their families, as she referred *"I think they do their best to support us. Still, we were not burden to our families during the wedding time. My husband told 'I am working so I will do everything alone for our wedding.' He has only a mother. We did not have much financial support; my family took some households as my dowry. Still, I had to give them away as a gift since we don't have fix home yet, I would not bring everything here because we don't know how long we will stay here. Whether we rent or buy our own house in Turkey, my parents are waiting to do their duty. They didn't do so far but it doesn't mean that they will not do. However, if they cannot afford financially, I would not let them buy anything even my husband says 'We work here, we earn money. Let's not be a burden to anyone. Let's take it slowly and let's do it ourselves.' Still my parents won't be listening to us. In terms of emotional support, both of our families are always near us either in Turkey, Jordan and Dubai. When I want something, his mother says 'Let's do it' or when my husband denies something, my father says 'He is right'. We are always supported by our families."* She responded that her family might have a say but they do not interfere into their relationship, however; she mentioned that *"my mother-in-law intervenes by saying 'to make another baby' so that my daughter will have a sibling. Our families do not interfere much into our marriage maybe because we are far away. My family and his family would intervene, if we were nearby, but we are far."* It seems that her husband takes moderator role between families. She replied *"my husband makes a bridge between our families and he does very well. I usually have the idea of my family and your family but he says 'we are all families'. Maybe I see in my family like this, and that's why I think in this way. He really connects them very well, for example; even he takes a role as a translator and makes our families talk with each other in Skype."* In the account of maintaining close relationships in each territory, she indicated *"In his family, I have close relationships with his sister and his sister-in-law and in Turkey I talk and spend more time with my mum. Generally, we talk about everything with my mum; when we are together, we laugh and joke, we talk about our good days or bad days. Sometimes we sit for long hours and we don't talk with each other in the same room but to be with her and to help her is all my pleasure. While we are in Luanda, we talk through Skype every day or we send messages via WhatsApp. I talk with other members of my family in every 3 to 4 days in WhatsApp and sometimes via Skype, and we talk through the phone with my husband's family every two days."* It is understandable by her phrases that she highly gives value to face-to-face communication and side-by-side experiences with her families, because virtual world produces a dry and superficial conversation. She expressed as follows *"Since I am a foreigner, when I only see the messages by my husband's family or when I just listen to them, I feel everything is far, cold or unnecessary because I am not with them. Contrarily, when I see something next to them, I try to do my best for everything because I see it. When I talk to my mum while I'm away, for example, if she says 'I am very tired, I do not want to do anything', I wished to be near her to help. Therefore, it's a very different to be in a virtual world and face to face."*

### **Couple's daily life**

Her following answers synthesized the questions of 'what makes them a couple' and 'her image to be a good wife/husband' as follows *"In the first times of our marriage, I thought that two opposite characters really got married each other. Currently, I think I have started resembling him because I know his mind so I've changed myself in accordance with his character, but he is still same. Earlier times, I used to respond directly to the cases or I used to get angry easily. By means of his character, now I have learned to keep quiet because the more I talk, the more issue gets bigger. Still I don't keep that problem to myself, when the time comes I ask him. I tolerate more."* She carried on explaining *"I cannot say that we are giving same reaction to the same subject because there are differences within us. I do not know, but if I go to the beginning what made us a couple, I guess I am the woman he dreams of and he is the man I dream of. We found each other and our dreams became true. I think the reason of being a couple was related to his answers to my questions that I never forget and even that time I told myself 'I would expect to receive this answer from the one I would get married' and I said 'okay'. When he asked me, my answers also pleased him. Maybe we react differently to the subjects and I may be calm down and he may be angrier but this is not our common point. Our commonality is to have a humanitarian value."* Her aforementioned statements demonstrate that the couple united with 'sharing same expectations' and 'humanitarian personality'. When the couple has disagreement, she prefers to have 'tolerance' in their relationship.

The couple lives together in the same household but still they fall apart 1 month or sometimes 3 months from each other due to several conditions of pregnancy, delivering baby and visiting families etc. She very rarely stayed without her husband in Luanda and her following reflects that it was not a satisfying experience for her *"I've stayed twice, I was so bored and I felt alone. It was really hard those two days for me. I felt I could not do anything if something happened to me. I do not even know what the police number is or I do not even know how to explain in proper Portuguese. Since he's always with us, I trust him."* When she is away from his husband, she goes to Turkey with her daughter to visit her family. She explained *"When he is away, I spend more time with my family. I do housework to help my mother and I take care of the things outside. My daughter and I go out more, I take her to more social activities but this is not related to his absence. Conversely, it is related to have more opportunities and facilities in Turkey."* In order to maintain their relationship at distance, the couple use the advanced technology to communicate with each other and also they develop some strategies. She stated along these lines *"Fortunately now when we are away from each other, we are using contemporary technology: Skype and WhatsApp, they do not really make us very far away. They help us to keep our souls together while our bodies fall apart from each other. Thanks*



*to the modern technology, we are always together. Apart from it, what I do is that I do not really get angry at certain subjects when I am separated from him for a long time. At that moment I say 'I should not make trouble, because I am not with him'. For the reason that it is harder for us to finish the problem when we are away, but if we are near, we talk and negotiate with our body language or glance. We cannot stay in the same house for maybe an hour without talking to each other, but while we are away, the discussion might take longer hours, 3 to 5 hours. That's why when I see things that it might cause trouble between us; obviously I close my ears and say okay."*

When she is together with her husband, she describes her daily life *"When we are in Turkey or in Jordan, he likes to go out and visit different places. Maybe, we are guests and we are temporary there so that we can go out every day. Here in Angola, we go out four days a week e.g. even riding a car counts going out for us."* Her husband's workplace and their house are so near to each other because their house is one of the company's accommodations and he takes only 5 minutes to reach home. In accordance with my observation, during his breaks and lunch time, he comes home to eat, perform his Salah (Muslim prayer), Skype with his family for familial matters, talk with his wife and play with their daughter. The closeness of his workplace can be advantage and disadvantage at the same time because he can check on family and their needs or in emergency situation he will be there on time. However; since the office is seen by their house or vice versa, he always keeps telling her to close the curtains in order to protect their privacy. This brings disadvantages in their life especially on wife and children because she always needs to be on the alert to close curtains and not to share their privacy, however; she also complained about *"the lack of natural sunlight in their house"*. When he comes from work, they spend quality time with each other and she illustrated that *"after his work, I sometimes ask a favour to cook together, he will surely help me and we cook together. In his leisure time, if there is anything to do, he always helps me. After dinners, we talk and watch TV."* The couple usually do shopping, go out, go to pool and park for their daughter. Besides their weekends, the couple likes to go to other countries but they give priority to visit their families in Turkey, Jordan and Dubai. She added *"We are a family-loving couple so we like to do family visits. I like to go and be with our families. I am very pleased to sit together and talk with them. I wish I would have a member of my family or my relative here."*

### **Parenting**

The couple has a 4 years old daughter. Bearing in mind that the couple not only maintain their spousal relationship but also their parental relationship and attachment with their daughter when they are fall apart from each other. She shared her opinion that because of her pregnancy she had to separate for a while from her husband and had to go back to Turkey for delivery. And until baby get in better shaped after 3 months, she got back to Angola. Even last month (before the interview) she stayed around 3 months in Turkey with her daughter. On the account of child-rearing, she believes that these falling apart for working, health and other purposes have impact on especially father-child relationship as well as on their children's well-being and psychological mood. She exemplified that *"our daughter gets calm and inactive when she is away from her father, but she gets energetic, confident and talkative near him."* On the contrary, it does not mean that father does not take role in childrearing activities; father is really attentive on their child as well. Even what I observed that they play together, kissing each other, when some attitude was not proper or appropriate father was trying to teach daughter to act accordingly by explaining in the eye level of children without suppressing or afraid feelings. Eye-to-eye level communication was proceeding in the slow talking pause so that father and daughter can listen better.

They transmit their mother tongues to their daughter in the way of Turkish mother speaking Turkish, Jordanian father speaking Turkish and Arabic with child and even calling daughter as 'mushamash' in Arabic [translation to English: apricot]. This was also a signal of raising up children in bilingual and multicultural context regardless of any limitation or suppressing other language. In the home, the joint culture was observed with the eating habits, cultural motifs, language skills and common goal of faith of being in same religion of Islam. Her indication demonstrates language transmission by parents *"We usually speak Turkish, and sometimes my husband also speaks Arabic to our daughter. We sometimes articulate some words either in English or in Portuguese. I speak English, but my husband is more fluent in English and Portuguese. For example, when my daughter wants water, she says in Arabic 'ma'an', she says 'horse' in English or when she want to say let's go, she says 'vamos' in Portuguese. In this way, she uses in her daily life the vocabularies that she has acquired."* The couple naturally started teaching languages to their child; they did not have any decision about it. She also clarified *"I read about bilingual children. When children are raised in bilingual environment, the child focuses on one language but in reality the child understands all the languages at home. Since most of her day-to-day experience is with me, she speaks in Turkish meanwhile she understands other languages. We didn't decide about which language we should teach, it happens naturally. For instance, yesterday we were out with my daughter, she started playing with Angolan kids. All the kids were speaking in Portuguese and I observed that my daughter also was responding them in Portuguese. Then, one more girl came and my daughter said 'Hayır, hayır' in Turkish [translation to English: No] and that girl started saying 'Hayır, hayır' as well. She wishes their child to learn English, Turkish, Arabic and Portuguese."*

The couple does not have a preferred country to raise their children. Regarding school choice, she told *"I would like to send her a school which has good education in the field of languages because my child grows up in a multilingual family. It is*

essential to learn host country's language so supportive- language education in school will be great. For example, if we are going to live in Angola for a lifetime, I would like her to know how to write, read and speak in Portuguese language." In terms of career building and professional plans, the couple will do their best to encourage their child in accordance with her choices and she included "we will have some guidance for studying language and literature. She will learn different languages from us and she will have a head start in her life. If she selects to study language and literature, it would be a great advantage for her future career because she would be speaking in different languages.

Their daughter has double nationality of Turkish and Jordanian.

### **Mid-term goals and plans**

*"In 5 years, I imagine we settle down in Turkey, I am going to school and my mother is looking after our kids. My daughter will be in school after 5 years. It does not matter if I'm working or not but I want to accomplish my dream within these years. I wish my husband will be psychologically more comfortable and different. Actually, he has a soft character but I want him to understand me better. I want him to accept me and my personality the way they are. In 10 years, I think I will have more than two children. After 10 years, I want my marriage to strongly settle down and lead a happy life where only includes the difficulty of our children at school."*

Later on, the couple wants to settle down in Turkey because they believe Turkey has better conditions and opportunities than Jordan. She also added *"I hope not to be a sick person when I am old, I don't want to combat with a difficult disease. In my old age, I wish to be loved and respected by my surroundings. I want to get old in a country that I spend most of my time and collect my memories."*

### **Identity**

She identified her nationality as Turkish. Her indication underlines her national values *"I like my country, my homeland and my nation very much. I love everyone living in our country and I feel lucky to be a Turkish. I think most of our people are hospitable, good and warm."*

After all this going back and forth between Turkey, Jordan, Dubai and other foreign countries, she mentioned that *"Some people might dream of going abroad and this makes them happy. Since I got married, I am going here or to the other places, and staying a while in each places or travelling to other countries don't make me happy. On the contrary, it makes me tired because I don't want to be a guest in other places; I want to have a fixed home with a settled/regular life. I even exemplify myself with a bag because in the beginning I thought, 'I have a bag, I'm traveling everywhere with that bag'. I would rather to travel to other countries after we settle down in our own house and have a regular life style. Traveling back and forth and staying a partial time in other places is bothering for me."* She further elaborated on the example of the bag *"Since my husband travels back and forth, he carries or he has to carry me like a bag. Wherever he goes, I have to follow him so I feel myself like a bag. Moreover, I do have my bag as well –my suitcase- which always contains fixed stuff in it and it is traveling with me everywhere."* While she was delivering her experiences about travelling back and forth, she had a tension. This atmosphere completely changed when we heard what her daughter said 'Mummy, please bring also my suitcase.' It is worthy to mention this phrase by little transnational child clearly reflects that the experience of travelling back and forth also changed their point of view about their life. After laughing, she continued *"I understand that I'm married to a foreigner because I always have a backpack in my back and carry the documents inside. The hardest part about marrying a foreigner is that you cannot do anything in normal way; you have to approve everything, translate everything and stamp everything in somewhere. I think being married to a foreigner means having a backpack."*

Life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures do not have any influence on her identity regardless of identity as a couple, a member of a family, and as a citizen of where she lives in defined in her statement *"I always feel like a Turkish and even I tell my husband you become a Turkish. When I make his favourite Arabic meal, I sometimes joke with him by saying "now I am an Arab girl" but it is only a joke, because I completely feel myself as Turkish. When I go to Jordan, I don't behave like an Arab or in Angola I don't behave as Angolan, or I don't adopt their lifestyles. In Jordan, Luanda or Dubai, I live like a Turkish."* In addition to her sense of belonging, she pictured sense of belonging as a 'home' and more correctly as 'a fixed home'. Even her indication clearly demonstrates that travelling back and forth and its ambivalence conditions influence their future plans *"I feel myself belonged to my parents' house. Of course, now I have a husband and I have my family, I have to make joint decisions for us. The place I feel belonged has replaced with my husband now. To feel belonged near my husband, I can constantly move back and forth with him. If our plan to go back Turkey in order to settle down doesn't work, I can go with him wherever he wants."*

### **Suggestion**

*"Marriage is very important institution and it is not like dating. I hope new married couples can maintain a healthy marriage because preserving a marriage is really hard. Couples need to have more patience and a sense of mutual-*

*understanding. Also it doesn't matter where the prospective partner comes from; the person needs to be a good, humanitarian, tender-hearted and conscientious in order to cope with good and bad experiences in life."*

## 8.5. Appendix 5

### Grid Analysis of Angolan-Spanish couple (ID-3)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with a particular interviewee through my social network because his partner is one of my husband's colleagues then as couples we became friends. We organize meetings, events, road trips and some activities in Angola and in Portugal whenever our time suits each other. In the recruitment phase, he accepted to take part in my research interview without any hesitation. Our interview was based on online interview via Skype because it was the easiest way that helping us to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. Moreover, we talked in private setting -rooms- and other people were not present. If there is a time that one of us did not hear properly, sometimes we repeated words or sentences. Overall, there was not great disturbance during the interview. He was excited to share about their experiences and he took a comfortable stance.

**Individual background of Angolan female:** She was born in Angola and she studied her master degree in Portugal. After living couple of years and having successful result from citizenship exam, she obtains a Portuguese citizenship. Since she works in oil field, she attends professional training programs in abroad, for this reason; she has overseas experience by travelling and having chance to live in different countries for assigned months/years. Besides her native language of Portuguese, she acquires English, Spanish and French language skills.

**Individual background of Spanish male:** He was born in Spain and he moved to Lisbon to do his Ph.D. He has travelling experiences to other foreign countries and currently he obtains studying and living abroad experiences in Lisbon, Portugal. Also, he goes forth and back to Angola in order to visit his partner on vacations. Besides his native language of Spanish, he acquires English and Portuguese language skills.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple has a characteristic of being transnational couple and living apart from each other due to her professional and his academic situations. Specifically, in the time period of interview, she currently works at petroleum platform in Luanda, Angola and he studies in Lisbon, Portugal. Apparently, she lives in Luanda and he lives in Lisbon but they have homes in both countries. In their holidays, the couple travel back and forth between Angola and Portugal, or sometimes they take advantage of visiting other countries while meeting in midpoint to see each other. The couple's current status is cohabited but in the near future they wish to get marry and have children.

#### Demographic information

34, male, on-going doctorate degree in History, Spanish

27, female, postgraduate in Geological and Mining Engineering, working as an assistant company man<sup>2</sup>, double nationality: Angolan and Portuguese

#### Background of the couple's life

The couple met in a party in Lisbon and they are together for 7 years. Since his partner has "overseas job experience" in petroleum platform, they organize their holidays in terms of her off time because she is in sea for 6 months a year. Hence, the couple sees each other for 4 to 6 months per year. When they are apart, he indicates that "*we maintain our relationship by speaking to each other every day on the phone and on the social networks. Without them the communication would be much more limited and the communication is the main point on this type of relationship.*" This illustrates that he found virtual communication as a beneficial tool to sustain their long-distance relationship because social networks facilitate their day-to-day communication with each other. When he is apart from his partner, he considers he has a "normal" daily life while when they are together, he defines that "*I feel relaxed although I try to do the same schedule, keep working the same way, but in some way I feel like I was in vacations.*" Probably, the notion of 'togetherness' gives him a feeling of safety when they are together and this make him relaxed. When his partner is off from work, she comes to Portugal. Even if he keeps working, they know how to balance their times. The couple likes to do things together at home, he exemplified as follows: "*family like activities (organizing home, cleaning, eating, cooking and watching TV), and also sometimes travelling and visiting some friends.*" For him, "*the feeling of confidence*" and "*trust to each other*" makes them a couple. His image of being good wife and good husband is related to "*love and support each other.*"

The couple exchanged their ideas and reached a common point that both parties would advantage by the decision, he states that "*I had the need to change to a different place to live so we decided to move together.*" His family approved their union, however; his partner's family had some difficulties in accepting. He continued "*only that her family is more present on her*

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<sup>2</sup> The Company Man is the operator's representative at the drill site ensuring the well is drilled with the drilling program and completed on time (further information: <http://www.rigzone.com/oil/jobs/categories/drilling-rig-personnel-3/company-man-718/>).

*choices and life therefore we have more their presence in our couple life her family ideas.*” The couple did not receive any advice. Even though he mentioned that they do not receive advice from their family regarding their relationships and there is no family interference from both families side to their spousal relationships, but it can be understood that his partner’s family has role in her decisions. Both families like their union because the couple accepts each other’s families and treats them in a friendly manner. However, he added that his family is concerned about *“the distance where she lives.”* In terms of living condition in Portugal, he said language barrier challenges his life. However, his following answer reflected the challenges are beyond language barrier because being apart affects his life condition as well: *“I have not moved from Portugal so I still live far away from where my partner lives. A relationship at distance is always complicate. And living in Angola takes some difficulties that do not make easy to move there. If I moved to Angola in terms of spousal relationship I believe it would improve, my only concern is in my professional future life.”* This excerpt revealed his worries about living condition in Angola, unclear conditions of the country and its lack of professional opportunities alerts his further decision on moving and living in there. Apparently, his concerns may not relate to their spousal relationship, the ambivalence and uncertain conditions in Angola will create difficulties in terms of his individual’s life. This well-illustrated in his following statements *“the main differences I find in this relationship is the fact that I may have to move to an African country which is something that influences my family, my job opportunities and my way of living. I will find the merging point when I understand that my life there (referring to Angola) has the conditions I am looking for in my life namely a good social and professional status.”* He fights with differences in their relationship and the challenges about living conditions in both Portugal and Angola with the power of his *“patience”*.

### **Previous expectations**

His future life expectation before meeting with his current partner was mainly focused on *“having a personal and professional autonomy. Nowadays, since I have not started working I still have as a current expectation personal and professional autonomy.”* His latter indication revealed his expectation has remained same. In accordance with his future education and professional life expectation, he told *“I had high expectations from my current and future education and professional life. Nowadays, I see that the previous expectations not always can be met and life has many changes as it passes and from that I imagine that from now on it will be the same therefore I assume and accept that some of my expectations today will not come as expected.”* This verified that unexpected changes in his life produce flexibility to his previous expectations.

### **Friendship & Socialization**

Creating a new social network is not a problematic issue for him and he is presenting himself as very socialized and adaptable. He specified himself as *“a social person, I do not have problem to talk and socialize with different people and it is easy for me to make new friends.”* His and his friends mobilized conditions harden their face-to-face communication so he only keeps in contact with some of his old friends in Spain via virtual communication. His preference is face-to-face communication because he believes verbal communication with body language is important. His following excerpt shows: *“I only have virtual contact with friends that I already had and they moved to a different place so I keep contact with them through Facebook and WhatsApp. Yet, there are differences since there is a lot on the body language that misses or we fail to understand when we communicate by virtual means.”* In terms of receiving advice from his friends, he rarely receives and he indicated *“my friends only advise me on that subject if I ask them and I normally do not ask.”*

### **Family relations**

In terms of family support, he stated that *“they support my decisions whichever I make.”* Related to the question of making bridge between families or separate familial relationships, his view on the basis of family domain is more close to individualistic rather than familistic perspective. He told *“I do not do it at all since I do not live in familial terms; I still live alone and far from my family. Even holding or maintaining close relationships is a complicate question for me since it has been a while I moved from my house and lived with limited contact with them. I would say I try to have a close and equal relationship with all from my family house.”* Living far away for a long time from his family might influence his point of view about familial terms. His view on the basis of family domain is more close to individualistic rather than familistic perspective. Living alone also create changes in his personal development regarding being more independent and learning how to stand on his own feet.

### **Parenting project**

The couple does not have children yet. However, it was interesting to hear their plans about parental matters in the future. The couple intends to share all the tasks related to parenting. They have intention to speak with their children in their own mother tongues. That is to say, he is going to speak in Spanish and she is going to speak in Portuguese. In addition to that the couple wants to encourage their children to learn other languages relying on children’s preferences. Both of the couple would like their children to study a public school in a system of *“a mixture between occidental and Angolan education so they can learn how to respect the differences.”* In terms of a preferred country to raise their children, the couple has different complementary views; he said *“I prefer to raise them in a European country in a normal public school”* while his partner

would like to raise them in Angola or in a European country. In terms of career building for professional plans, both of the couple wish *“them to become an autonomous person so that they choose their own future responsibly.”* Related to citizenship, he declared *“I would prefer them to have more than one and one of them should be Spanish.”*

### **Mid-term plans**

In 5 years, for his professional career, he hopes to have *“a stable and satisfactory job.”* He does not have any wishes for educational plan. On that time, they will already have children. In 10 years, he wants to keep his *“same professional career but with a better remuneration”*, in relation to his educational plans he wants to *“have a degree on a different subject”*.

His excerpt surely relates to lead a life in a well-developed country with better life conditions. *“I want to become old in a European country; I place where I can have any elderly assistance.”*

### **Identity**

After all this going back and forth between foreign countries and Spain, he specified himself *“I still continue to identify myself with Spain; I am more opened to specifications of other countries and people. It changed a little bit, it is more abroad now in a way that I see and understand different points of view from different cultures which I did not know.* Having experiences related to other countries and their cultures, he presents himself as raising awareness and broadens his point of view in understanding cultural sensitivity which is reflected by his life trajectory.

Life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures has an influence on him as well as in a way on his sense of belonging. In terms of identity as a couple, his following quote *“it makes me a very specific person in a way that enriches me on my way of seeing things and life and makes my belonging sense not exclusive. This is how I believe it influences me on my couple relationship”* disclosed that his personality was shaped by these experiences and apparently acquiring broader perspectives on feeling and respecting diversity formed their spousal relationship in a positive manner. In the matters of identity as a member of his family or his partner’s family, there is no change. He does not feel belonged to Portuguese society, his indication clearly mirrors *“I do not feel Portuguese I feel Spanish, I will never be considered a Portuguese by Portuguese people.”*

### **Suggestion**

He did not have any specific advice for new couples with same experiences. On the other hand, he alarmed new couples about the hardness of maintaining long-distance relationship as follows: *“Only a warning for this type of relationship (at distance), it is very hard to keep it.”*

## 8.6. Appendix 6

### Grid Analysis of Angolan-French couple (ID-4)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with my particular interviewee through my husband because they used to be colleagues in Baker Hughes. To give information about research, the aim of research and interview questions, we talked in WhatsApp. Then we settled a date to have our interview. Our interview was based on online interview via Skype because it was the easiest way that helping us to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. Our first interview took place in their kitchen while she was cooking dinner; meanwhile her husband was taking care of their children in their living room. The second interview was in their living room and she was holding baby and trying to make him sleep. During the third interview, she was constantly shifting from living room to baby's room to double check if baby is sleeping fine. During our interviews, when baby cried, she was calming down him by signing, hugging and playing with his rattle. We had in total three online interviews with her but we could not finish all the questions in Interview Guide. The reason is that their baby was in fever for a few weeks as baby's teeth would be emerging. His little tiny teeth made it hard to meet with her again because she was taking care of their baby. During all interviews, although we talked each other for first time, she shared her thoughts and answers without any hesitation. All meetings were open and enjoyable for both parties. All in all, I appreciate that she shared her quality time with me while sometimes singing and calming her baby boy.

**Individual background of Angolan female:** She was born in Angola. She left Angola at the age of 2 years old because her mother started working at the embassy in Gabon. She grew up in Gabon; she studied her primary, and high schools in there. Her valuable time has passed in Gabon from her earlier child development to teenager period, which is the reason; she also identifies herself as being Gabonese. Then she went to Namibia to study her bachelor's degree.

**Individual background of French male:** He was born in France from a British mother and a French father. Due to his job, he was working in Luanda, Angola and currently he was referred to work in France.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple currently moved and started living in France because of his job. They still travel back and forth to Luanda, Angola and they never break their bond because her family residing there and the couple has house in Luanda. For now, the couple might start living in France; however, he is always on move to work in Angola and/or another country depending on the opportunity given by his company. This ambivalence situation of not knowing permanent and/or temporary country creates burden on their life and challenges to do long-term plan.

#### Demographic information

35, female, bachelor's degree in Business Management, Communication and Tourism, stay at home, Angolan

31, male, postgraduate degree in Energy and Power Engineering, working as electrical engineer, French

#### Background of the couple's life

In the first time, they were introduced to each other by a common friend. Still, the conditions were not convenient for them to be girlfriend and boyfriend, because he already had a girlfriend (she turned to her husband and she was joking with him). There was no exchanging numbers so they just met and ended up not seeing each other about one year. By coincidence, they were introduced again by a common friend after the party, but at that time they were already acquaintances to each other. Thus, they exchanged their numbers and started sending messages about greetings and daily life. She added "*one day he told me 'I am kind of tired to hanging out with my colleagues'; eventually we hang out a lot of time with his colleagues. We just organized a trip to Malanje<sup>3</sup> at the weekend with his colleagues and my friends but my car's engine didn't work. So I call my friend and tell them I can't drive this car anymore, I will be going back to Luanda. And then he was with me and he told me how your car isn't working, Amen. He said gently, 'since I don't know anybody else, I will go back with you'. Eventually, we managed to go to Cabo Ledo Beach, we had a good conversation and slowly slowly we became together and here we are. It just happened naturally. I guess we had a magic powder.*" When asked about the length of their relationship, she asked her husband in French and then she answered surprisingly: "*We going to our 5th years now. Oh Gosh, I just realized it, ohh you made me realize the things here (laughing). You know, you just being in relationship you don't really go talking right? I am very surprised really. We mean to have better and better years but we don't really ask those questions. You are making me realize the things here.*"

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<sup>3</sup> The province is located in northern Angola.

Their decision to start living together was mainly a natural process occurred by the conditions of Luanda concerning difficulty in driving outside to the town due to traffic jams in early mornings. She explained further *“it happened naturally and quite fast. It is not like we decided on it. He was living in town and I was living at my mom’s side. In my mom side, I need to wake up early to go to work. So slowly slowly after started dating, 3 to 6 months we started living together.”*

In terms of family approval for their union, especially their cohabiting decision was not welcomed by her family as they have religious and traditional perspective. Although it was quite challenging process, the couple stand strong and determined in their own ideas. She responded as follows: *“In Africa, from the very religious family’s perspective it is not very well that when a lady goes to live with the guy without being married. Living together without marriage is a no no situation. We were told to get married, but we had been together for less than 6 months and we were not thinking to get married. We were ok where we are. This was a bit challenge for me and family, but at the end it worked quite well. We made them respect our decision, not necessarily accept. We are grown-up, and there is nothing to change our minds. This is what I wanted and this is what we wanted. This is what we were up for it and that’s why we did. That’s why we ended up working well.”* After 8 months of cohabiting, the couple decided to get married and she told their decision to her family. Her family again was not so favour of their decision, and they were concerned and asking ‘are you pregnant?’ After all existing tension between her and her family, she replied confidently and determinedly to her family. While she took a strict stance to make them realize that they are big enough to take marriage decision, her statements also revealed being accepted, regarded and received blessings by her family was crucial for her to start a new life: *“We decided getting married, and we gonna get married. There is no explanation, there is nothing to say, this is what we feel and we are going to do. If you can share with us, we are going to be really happy but if you cannot share with us this special moment, we gonna be really sad but our life will go on.”* The scene from his family’s side was not that different from her family and their reaction was quite strong. She stated *“I don’t know, but they just reacted quite strongly like ‘you guys are too young to get marry, it is too early to get marry’. I don’t know really maybe I am coming from different culture. They accepted us because we reached a point that we decided and we stick together at the end -me and him- so it must be what we both want not because somebody thinks we should do. The pressure from the moment, his family was in France and they could not make to Angola. They don’t know our reality in Angola, they don’t know me well. They know this black girl coming to marry a white man, so all those are question marks they don’t know. And they wanted to justify what they didn’t know and they have to know. Now we are ok, now we are good.”*

The couple set their own rules from the beginning in order to overcome tension by their families seen clearly by her following statements *“from the very beginning, we were quite strict. This is what we want, and how we gonna have our relationship. We are grown-up, we are adults and we eventually take advice, but we won’t do anything we don’t want to do not because of tradition, religion, not because what others’ desire. This is the way how we conduct our relationship from the beginning. I guess it worked out. We took our decision and that’s it. Even today, whenever we do something of course we will consult our family, but at the end the final word is ours.”*

The couple face differences in their relationship of being from different backgrounds (nationality, country, social life, culture etc.). The couple always find merging point by accepting their differences, respecting their boundaries, compromising and using good communication skills with each other. Her indications demonstrated in the following: *“We take a lot into considerations of our backgrounds; coming from different social life with different backgrounds. So there is no way we can be the same in all sides. I don’t strongly agree the way he thinks or the way he does things, but I accept and respect it because we have different backgrounds. We cannot agree everything obviously but we have learned to accept our limits and to compromise. I know where my limits and he knows where his limits. Even if we are a couple, we still have respect in our relationship, and we avoid jeopardizing our relationship. And if you don’t compromise, it becomes really difficult to have a healthy relationship. It cannot be just from your side, you have to open your arms and accept that the other person has differences. From the very beginning that those are our differences and are we willing to live with those differences? We accept our differences and we live with it. Living with somebody that everything is blue and purple is easy, the challenge is where there are differences. If you are willing to live with those differences, if you can compromise those differences without jeopardizing your happiness is fine.”*

Before they started dating, her husband was already working in Luanda and he faced challenges regarding life conditions. He had quite difficult time to adapt in his first expatriate year. When they started dating, she accompanied him to re-explore Angola and she explained subsequently: *“I showed him another side of Angola that he didn’t know: culture, people, not only Ilha where expatriates always go to. In the beginning he didn’t know what was happening but afterwards living with locals, meeting other people than his colleagues, he became more open-minded. I also introduced him to my family. And since he is coming from mixed family as well, his mind was already set up so I guess it was easier for him. Still he learned a lot to be a bit more how to be open-minded and he had to learn a lot to understand certain behaviours so I guess friendship, communication and a lot of sharing did help.”* This also maintained that once her husband started learning new aspects and socialized by making new friends except from his colleagues gave him credit not only to absorb the reality among local/national people and also to integrate into society. It is also pertinent to mention that coming from a multicultural family



facilitated and eased the process to learn differences but to understand 'cultural sensitivity' required enhancing the level of open-mindedness if previously no information/knowledge was obtained about specific culture.

### **Previous expectations**

Due to time inefficiency and their son health condition, the answers were not obtained.

### **Friendship & Socialization**

Due to time inefficiency and their son health condition, the answers were not obtained. Only she phrased that the couple is eager to receive advice from their friends besides their family, still the couple will be the one to say a final word.

### **Family relations**

The couple's rules are quite useful for her to avoid emerging family interference into their relationship, she stated that *"so from the very beginning we have settled that rule and it is quite working for us because coming from an African family can be very very veryyyy, family can be all over you, trying to rule your life."* The couple is open to receive advice from their families but the final decision belongs to the couple.

These aforementioned statements reflect that couple experienced quite harsh moments while announcing their decisions about cohabitation and later getting married. In the first phase, her family was not happy with their cohabiting choice. Then, both families were in denial phase for their further marriage decision, assuming that families might be wondered about their international marriage and its prospective cultural differences.

### **Couple's daily life**

Her following answers synthesized the questions of 'what makes them a couple' and 'her image to be a good wife/husband'. Sensibly, friendship and communication are crucial metaphors for their relationship. She expressed as follows: *"First of all, the base of our relationship what I believe is friendship. Just be friends before being a couple, this is how I feel the relationship. I say be friends before become lovers. I think as friends we are more open and we are more free to communicate. When you are friend of somebody, it is easier to relate to that person. We communicate a lot for good situations and we also communicate for bad situations. I think the base of our relationship is friendship and a lot of communication. And eventually love comes in when we find other part. When you find other part, you don't have to ask for anything. From the beginning, our relationship just happened naturally without even being talked or discussed, it just happened naturally because at the beginning, we were friends. We have a lot of common and what is not common we compliment."*

Since the beginning, the couple was open to talk about specific way of life awaiting them - sometimes will be separated or away from each other due to rotations and family visits. They are aware and well-prepared about process and consequences. Sensibly, there were times that they had difficulty to fall apart exemplified by her statement *"there were a lot of different times, but I guess we found ways to go around it and survived. We think we hold on the fact that we knew it was temporary, we just have to accept and live with it but eventually it will end, we will be together again."* The couple uses 'a good communication' to maintain their relationship, when they are apart by using social network such as Internet, Skype. She said *"always being contact/communication with the person so that the distance is not there. I guess we accepted and we found a way to make distance not so distant anymore. In our time now, Internet is very helpful."* Besides communication, the couple also uses 'trust' to maintain their relationship as she mentioned in the following statements *"you really have to trust to your partner. We are human beings and everything and nothing can happen, just have to trust other person and accept as truth whatever the person is telling you because there is nothing that we can do besides accepting as a truth. I guess the times separate our strengths and our trust to each other. When the person goes away, there are thousand and thousand pressures, and asking 'Is he faithful?' 'Is he really doing whatever he is saying?' At the beginning, we were doing a lot but we found out the time we spent asking or thinking negative thoughts affected the relationship in the negative way. We thought to maximize good times by talking nicely to each other rather than focusing on negative thoughts, we are still doing it and we communicate by truths."*

### **Parenting**

They have a 6-month-old baby boy. In parental tasks, the couple shares responsibilities of child care activities. She finds her husband really helpful because he divides responsibilities. Even during our interview baby was crying but she entrusted on her husband highlighted by her statement *"baby is crying but he is here. It is good that he is here otherwise I go crazy. The relationship becomes fission like a help, we counted on each other. Like he is all day at work when he comes to home even all day working, he still helps me out at home e.g. taking care of the kid while I am cooking, or sometimes he cooks and I take care of the kid. We are always complimentary to each other and thank to that."*

### **Mid-term plans**

Due to time inefficiency and their son health condition, the answers were not obtained.

**Identity**

Due to time inefficiency and their son health condition, the answers were not obtained.

**Suggestion**

*“Be friends before become lovers.” “You really have to trust to your partner.”*

## 8.7. Appendix 7

### Grid Analysis of Angolan-Portuguese couple (ID-5)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with a particular interviewee through my social network. We organize events, road trips and some activities in Angola and in Portugal. In the recruitment phase, he accepted to participate in my research interview without any hesitation. Our interview was based on online interview via Skype because it was the easiest way that helping us to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. Moreover, we talked in private setting -rooms- and other people were not present. During the interview, if there is a time that was not heard properly, sometimes we repeated words or sentences. Overall, there was no great disturbance. While delivering his ideas and thoughts, he was comfortable, open and excited to share about their experiences. This might be related with our friendship and common experience of transnational life causing a feeling of trust to each other.

**Individual background of Angolan female:** She was born in Angola. She studied her master degree in Portugal. After living couple of years in Portugal, she entered citizenship exam and she obtains a Portuguese citizenship with her successful result. Since she works in oil field, she attends professional training programs in abroad. Hence, she has overseas experience by working and having chance to live in different countries for assigned months/years.

**Individual background of Portuguese male:** He was born in Portugal from a Portuguese mother and a Capo Verdean father. He had lived for 2 years in Spain. Also, he travels to different countries and he goes forth and back to Angola to visit his partner on vacations.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple has a characteristic of being transnational couple and living apart from each other due to both of their professional workplaces. In the time period of interview, she currently works at petroleum platform in Luanda, Angola and he works in Lisbon, Portugal. Apparently, she lives in Luanda and he lives in Lisbon but the couple has their homes in both countries. In their holidays, the couple travels back and forth between Angola and Portugal, or sometimes they take advantage of visiting other countries while meeting in midpoint to see each other. The couple is not engaged or they do not have any traditional contest in their relationship. Currently, the couple is cohabited.

#### Demographic information

28, female, postgraduate in Geological and Mining Engineering, working as an assistant company man<sup>4</sup>, double nationality: Angolan & Portuguese

33, male, bachelor's degree in Business Administer, working in a company as Business controller<sup>5</sup>, Portuguese

#### Background of couple's life

The couple met in a salsa class in Lisbon as a dance partner, and then they started talking and knowing each other so they are together for 7 years. The couple has "overseas" as well as "transnational experience" because his partner works in petroleum platform and the couple falls apart from each other for 6 months a year. Hence, during her off time, the couple sees each other 6 times a year. In order to have their own privacy and organization they decided to start living together as his indication follows "*Last year, it was a natural step to do after 6 years relation because every time when she comes to Portugal, she had to sleep in my parents' home but we didn't have a lot of privacy. So we choose to start living in my parents' empty house*". Due to his partner's mobilized profession and the flexible movement in Europe, the couple has established one of their headquarters in Lisbon, Portugal, as his statement presents: "*She has a lot of flexibility to travel when she is off duty or when she is not in the sea but I don't have that flexibility because my job in Portugal and I only have one month of holiday per year. That's why it is easier for her to come to Portugal than I go to Angola. I go to Angola once a year. Here we have a lot of freedom, moving and travelling but in Angola is not the same thing*".

His following answers synthesized the questions of 'what makes them a couple' and 'his image to be a good wife/husband'. He told that 'loving each other', having a 'serious commitment' and 'respecting each other' make them a couple and he

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<sup>4</sup>The Company Man is the operator's representative at the drill site and s/he is responsible for ensuring that the well is drilled in accordance with the approved drilling program and that all operations are completed on time and within budget. Additionally, the company man inspects the work and scheduling of all third-party personnel (further information is available at: <http://www.rigzone.com/oil/jobs/categories/drilling-rig-personnel-3/company-man-718/>).

<sup>5</sup>The Business Controller inspects the business and financial operations and shares responsibility for the organization's economic and financial performance. They perform financial analysis and develop business plans (further information is available at: <http://www.jobhero.com/business-controller-job-description/>).

conveyed *“We love each other, we have a romantic relationship and we have a serious commitment to each other. I know that she loves me and I love her. She respects me and I respect her. We present to our friends and to the society that we are together. I think that’s why we are a couple.”* Regarding his image to be good wife and husband, his indication reveals a combination of values of ‘respect and acceptance, love, negotiation and tolerance, and having good communication’. He specified *“I don’t think there is a secret form of how to be wife and husband but need to have general principals respect for one and another, respect to opinions, having respect to say opinions without being afraid and having good communication. You have to love each other; you have to love the mind, body and soul of the person because if you lack one of these parts, it is not a healthy relationship. If you don’t like the body of the person but you like the mind, it is strange and bad and it is not a romantic love. You have to have tolerance to the other person; you have to accept the worst part of the other person. Then you have to try to improve yourself and the other person by negotiation process, you have to accept each other.”*

Their union was approved by both parties of families smoothly as he stated *“My family is not traditional and they are very open-minded and her family is same as well. We are very similar in terms of principals, way of thinking, open-mindedness, and tolerance. This is the first time I am thinking about this”*. In terms of receiving advice from families, his family sometimes give some guidance about their relationship. Also he had some conversations with his partner’s family to ensure them about their serious relationship. He told that *“It is not type of advice of getting married or something but their advice is ‘sometimes if you have difficult situations when we have arguments or when we are sad, it is normal in couple’s life’. Sometimes I can talk a little bit with family and receive some advice like type of relational advice but not structural advice such as ‘marry her’. They say ‘you need to talk with her; you need to solve the issues with her’. I had some talks with her family in terms of guarantying them that we are in serious relationship although we are not engaged; we choose to not be engaged. So far, I went 3 times and if I am there 3 times because it is a serious relationship and I am respecting to their daughter”*. Their families do not hold any negative attitude towards their union, nevertheless; they are thoughtful about their long-distance relationship as he stated: *“They never think or say anything negative about our relationship because they accept it but I think the distance and the difficulty in having life together because we work in different countries although we manage to have a healthy relationship in these 7 years. The reality is that when you live apart, the working – is bigger so I think this is a main concern from both families but they never told us. We have good relationship one and other families. They like our serious commitment in our relationship”*.

In terms of living condition, the couple faces especially economic difficulties to afford the cost of transportation between specific countries of Portugal and Angola. In addition to that her special field of profession is another challenge which hardens the couple to find a job in same countries. He told that *“The main challenge now regarding Angolan situation in terms of inflation and money values decreasing a lot in the last years so the power decreasing a lot and these trips are getting more and more expensive for her. So we are trying to split costs and we trying to manage the situation and wishing it will get better. But another problem we have is more a structural problem because the field of work for her in Portugal doesn’t exist so it would be very difficult for her to find a job here and it would be a lot easier for me to find a job in Angola because I have a lot of friends, some contacts in companies and my own company has a headquarter there. One of our main difficulties is making charges because it is really difficult for her but a lot easier for me to go there but the economic situation is really bad there for now”*. He gave further details *“The reality is if you have money, you don’t have problem wherever you live. If we will have enough economic condition, it is probably that we would live in Angola. For example, if I would have really good job opportunity there, I wouldn’t mind to live in there, if we have money, it is easy to bring health or good education to children anywhere almost anywhere. We are aware of health situations and problems in Angola. My deep expectation is that the country will evolve in next years; I don’t have a pessimistic view about Angola. It is normal if you go back 50 years, Portugal had very similar situations like Angola with very bad health and education system with very strong traditional opinions ruling by religion but the country evolved. And I think that Angola will be the same in next 10 or 15 years so these situations will improve. Nowadays, we know that a lot of Angolan pregnant mothers come to Portugal or go to other countries to deliver their baby because in Angola health conditions are not good. So if you have enough money, these problems will go away because it gives you access to go other countries or well-developed clinics in Angola. I think it is not a simple question. Another thing is that it is a lot difficult for someone doesn’t have African culture like you to go to Angola than for me because we speak the same language and we share a lot of traditions. Angolan terms of tradition is very similar to the Capo Verde in terms of male dominance society, importance of elderly people and family, and we share a lot of those values and African style of parties and music we share a lot of things. It is a lot difficult if you don’t have that because the adaptation is more difficult. We know a lot about each other countries, like we were colonized by Portugal and we share a lot of commonalities. But I think if you love the person and if you want to invest in your relationship, anything is possible and any kind of adaptation is possible because as human beings we have adaptation capacity that it is beyond than everything we imagine.”* These challenges directly or indirectly affect their relationship and specifically their current and future plans about life changing decisions. He added *“I would not say that they are affecting our relationship but they are obstacles to access the relationship in terms of management, having family, and move forward of developing relationship. We didn’t make the choice of having children yet. But if we would choose to have children, the economic problem in Angola the fact that it is really difficult for her to move to Portugal, it would be an obstacle. Yes, I can move to Angola to work but the economic*

situation is not good in Angola so it is not an ideal moment to go there to work. But she could come to work here (referring to Portugal); she would not have a lot of opportunity to find a job in her field work. I would say this probably is main problem of long-distance in our relationship. But we are used to the distance and we have a distance relationship, since I went to Spain in 2012, more or less for 5 years". Seemingly, the couple does not mind to have a long-distance relationship because they are prepared and developed their own mechanism. It is clearly seen by his indication "We more or less make agreements about investing and staying in the relationship till the moment when we are together don't compensate the moment when we are apart. It is more like a strange equilibrium because it is more or less a sacrifice to be apart from the person that you love. But if you feel that the moment when you are together compensate, the sacrifice then it is worthy but if you reach a moment where it doesn't compensate probably we would break up. Then we make another agreement to be honest with each other that the moment to tell the other part but we love each other and we think that it still compensates. We love to being together, talking, travelling together and doing things together. But we can only do that one month at a time. Love is the answer". Even though they invest time when they are together and compromise to be together, still the time is not enough but their love is their powerful tool to win the battle of living condition in both countries and prospective challenges relative to long-distance and transnational way of romantic relationship.

When it comes to the differences that they face in their relationship, in the beginning they had conflicts in relative to traditionalist view versus egalitarian view. "We have the same principals and views in terms of main questions of society such as women's right, minority's right, freedom of speech, and living in democracy in which being free to do whatever you want. In terms of in the beginning of the relationship, the role of the men and the role of the women in the relationship, it was a little bit different because in Angola they have a very traditional society where the men has very dominating rule in the society and in the relation of being in terms of decisions, economics and interpersonal relationships. She was more or less used to that role of men but well in Europe the things are a little bit different but I don't think the reality in Cape Verde the relations are very similar to Angola but in Europe we are more a lot more open-minded and equal in relationship. And in the beginning, I didn't have any dominating role and it was a bit strange for her because I remember she is telling me a lot of times 'I am not used to paying or making decisions' but nowadays she is very independent and learns how to make decision and learns her right to have a choice where she wants to go so I think that she has changed a little bit. And we have a traditional difference in man and woman in our relationship, like man forgets a lot of things, doesn't help to clean the house. In the beginning, we had a lot of arguments because I forgot a lot of things if we compromise to do things but my memory is not good like hers". The couple finds a middle point in their relationship with the power of negotiation and tolerance as he expressed: "In a relationship, we must have and guarantee a tolerance to the mistakes that our partner does. In the same time, you say you don't like that mistake, you cannot allow those everyday mistakes like forgetting things, arriving late to disturb the relationship. But she is very strict with some matters and sometimes she allows these small mistakes can create discussion and sometimes it causes problems, at the same time, the reality is that I try to avoid the same mistakes in certain way of improving our relationship. I notice that you have to put things in the relative point of view; I think forgiveness is really important for the relationship and eventually leads to negotiation between the couple to find a middle point".

### **Previous expectations**

His future life expectation before meeting with his current partner was mainly focused on leading a normal or traditional way of life instead he has a long-distance relationship as stated in his indication "My expectation was to have a normal life to find a girl more or less similar to me with same principals and in the same life with college degree, with some awareness of the world, a smart girl, and responsible to have a nice conversation but distance relationship was something that I never thought about and I thought that would have a normal life like more in traditional relation married with kids, then she came and..." Although the relation type was totally different than he wished for, finding and loving his dream girl has remained same. He indicated that "I found love and happiness in another way that I had to manage and match because the distance relationship is a little bit strange, brings some advantages. In terms of we have a lot of space to do other things; we have to more or less force the communication because in reality you live together sometimes and fall apart, but because we are in long-distance relationship so we have to force to talk every day through FaceTime with each other and talking about what we did in daily basis and we develop communication structure to maintain the closeness of the relationship. It is advantage to have good communication." This also reflects that the couple creates their own way of maintaining their long-distance relationship by developing their daily communication. His latter indication revealed his professional life expectation has remained same. In accordance with his future education expectation, he told "I didn't have any different expectation than my current condition. I did my degree, I am thinking about doing master, post-graduation in MBA later on. In terms of profession, I did what I wanted, I have relatively successful career and I am more or less satisfied with my current condition."

### **Friendship & Socialization**

He has an active social life with a variety of social networks and activities. He mentioned "It is very normal. I have a lot of school friends, some friends from work, my family, friends from my dance classes, I attend social activism such as involving association about racism, and I have poetry sessions. Basically, I socialize with my close friends, my family and I have social and work activities." He said that he makes new friends "more in open activities ... and through my friends." He still keeps

his contact with his old friends from primary school, but especially his close friends are from his high school and college. It seems that advanced technology helps to maintain his communication with friends, who are abroad. Once they travel back to Portugal, they organize face-to-face meeting to catch up. He explained *"Nowadays, WhatsApp is the main communication, I talk a lot through WhatsApp and in every two weeks we usually meet with my close friends, and I have a lot of friends that they are not here, we talk only by message and I don't see them face to face. And I have also some friends, they come to Portugal every three or four months and we arrange meeting to have face-to-face conversations. Then I have friends that I don't see physically and I only talk by WhatsApp."* He finds face-to-face communication useful to convey his thoughts in verbal and non-verbal contexts because he highly values the power of bodily contact in relations. He rarely receives advice from his friends about their relationship, sometimes they say him *'you need to calm down, you need to talk and find a middle point'*", but he still does not find very normal to receive advice.

### **Family relations**

His following excerpt also demonstrated that the couple feel very welcomed in both families and supported emotionally and materially in their journey. He articulated *"They fully support because they would do anything possible. Before moving to our house, when she came to Portugal, she stayed in my family house. They would treat her as a family member and when I go to her family they treat me also as a family, we talk a lot, joke, laugh. We talk about anything, having really good conversation. Sometimes because of the political environment in Angola, sometimes they don't feel free to talk about certain aspects of political life, but they do with me. They are really open-minded. When I say fully support is that they never raise any obstacles towards our relationship and anything that we need, they will try to provide for us."* Their families do not intervene into their relationship instead they respect to the couple's decisions; he referred as follows *"No, they don't because both of them give us a lot of space about our decisions, choices. I think it is related the fact that we are both independent in terms of life and economic matters, and our families are not traditional. These are two main factors: being independent grown-up adults and not having traditional family."* Even though the couple does not make any effort to combine familial relationships, still their families meet and keep their connection especially when her family comes to Portugal. He clarified as *"We don't try to bring families together, we actually don't do that. The distance is a great obstacle because they are very apart from each other but every time when her family comes to Portugal, they go to my family's house. The reality is that my family never went to Angola and I don't think that it will ever happen or maybe if we get married or something like this but it would be once in a life. But whenever they come to Portugal, they are very well-received in my parents' home; they have a very good relation. For instance, in January, they were here and my mother gave a dinner and they had a very good time."*

He rarely have virtual communication with his girlfriend's family, also the families do not have virtual communication with each other. He specified as *"With her family, it is not daily basis way but I try to send messages by WhatsApp and Viber. For example, her father likes to talk with me face-to-face when I am in Angola. And if I see any news, article and interesting subject, I send to him by Viber and we talk a little bit but it is not every day, or even not every week maybe it is once a month. No, the families don't talk with each other but only my sisters talk with my girlfriend but they don't talk with her family. They might be friends in Facebook but they are not close friends."* He might not have virtual communication for any reason with her family, but when they are together, they talk about several issues. As his indication follows *"They are very open-minded in terms of Angolan society, they are very nice and we talk about everything such as social problems, developments of the country, daily issues, our future and our career. And it is same as her here (referring to Portugal) as well."* Even if he always prefers face-to-face communication with his girlfriend, friends and families, he uses virtual communication as a solution to maintain his social networks. He continued *"As I said virtual communication is not that good but it is the only solution that we have for distance problem. I would say that virtual communication solves the problem but it is not same quality as face-to-face communication. When I lived in Barcelona for two years, I used virtual communication with my own family. Virtual communication is a solution and phase and it is useful for the distance relationships but I always prefer face-to-face communication."*

### **Couple's daily life**

When they are apart, they use WhatsApp and Viber for daily communication and he believes these virtual tools are essential *"not to grow apart"*. He indicates that *"We have to force ourselves for a daily basis communication. We talk to each other to say when we have a problem, when we are sad; we need to share the difficulties on our life for daily basis. I always ask her 'How was your day? Did you sleep well? Did you eat?'"* and she makes the same questions. *Every time when I have a problem at work, I tell her and it is same for her. We have a romantic relationship and we also have a very close friendship."* This illustrates that their long-distance relationship has flourished their communication and friendship. Still, he finds face-to-face communication useful to convey his thoughts in verbal and non-verbal contexts because he highly values the power of bodily contact in their relationship, and additionally he believes that virtual communication is only a 'possible solution' to shorten distance in their relationship. He further detailed *"Face-to-face communication is a lot more quality than virtual communication. If I could choose, I would only have a face-to-face relation because it is very difficult to make a point and a lot of our communication is not verbal, we have a lot of physical communication and even effect of touching to someone"*

*brings a lot of quality to the relation so I think that virtual relations are possible solution that we can have in distance relationship but I think face-to-face communication is a lot better.”*

He described his daily life when he is apart from his partner as normal, but incomplete and sacrificing the moments due to lack of her presence as follows: *“It is normal that when you love someone, you want to be with that person, want to share main life. When she is not here, I have a normal life: I go to work, I have my dance classes, I do my social activities and my poetry. But every time something important happens or some important situations or some friends gathering, I lack her presence so that is the sacrifice part for me. So that’s why I have a very normal life but it is incomplete because in some situations her presence is very missing although I don’t want to be with her every single time. For example, when she is not here I live alone. When we choose to live together and I forced her that when she is here we live together, when she is not here I live with my parents because I have better treatment but I choose to not to do that. And I choose to live alone because you need to have daily relationship with your house and accept as home so I choose to live alone. Sometimes I feel alone because I miss her and I don’t want to be with my family or friends, I want to be with her and I am not alone because I have a lot of friends and my family but she is not present then I feel alone. Of course I don’t have lonely life. When I was in Barcelona, I spend most of the time alone because I had less friends and my family was not there and I started to baring time alone, and time alone is really important to listen yourself, to have the freedom to do whatever you want. Feeling alone is not good but sometimes being alone is good.”* Obviously, her absence creates fluctuation in his psychological and emotional mood, but he has developed some personal and survival skills to bare loneliness when he is far from his beloved ones. When he is together with his partner, he works and she is off and he describes his daily life as *“Full. We do have a normal life when she is here. We do a lot of things together such as road trips, going to beach, hanging out with friends, going to cinema, visiting family, buying things for the house, and cleaning the house, dancing, sometimes we run together, and she likes gym. We go to dinner a lot of time because she doesn’t like to cook and I don’t know how to cook so we go out to dinner a lot of time. Well, it is normal couple’s life. Now we spend a lot of times with arranging the house and buying things for the house. Her family gave lots of things when I went to Angola, we brought a lot of things and my family give also a lot of things. You have to take advantage to have the family, right?”*

### **Parenting**

The couple does not have children yet. However, it was interesting to hear their plans about parental matters in the nearest future. The couple intends to share all the tasks related to parenting. In terms of language, since they are both from Portuguese-speaking countries, they will be speaking with their children in Portuguese but he has intention to learn the traditional language of his father and wishes his partner to learn her parents’ native language so that they might convey to their children. He explained *“She has her traditional languages that she doesn’t know how to speak and my parents’ country they speak Creole language. I understand and I speak a little bit but I am not fluent but I would like our children to speak Portuguese, English because it is international language and I would like them to know our parents’ languages including Creole and her parents’ language -Yaneka.”* Regarding his partner’s view, he added further *“I don’t think she feels the need of our children to know our parents’ languages. Well, it is nice to have but it is not essential. My opinion is that you need to know where you come from; you need to have more or less knowledge of your origin to build your own identity. You don’t need to be same as your parents but you need to know the history of your country, your traditions. You don’t need to follow them but you need to know them. That’s why I want them to know our parents’ languages.”* This demonstrates that he dignifies transmitting traditional languages in order to transmit traditions, customs and cultures which belong to the origins of their parents.

In accordance with educational plans, the couple will take unbiased stance on their children’s choices and decisions, still he stressed on specific professions of administration, business, and engineering in which he specified *“liberal professions”*. He responded as *“It is difficult answer but it is important to be happy and want whatever they want but I would love them to follow some path that I know the chances of success are in need and higher than other jobs. If our children wants to be a basketball player and I know that the chances of success are very limited or if wants to be a musician, the chances are still limited but if want to be doctor or business administer or lawyer, I know that the chances of success are greater in society where we live nowadays. I know the most important thing to be happy and to do whatever they want to do and be happy to do but I also want them to have a success and have a normal profession related to administration, business, engineering with computers. I would be more tranquilized if they would choose those areas but still we are really open-minded and we will always support their choices. But I think she is more open-minded, she will simply let them do whatever they want. Yes, I would also do this but I would become worried if they want to achieve something more difficult.”*

In the case of selecting a country to raise their children, the couple has a shared decision about Portugal due to the fact that on one hand growing up in a developed country will bring opportunities into children’s life in terms of improving their well-being and quality of life. On the other hand, his following statement discloses his wonder about the future of their children in regard to be a minority and be exposed to possible discrimination because of their colour. He detailed *“She knows that Portugal is more developed than Angola, we could provide more quality of life for our children in terms of health, education,*

*social mobility, social opportunities, and work opportunities. She knows that living in Portugal is better for quality of life but the reality is that in Portugal my children will always belong to the minority group. I don't feel any concerns of belonging to the minority because I don't feel it in my daily life. The reality is that racism exists in Portugal and the fact that being minority of the race and colour, sometimes you don't have access to certain opportunities. In Angola, they are all the same race although there is racism as well; they have a lot of similarities than here in Portugal. There they wouldn't face these kinds of obstacles but if you put in balance we would have better quality of life and better opportunities to raise our children. She is conscious of that."*

In the account of school choice, he intends to send their children into public school and he explained the reasons behind of his preferences in order to raise awareness of diversity in the society and teach them how to live with the diversity. He exemplified that *"I always went to public school and I think she went to private school but I would be defending public school for our kids because I think that if you go to international school, it is very good to learn a language when you are child. If you go to private school, you will have a good quality of education but if you go to public school, you have contact with every type of person in the social structure of the society. I think that is more important because you can learn language I never go to private school and I can speak more or less English. For example, I went to public school and I am not less or I don't have less professional success, but one thing I do have is a lot of tolerance to other persons' belonging to other races, cultures, educational backgrounds and other social positions. I have friends that are poor and rich and I think that I have this kind of view towards social relationships because I was in a public school. I have relations with my friends that are poor, rich, black, white, dumb, and smart and I think this is an important characteristic that I would like my children to have. So definitely, I will try to put them in public school unless public school is so bad that it is impossible to put them there but if public school has good condition definitely I will put them to public school even if I had the economic condition to put them to the private school."*

In terms of citizenship, the couple does not hesitate to their children to obtain their own citizenships; on the contrary, they believe having double nationalities will be highly beneficial for kids to maintain generational ties in both countries of Angola and Portugal. This is clarified in his excerpt of *"Portuguese and Angolan citizenships probably would be main choice because my family lives in Portugal and I have a lot of family lives in other parts of Europe and I have some family in Cape Verde and most of her family lives in Angola. So most probably, we will travel between Portugal and Angola so taking this into account, it would be better for them to have both citizenships."*

#### **Mid-term plans**

In 5 years, he sees himself as *"married with one offspring"* and the couple wants to work as line managers. In 10 years, he wishes to have *"more than one offspring"* and the couple wishes to obtain a MBA degree.

He imagines himself becoming old in both Angola and Portugal in good health and economic conditions.

#### **Identity**

When the question of after all this going back and forth between foreign countries and his country, how he specified himself and how his emotions are; he replied as *"It is very interesting because when you travel a lot or when you live in different places, you become a part of those places or those places become a part of you. So I cannot say that I am fully African or European, I am a conscious that I am mix of every single experience in my life time, I am the result of that. I started to accept that because when I am participating in African communities in Portugal, a lot of African people felt that they didn't belong anywhere, they were attached a lot to their African roots and they didn't feel a part of the Portuguese society. Well, I felt that more or less but I learned to accept myself like a result of blending and mix cultures and mixing things, so I would define myself as a citizen of world but with Portuguese and Cape Verde roots and I am conscious where I came from, I know where I was raised and I know more or less my parents' country and my parents' traditions. And I am really proud of being black and being from African continent with African roots and African culture. I am really proud of that. So that's how I define myself."*

The question of identifying his nationality was a puzzling effect for him and he responded as follows *"That is very difficult question. I know that I am Portuguese but I am different kind of Portuguese because I don't share the same origins that the majority of the Portuguese people. I have different origin and I have slightly different culture because I have an African culture that is little bit different. For example, African culture is a lot close to the family and we have different taste of music, and social relationship. At the same time, I am fully integrated into Portuguese society and I share European values including democracy, freedom, freedom of speech and I knew a lot about Portuguese history because I was raised here. I feel Portuguese but I also feel that I am different kind of Portuguese and I am also different kind of African because I am not fully African so I am a different thing, I am a mix of Portuguese and African culture. If you look at the origins of Portuguese or African culture, I am totally a different thing, I am neither of them. It is difficult to answer; it is so difficult for me."*



Life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures shaped his identity and sense of belonging. He articulated *“When you go to a lot of different countries, you have to know how to adapt. Adaptation process is making the places become a part of you by accepting traditions, the way of living there and more or less blending and trying to be part of the society. If you don’t let that happen, it is very difficult to have integration to the society. If you don’t make effort to blend in, the integration would be very difficult. They need to accept you and it is very difficult to them and you will not feel accepted. But when you do that, you will feel more or less your sense of belonging because I feel comfortable and I accept myself in a certain place. For example, when I was in Barcelona, I didn’t feel Spanish because I know that I am Portuguese but I developed a social structure of friends, work, activities that allow me to have a sense of belonging that I thought I am good here. When I returned to Portugal to visit my family and friends, I looked at my country and Spain is a lot more developed than Portugal. Then I thought Portugal is not that developed and has many issues and when I was driving in road with a lot holes and I said it seem as a developing country with many holes in the road. What I am saying is that it affects your sense of belonging because you learn to compare your country with other countries, other countries are better than yours in the sense of development and you don’t identify less your country because you want to be in country that has good health and education services and has good government with less corruption. The reality is that it makes you value that your country has and other countries don’t have. For example, my family and my friends are here or they are in any country, they can affect my all life in Portugal and my quality of life in Portugal is different than in Spain because I have my social network and I am comfortable with them. I feel home here. And I think this is a feeling that a lot of immigrants have because of sense of belonging.”* His indication clarifies that feeling home and feeling comfortable are related to being among his social networks –especially his family- are crucial metaphors for him and other immigrants to feel belonged to the society as well as to country. Moreover, he underlines the importance of integration process that immigrants need to make effort to integrate into society and combat with prospective challenges during adaptation period.

In terms of identity as a couple, he said *“We see ourselves more or less as a citizen of the world in a sense that we think it is possible for us go and live in another country. We don’t have a dogmatic view to live in Portugal or Angola, for example we could go to live in Barcelona or London, so we see as a couple a citizen of the world which she has deep African root and I have African root blended with Portuguese root. It is like we are very served to our past but we are open-minded to our future.”* His identity as a member of his biological family and his partner’s family, he mentioned about having African root eases to process of blending in both cultures and he does not feel as stranger in her family. *“The fact that both of us having African origin help a lot, it is very easy for me to blend in the family because we share a lot of things, opinions about the world. In my family, I am the only male offspring; I have only sisters so the reality is very comfortable situation because I am in the centre of my family because I am only one boy. In her family, they treat me very well because when I am in their house, of course I am not in the centre of attention but I am like a visitor and need to be treated well. I cannot complain; I have a very good relationship with my and her family. And I am 33 and I am an adult and I have also life experience although not same as 60 years old person but anytime it is possible I try to share my knowledge with my and her family. I also give some advices and I try to help if they need anything from Portugal or if they have to solve any matters, I also try to help.”* Last but not least, the identity as a citizen of the country where living in can change and disguise human being in accordance with the concept of time and place but the core of the person and personality will keep remaining as same. He explained in following indication *“When I go to Angola, I naturally think more African. If I go to London, I naturally feel more British if I could say that. What I mean is that the places where you are affect you in a way that changes in your behaviour but doesn’t change my core, my principals, my moral and my ethics. It changes my costumes what I wear so it is like a superficial change but it is not a deep change.”*

### **Suggestion**

*“We have more or less 5 years long-distance relationships so I can give some good advices. Daily communication is very worthy. Aligning the expectations is very important because you need to know other part’s view. For example, if you want to have a family, you need to say that you want to have a family. If you want to live together, you need to communicate. If you are not happy with behaviour of your partner, you need to talk. This is what I mean aligning of the expectations is like I expect certain things from you and the answer from other part is agree or not. If your expectations do not match, you need to find a solution either increasing or lowering the expectations but you need to be in the same line. You should have a tolerance and respect to one and another.”*

## 8.8. Appendix 8

### Grid Analysis of Kyrgyzstani-Turkish (ID-6)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I met with my interviewee by coincidence in Büyükçekmece Directorate of Population (*Büyükçekmece Nüfus Müdürlüğü*), Istanbul. She was with her husband, their baby girl and her brother-in-law; they came to receive the ID of their baby. At first, I approached to love their baby and I started speaking with her. In our conversation, I learned that she is from Kyrgyzstan. When I realized their mixed-marriage, I kindly asked them to participate in my research. In the first time, they were hesitated and she looked her husband to receive approval. After delivering information about my research, her husband allowed her to participate in my research and we exchanged our phone numbers. One week later, since she has a small baby, she wanted me to go to their house so we met in their house. During our interview, I was with my interviewee while my mother was looking after the baby. There were times that baby was crying for hunger and she was breastfeeding. This can be identified as a pause to observe her child raising activities to understand their mother-child interaction. However, she had difficulty in comprehending and answering to some questions due to her lack of linguistic competence in Turkish. She was particularly open and transparent while sharing her experiences. Moreover, since she does not have many friends, she was also very happy to talk with me and even she wished to be friends. Since this moment, sometimes we talk through WhatsApp, and she sends me her baby's pictures.

**Individual background of Kyrgyzstani female:** She was born in Kyrgyzstan. In 2012, she travelled to Turkey and she was not able to speak in Turkish. When she returned to Kyrgyzstan, she registered a Turkish course for 4 months since then she has started learning Turkish. In Kyrgyzstan, she had previous relationships but they were not serious. From 2013 and 2015, she worked in domestic business e.g. housekeeping, child and elderly care in several cities of Turkey (containing Antalya, Gaziantep, Bodrum, Kuşadası). She did not have a working visa because she found it was not necessary to pay tax to the Turkish government. However; she got tired of working illegal and doing endless entry-exit country. Then, she decided to get tourist visa for a year in 2015. Due to her marriage, she obtains a family residence permit. Since she does not fulfil the requirements to become a Turkish citizenship<sup>5</sup>, she does not have a Turkish citizenship yet.

**Individual background of Turkish male:** He was born in Turkey from a Circassian family background. He got married 15 years ago and he got divorced after 4 years due to financial difficulties affected their spousal relationship. His previous wife did not want to have a child, so they did not have any children. Moreover, he had previous relationship with a Tatars female. Later, he had a cohabiting relationship with a Russian female. Their relationship was characterised as being a transnational, she had travelled back and forth to Russian in every 15 days. Unintentionally, they got separated because his partner died due to the cancer.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple lives in Istanbul, Turkey. They are married since 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, 2016 and they have a baby girl.

#### Demographic information

34, female, bachelor's degree in Economics, stay at home, Kyrgyzstani

53, male, high school, boat builder<sup>6</sup>, Turkish

#### Background of the couple's life

When she came to visit Turkey in 2012, she met with her current husband through one of her friends. At that time, she was not able to speak Turkish and her friend was translating their conversation to each other. When she came back to Kyrgyzstan, the couple did not break their contact. Her husband asked her to come to Turkey so as to know each other but she did not have any intention to head back to Turkey, she stayed in Kyrgyzstan. *"At first, he loved me and wanted to get married with me but I didn't want to be married. Also, I thought he was old"*, she said. In 2014, she came back with the intention of knowing him better, meanwhile; she learned that he had a cohabiting relationship with a Russian female. On that time, her husband said her 'you are young and you wish to have a child. Nonetheless, I am 50 years old and after this age I don't want to take a child responsibility. You are still young, you can find a better person for you' and then the couple decided to end their relationship before it started. It was heart-breaking moment for her as she said *"since I wished to be with him, I got sad*

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<sup>5</sup> The Acquisition of Turkish Citizenship by Marriage: The eligibility requirements for Turkish citizenship are fairly straightforward: A person need to be of adult age (according to the country of origin), and the person must have lived in Turkey for at least 5 years, with a total interruption of less than six months. This is reduced to 3 years if the person is married to a Turkish national or if the person is a foreigner born on Turkish soil (further information is available in 'Turkish Citizenship Law')

<sup>6</sup> Boat builders construct, fit-out and repair marine vessels. They can work on all aspects of building new marine vessels from drafting the initial design; building the frame, hull, deck and cabins, installing engines and furnishings, and painting and finishing the completed vessel (further information is available at: <http://www.careercentre.dtwd.gov.au/Occupations/Pages/boat-builder-and-repairer.aspx>).

*and I cried a lot. Although we are not together, he always called me to check whether I was fine or not. He always thought on me and gave advices on the phone 'don't trust on people very quickly, Istanbul is big metropolitan city with a variety of people' and I always replied him by saying 'we separated, we are friends, don't think on me anymore'.*

She decided to live in Turkey in order to find a job, explore Turkey and maybe find a partner. She declared *"I was fed up from Kyrgyzstan and I was tired of my routine of home to work and work to home. I wanted to have change in my life so I wanted to come here because my Turkish was better. I came to Turkey to work in domestic business e.g. child care, housekeeping and elderly care. I have worked in many places in Turkey. I saw all of Antalya, Gaziantep, Bodrum, Kuşadası."* This mobilized working experience was good and satisfactory for her because her verbal and body language pleasantly demonstrated it. During her working times in 2013, she did not have a working visa because she found it was not necessary to pay tax to the Turkish government. However; she got tired of working illegal and doing endless entry-exit country. Then, she decided to get tourist visa for a year in 2015 and she worked about 6-7 month as a baby sitter but she decided to quit. At the same time, her husband lost his partner due to the cancer and supported her till the death. Before she died, she told him *'I will not get better, there is no hope. You can find another person, I am setting you free'*. During his grief and mourning period, she (particular interviewee) was an endless support for him and she always check on him. This traumatic event brought about some changes in couple's life and this sadness paved the floor to mutual sharing, understanding, and support for both of them and eventually triggered her decision to start being with him.

In terms of family approval, both families respected their decision. She articulated *"my mother told me 'you know who you will get married, it is your decision. Even is black, it is your decision; you will live with that man' because of the fact that in Kyrgyzstan there are not only Kyrgyz also Russians and Uighurs. My husband's parents passed away but he has sisters and brother. His siblings got really happy when we got married. Because my husband got married 15 years ago and they got divorced after 4 years due to his financial difficulties. My husband didn't have children so his family thought we could still have a child."*

Their families were happy with their union. She said *"my mother was very happy for me and said 'your dream was of having your child'. I have my sister and my brother, my sister said, 'I always think of you, who you will marry, when you will have children, or will you be eventually alone? Now you have a husband and a daughter, I am not afraid for you anymore. You established your family and you are no longer alone.' My husband's family also like our union, they like me and so do I like them. They love their granddaughter a lot."* However, her happy mood left its space to sadness when she memorized her mother. She continued in tears *"recently, I am not good. It has been a month that she left. My mother took one month off from her work due to my delivery. I always remember her in the morning while having breakfast, we talked about everything for a month, we ate and we drank. Sometimes I think if I would be near to my mother, I would take my daughter once a month or once every two weeks to my mother if I would be living in Kyrgyzstan. However, now I can only speak on the phone, now sometimes it hurts me inside and my soul is aching. The distance is so bad. I went to airport with my mother and I sent her. Then when I got home, the house was empty. I came with my daughter, my mum was not there and my daughter was only 12-day-old-baby. I said to my mother I got very used to you in one month."*

Her mother made her daughter realize about possible challenged to be in distance rather than giving advice: *"My mother said to me 'you know everything, you know their food. Only it would difficult because of the distance. My mum is a quiet woman, what I say she is okay with everything. Normally, mothers recommend to their daughters whereas we are opposite, I recommend to her."* From his side, his siblings give some advices to the couple and especially his brother advising *'you made a choice to get married. I couldn't live like this, I couldn't have a child, live for me as well. Don't think about age difference, take good care of your husband and your baby, pay attention on each other, don't do harmful things, and don't eat harmful things'.*

In terms of living condition in Turkey, she did not have culture-related challenges because she came to Turkey 4 years ago. She said, *"If I would come directly from Kyrgyzstan, I would have difficulty in culture and food. However, I have already learned how to cook, how to take care of children, how are Turkish women and Turkish men, how are mother-in-laws here, I have learned before I came."* She continued *"I was used to wear long or short skirts or wear a décolleté. In Kyrgyzstan, since we live with Russian we habituated their way of, everyone wears what they want. Here I don't go out wearing short dresses/skirts, I am ashamed. My husband doesn't mind what I dress but still the dress codes change according to the living quarters. Due to financial difficulties, we moved here while I was more comfortable in other house."* These lines capture the essence of social norms that shaped her behaviours in a particular social group or culture accordingly. She sustained *"when I worked, I faced with social difficulties. My former boss, for example, had tendency to do social discrimination in accordance with class stratification. He acted superior to us (referring workers). When we went to the hotel, he said, 'This is our staff'. At the first time, I did not understand his stance towards us. Additionally, when I worked as babysitter with the doctor family in Gaziantep, I started coughing and they told, 'You know foreigner, carer, we need to take precautions', and I replied 'I am fit as a fiddle, only I cough, but I don't have such a serious illness', but this hurts me a lot. Still, I thought if my child would*

be looked after by a foreigner, if I were them, I would do the same. Also, some of Turkish women are chatty, of course in Kyrgyzstan we do have gossip but we do not have time to do.” After she got married she has not faced with those difficulties, she said, “I am protected with a shield of my marriage, our common friends, and my husband’s family.” Her statements demonstrated her social network prevent her from unpleasant and unfriendly experiences.

The couple have not had culture-related differences in their relationship. She assumed that her husband’s previous relationships with international and intercultural characteristics with a Russian and a Tatars partners made him to get along with cultural differences in spousal relationship. She described differences with a comparison “For instance, here women who stay at home don’t work after marriage. In our culture, women also work so I want to work and earn my money too. Also, I like when Turkish men protect and back up their wives, our men don’t do that much. However, sometimes his overprotection disturbs me because even I cannot go outside alone when I want e.g. even I cannot go to buy bread unless I called him. I guess I am foreigner and I am alone with the kid at home, he is worried about our security. It is not like that in Kyrgyzstan, even if I’m alone, nobody can do anything to me. I was free in Kyrgyzstan. Even if I want my freedom here, my husband is always near me. I never experienced this before, I was always alone. Yes, I like to be protected, cared and loved but I want to feel free. I could go anywhere I wanted in Kyrgyzstan, but you never get out here. We go to the doctor; my husband accompanies me every time.” She is happy to be protected but his over protective and over worried attitudes cause limitations to her life and hence slow her process to integrate into society.

### **Previous expectations**

Before getting married, she was offered to work as a housekeeper with \$1000 monthly salary in the house of the head of Sabancı Holding<sup>7</sup>. She thought to work and invest money to buy a house in Kyrgyzstan. On the one hand, she wished to establish a family, have a child and live near the sea. For this reason, she rejected to get married and have a child because her biological time was passing to have children. Her future expectations matched with her current life in these matters as she mentioned “I established my family with my child. I love Istanbul very much and I came near the sea. It would be nice if we have our house. My husband bought a land in Keşan and if we build our home there, it is enough. What else you need in life, you do not need much: your husband treat you well, love you, see you as a priority, look after you, and not beat you. My husband, for example, loves his daughter so beautifully, he likes to look at her face, hold her fingers, loves his daughter. After this age, he became a father and he loves her so much. When he loves our daughter so much, my love also grows every day towards my husband. The difference is only I am not working now.” Her expectation from her future education and professional life before she met with her husband was as accountant. However, she thought her education in Kyrgyzstan would be unbeneficial or insufficient in Turkey.

### **Friendship & Socialization**

“I don’t go out, what a socialization! We used to go to beach in Büyükçekmece, or we used to explore new places: Silivri, Taksim, every time we went but now our child is so small to go out. I wished to make more friends; I only have my husband’s relatives, his friends’ wives and some Kyrgyzstani girl friends that we talked on the phone.” She keeps in contact with her friends back home in Kyrgyzstan; she uses the Internet to communicate with them. Still, she prefers to have face-to-face communication because she believes “it is not possible to transmit emotions on the phone.” Her one of friends give advices to warn her by saying “you are a foreigner, he can leave you. Don’t trust in your husband %100, put aside some money” while others asking “does your husband treat you well?”

### **Family relations**

The couple receive support emotional support by both families and since the couple lives in Istanbul, his family takes role in helping couple in the matters of child care and material support. Even she exemplified “they supported us financially a lot, when we got married, when our baby was born, when I was at hospital. I am very grateful; they support us both by delivering money and gifts.” The couple make their families together whenever possible; they have a plan to visit their family in Kyrgyzstan when their baby gets bigger. She talks with her mother and sisters in every two days in the subjects of breastfeeding, cooking, and housework. Above-mentioned statements revealed that she gives value on face-to-face communication, even when her mother came she tried to catch up times they missed. She explained cheerfully “when my mother came, I slept in her arms. I told my husband ‘sleep in sofa, I will sleep with my mom’.”

### **Couple’s daily life**

“Loving the sea, loving the water, having harmony in food, culture, everything, we have harmony in the romantic and in bed relationship, we are compatible with each other” are the elements that make them a couple. When their baby gets big enough to travel, she plans to travel back and forth to Kyrgyzstan every year for a month. They will talk through the Internet such as Skype, WhatsApp and Facebook. When her husband is at work; she takes care of the baby e.g. feeding, changing her clothes

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<sup>7</sup> Sabancı Holding is the parent company of Sabancı Group, one of Turkey’s leading conglomerates. Sabancı Group companies are market leaders in their respective sectors that include financial services, energy, cement, retail and industrials (further information is available at: <https://www.sabanci.com/en>).

and diaper, watches TV, cooks dinner, and do some housework. When they are together, they have a same routine but this time the couple share parental tasks. They go to children playgrounds, visit their friends, going to shopping malls and on Fridays, the couple has their time for pairing wine and fish. On summer, they take the boat out for swimming.

### **Parenting**

The couple has a 5-month-old daughter. The couple share partially all parental tasks except for changing diaper as follows: *“He looks after the child while I prepare breakfast or meals. If baby cries, he keeps on cooking and preparing the table. In the beginning, he was afraid to hold the baby, now he gets used to and looks after pretty well except he doesn't change the diapers. All other tasks we do together, we play, and we wash her together. He prepares the water, my husband hold her and I wash.”*

She knows Kyrgyzstani, Russian and Turkish and declaring *“I speak Turkish at the moment, on occasion I say Kyrgyzstani to my daughter such as ‘ukdasana’ you say in Turkish ‘uyu’ [translation from Turkish to English: sleep] or ‘geldim’ [translation from Turkish/Kyrgyzstani to English: came] is same in both Kyrgyzstani and Turkish. They are so similar. Sometimes I confuse and I say some words in Russian, but I have forgotten many words in Russian. The Kyrgyz people who live in Turkey are now forgetting Russian. I know everything but I started forgetting because of lack of practice. My Kyrgyz friends here speak Kyrgyz, but in Kyrgyzstan we speak mixed of Kyrgyz and Russian. Nevertheless, here I started speaking mixed of Kyrgyz and Turkish. We haven't decided with my husband but I decide to speak with her in Turkish until 1-2 years old, at least she can be fluent in Turkish. If we mix up with Kyrgyz and Turkish, I think the child's mind will be mixed. It is written in the internet that until 2-3 years old only to speak in Turkish, then slowly start to teach Russian. At least the child will acquire one language at that time. They told if we teach all the languages at once, the child's mind will be puzzled. They say if the child is Kyrgyz, Turkish, Russian, the child will be confused. I will show such informative cartoons for Kyrgyz and Russian and when she is bigger I will register her in these language courses.”* Though her husband speaks in Turkish, he tells her to teach Kyrgyz and Russian.

In terms of educational plans for their children, she desires to send her to study university in Kyrgyzstan. *“We have many American universities, there are American professors. She is going to learn English, Russian, and Kyrgyz and she will already know Turkish. I see our education in Kyrgyzstan better than here and I think here is not good. There are not state-funded kindergartens, or there are not low-paid state kindergartens. For example, in Kyrgyzstan we have low-paid state crèches and very few private kindergartens while the crèches here are very expensive. Additionally, in Kyrgyzstan, there are sport activities in which children have gymnastics training and ballet at the schools. There is not much here.”* In terms of career building, she told, *“I want my child to be a doctor, but I want her to develop personal and social abilities in music, dance, and sports. In Kyrgyzstan, we send our kids to the ballet to form the child's posture smooth and the girl should walk like a girl and walk to the edge of her feet. But then I see the kids here, our children are different because they have more activities.”* She sheds a light on the importance of developing children social and personal abilities besides their academic achievement.

Their child has a Turkish identity and they are in process of applying her Kyrgyzstani identity but they have to approve their marriage in Kyrgyzstan.

### **Mid-term plans**

In 5 years, she identified herself unpleasantly to become a Turkish woman, staying at home and not going out since she wants to work. Furthermore, she believes without patronage and nepotism is impossible to find a job due to being a foreigner. In 10 years, she did not have a long term plan, but she wishes to be healthy. The couple do not plan to have more children; rather they want to invest on their daughter education and life.

She wished to be in Kyrgyzstan or Russia to work and to have better life conditions, but it is difficult to him to work or adapt to the environment because of his lack of linguistic competence.

### **Identity**

She identified her nationality as *“of course, I am Kyrgyzstani.”* After all this going back and forth between foreign countries and her country, she specified herself as being *“I see myself as a typical Turkish woman. If I lived in Kyrgyzstan, it would be completely different. I always said I would never marry a Kyrgyz person, because I did not like the Kyrgyz culture, the genes, and the restrictions. It is like the East here, there are restrictions, for example, the bride is seen inferior and always suppressed by mother-in-laws. I did not want such a life, I wanted to live a more modern family, and currently I have it. If I were in Kyrgyzstan, I had many friends. I would be working in my textile job or I would be an accountant. If I would go to Russia, there were many job opportunities that I could work. I like Turkey is very beautiful but I am really regretful because I cannot find a job. I am very sorry about the business here, I cannot work anywhere here. My daughter, my husband, my family, is the only thing that really holds me here otherwise I have nothing here. There's nothing I can do for myself here, no space to show myself.”*

Life across two (or more) countries, languages and culture may be was a force for her to disguise in the role of Turkish woman. Her spousal relationship and oppressed and perceived role of being Turkish woman might stick on her identity but it does not mean that she is willing to be accepted and belonged to the Turkish society as a Turkish citizen. This highlighted in her following statement *"I don't feel belonged to Turkey. Even if Turkey accepts me, I cannot accept it. I need time to adjust and admit maybe later on."* She identified her identity as a couple *"I disguised into Turkish woman"*. In the eyes of her experiences, she feels well-belonged, well-accepted and feels as being a family member in her biological as well as her husband's family. She told about identity as a citizen of Turkey *"since I don't have any social interaction and don't experience the real life conditions, I have not been able to integrate, I couldn't."*

### **Suggestion**

*"It is necessary to your spouse's culture in order to have a harmony. The couples need to be compatible. It is thought that the children who are raised in multinational and multilingual atmosphere are going to be smarter but it is the good side of the medallion. I think it is better for everyone to live in their country of origin. I regret being moved to Turkey or marrying at a distance because I am away from my mother. I do not have social life here, I am closed here, even if I am not closed, I am closed at home. Even if I try to learn your language, I cannot clearly explain what is inside of me. Since it is not my mother tongue, I cannot express all my feelings and emotions. I think it's better for everyone to live in their own country. Ultimately, your heart wants your own country because your country calls you back. I pray that my husband stays healthy but if something happens to him, I will go back my own country because it is very difficult to remain as a stranger in another country."*

## 8.9. Appendix 9

### Grid Analysis of Turkish-French (ID-7)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I know her around four years via her blog consisting of her earlier experiences in Luanda so I became one of her readers then we became friends. I received lots of advices regarding living conditions in Angola from not only a woman and also a Turkish woman perspective. While conducting research interview, she was on vacation in Istanbul so we met in a café. Other people were present, but we had a nice spot to have our conversation smoothly. In the beginning, we update each other's life changes and related experiences, then we started interview. Even if this was our first face-to-face communication, we were not strangers to each other, because we have keep contact with each other for 4 years. During our interview, she was open and excited to respond the questions. Moreover; since she is a writer and has experiences to be interviewed, her answers were straight to the point.

**Individual background of Turkish female:** She was born in Turkey. Currently, she holds also French citizenship because of her marriage. She was married before but she did not have children. She was working in Coca-Cola as a facility and procurement manager. When she had free time on weekends and on holidays, she has been travelling abroad to know other countries and cultures. She is retired and currently writes travel books and articles in magazines from her home office.

**Individual background of French male:** He was born in France. He has 3 children (at the ages of 27, 31 and 32) from his previous marriage. Due to his overseas job experience as a field service engineer, he has been living in other countries and continuing to do so.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** Even though the couple currently lives in Dubai because of his job, they have their home in Istanbul, Turkey. They are an example of being a transnational couple in the purposes of his overseas job experience and her entry-exit country (from Dubai to Turkey or vice versa)<sup>8</sup>. During our interview, she was on vacation in Istanbul and they were apart from each other for a month. The couple continues living in different countries because of his overseas job experience.

#### Demographic information

51, female, bachelor's degree in English and American Literature, retired and travel writer, double nationality: Turkish/French

58, male, university, CFM field service engineer UAE<sup>9</sup>, French

#### Background of couple's life

*"In December 2002, we met in salsa class at the Mundo Latino Dance School in Istanbul."* Although decision-making phase to start living together was quite challenging for the couple, they were inspired by their similarities, the feeling of sharing and 'togetherness', she explained as *"it took considerable time to decide living together, marriage and preparations. We have same point of views with same interests, tastes and pleasures from the life. That's why; taking decision to get marry was beyond of living together, it was related to share more things together."* Her husband's overseas job experience makes the couple mobilized. *"After getting married on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2006, we lived a few months in Istanbul, then we moved to Luanda, the capital city of Angola and we stayed for 2 years. We constantly move from country to country due to my husband's job (2006-2008 Luanda, Angola; 2008-2012 Nairobi, Kenya; 2012-2016 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; 2016 January currently living in Dubai) but our bond with Istanbul never break because my family live there and whenever we have a chance to have holiday, we come to Istanbul."*

Both of their families stayed on the side-lines about their union or their relationship because it is their second marriage. Their neutral stance might be related to the couple's characteristics such as their ages, previous marriage experiences as well as life experiences. Consequently, they did not ask for any advice from families, she said *"only we told our decision to them"*. Both of families were happy with their union, however; she mentioned that *"even though my family do not vocalize it, they were absolutely sad by the fact that I left Turkey because of my marriage."*

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<sup>8</sup> With the French citizenship, she can receive the long visit visa on arrival at the airport to a 90 days stay in UAE with the cost of Dh1000 ~ €250. On the other hand, advance visa arrangement is necessary with her Turkish citizenship. Only after the completion of the required documents, UAE Ministry of Foreign Affairs issue the long visit visa around three days with the cost of Dh1000 ~ €250 (further information is available online at: <http://uae-embassy.ae/embassies/fr> and [tr](http://tr)).

<sup>9</sup> Field service engineers, who work either on an oil rig or land rig, ensure every aspect of oil production runs smoothly. They are responsible for the correction and repair of all equipment used in the oil drilling process. Also, they are responsible for maintaining all aspects of the jobsite including safety rules, schedules, and equipment (further information is available online at: <http://www.payscale.com>).

In terms of living condition, constantly mobilized way of life have occurred some challenges in their life. She expressed that *“organizing our life in a few years and leaving everything behind, not completely settling down to any country, recreating a new life in another country and trying to create a new social network from time to time harden our life.”* She continued *“I am more social character than my husband so usually I have a role/mission in creating new social networks and sometimes this bothers me.”* However, she said that *“I complete my mission so we meet with new people and get involved in social events thus there is no conflict in our relationship.”*<sup>7</sup> When it comes to facing differences in their relationship, she mentioned that *“even two people come from the same culture; incompatibilities can be caused by having grown up in different families. In our case, our countries and our cultures are completely different from each other. Still, even before the marriage I have been organizing some trips to other countries to experience and learn about other cultures. Likewise, my husband has been in a lot of countries because of his work. Gaining this travelling experience helps us to develop our adjustment skill hence we definitely find the midpoint.”* Having chance to live in other countries and being exposed to other cultures (including each other’s ones) will give transnational couples a head start, because they are prepared to adjust and adapt to new environment.

### **Previous expectations**

Related to her future life expectation before meeting with her current partner, she told *“I thought I would never be married again because of my first marriage experience and I wished to lead a happy life without being stressed and travel a lot. However, I did not have any clue how to do that so at that time I tried to breathe freely and enjoyed my freedom.”* Related to her future professional life, she mentioned that *“even though I had a good position as a manager in Coca-Cola and my working time was at 8:00-17:00, I only had a chance to take a break at holidays or weekends to travel to other countries in order to observe other cultures. Now I live in a different country and every year we go to at least two different countries for travel purposes. I take pictures. I take notes about my trips; I also share my photos in my books or in magazines to my audiences. Two lives have opposite characteristics to each other.”* Even though she might be in satisfying position in Coca-Cola, her monotonous working times limited the adventurous and explorative side in her. That is the reason why although there is a tremendous change in her past and current life, she welcomes these differences with a great pleasure noticeably seen by her thoughts and feelings. On the basis of my observation related to her personal life, she is not only observing the countries or experiencing alone anymore, she is also reflecting her experiences, emotions and knowledge regarding different countries, cultures, and habits with her readers.

### **Friends & Socialization**

Regarding social life and friendship, she takes initiative to find different associations and people from their own countries, and then they attend events such as hiking. In every country that they live in, they definitely make new friends. The distance does not have a bad influence on her friendships. She even declared *“even I am far away from them; I still keep contact with my old friends even including my primary school friends. Before travelling back to Turkey, I inform them about my arrival and they organize reunion events.”* Though she preferred to have face-to-face communication, virtual communication is necessary at a point to organize upcoming meeting with her friends. She also complemented that *“unfortunately virtual communication is the result of modern world and I have to use it to communicate with my friends and let them arrange face-to-face meeting as soon as possible but I’m trying to set the dose.”* She did not ask any advice from her friends regarding their relationship, she added *“even if I didn’t ask their opinion before getting married but some of them do share their opinion that ‘this marriage was impossible!’”*

### **Family relations**

Both of their families support their relationship by respecting their all decisions and they do not intervene in their relationship in any way. In terms of making bridge between families or separating familial relationship, she mentioned *“even after marriage, I acquired French language skills and this facilitates communication with my husband’s family. On the contrary, my husband understands Turkish but he has difficulty in speaking.”* It seems that she has another mission of being a translator since she plays an important role in making bridge between families. In Turkey, she maintains close relationships with her mother, sister and cousin and in France with her husband’s children from previous marriage, brother-in-law and his mother before she died. Similar to face-to-face communication with friends, she prefers to talk with family side by side as well. She has strong bond with her family, that’s why in every 3 months she comes to Istanbul, Turkey to be with her family. She affirmed that *“virtual communication cannot go beyond the superficial matter because talking face-to-face, being side by side, sharing valuable time with people is priceless and both of these communication styles cannot be comparable with each other.”*

### **Couple’s daily life**

The couple are together for 14 years. She explained that *“common feelings (especially love), pleasures, speaking, sharing our thoughts freely with each other, making joint decisions and adjusting those decisions together but at the same time having our private spaces in our life”* are the special elements to make them as a couple. When she travels to Turkey, the couple have a separate time in every 3 months meaning that the couple is together about 9 months. In the time of being apart from each other, they frequently talk and keep informed each other via sending messages through virtual communication. When



she is far from her husband, she said that *"I use this time for my personal development such as reading book, writing, doing sport and meeting with friends."* While they are together, she told that *"my daily life is quite delightful because of having common pleasures, hobbies and feeling of 'togetherness'".* When they are out of work, they spend quality time with each other. They usually organize trips to explore new places and new cultures, read a book, watch a movie, do sport and go to the sea by boat and go fishing. When they are off or when they are together, they spend quality of time with each other because they enjoy to be surrounded by the spirit of 'togetherness'.

### **Parenting**

The couple does not have a common child and she said that there is no possibility to have because of their ages. Her husband has three children from his previous marriage (at the ages of 27, 31, and 32). When is asked about their parental role on children, she mentioned that *"they completed their education, now they are working so they are already adults. Whenever they need something, we will do our best to help and guide them. After this time, we might have a role in the development of our grandchildren."*

### **Mid-term plans and goals**

In terms of mid-term plans, she wishes to continue writing travel books. After 3 years, her husband is going to be retired so the couple will travel around the world more comfortably. Before they met, her husband has lived in Morocco for 5 years and also she was inspired by Morocco with its climate, friendly people, nature and ethnic motif. For them, another plus is that Morocco is a French-spoken country. In the Northwest of France, winters are always rainy, cloudy and dreary so they plan to spend especially winters in Morocco, that's why they bought a typical Moroccan house in Agadir. For this reason, in their retirement, they want to travel going back and forth in the specific countries of Turkey (Istanbul/Alaçatı), France (Dinard) and Morocco (Agadir) and also squeezing other countries in this triangle. It seems that the couple highly adopts the wish to continue the transnational way of life.

### **Identity**

After all this going back and forth between countries, she specified herself and their identity -as couple- as *"a citizen of the world."* This constant mobilization and having French citizenship didn't change her sense of national identity and her sense of belonging, she states that *"even though I have French citizenship, I am Turkish and I will always keep being Turkish. Turkey is so important for me and of course I feel that I belong to Turkey."*

### **Suggestion**

*"If we accept each pair as a cluster, two clusters will intersect in the middle point which is the quality time of the couple. The rest of the clusters are their own private space that individuals can be free and have their personal development. This meant that individuals should have understanding and respect to each other's boundaries."*

## 8.10. Appendix 10

### Grid Analysis of Ukrainian-Turkish (ID-8)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with my particular interviewee through one of my neighbours. When she came to visit my neighbour, we also arranged our meeting. I let her to select while ensuring if she wants to talk in private and she wanted to talk in the balcony. Since they are best friends, she did not mind to speak near our neighbours. There were two neighbours sitting and dipping their coffee while we were doing our interview. During the interview, there were some disturbances. For instance, when she wanted to receive approval, sometimes neighbours commented about her statements and her son sometimes was darting in/out to the kitchen to call his mother to look for his little brother. However, these disturbances did not prevent us from completing our interview. She was particularly open and transparent while delivering her answers.

**Individual background of Ukrainian female:** She was born in Ukraine from Ukrainian mother and Tatar father. When she arrived to Turkey, she was not able to speak Turkish. Now, she is fluent in Turkish and she could express all her thoughts even by using Turkish idioms.

**Individual background of Turkish male:** He was born in Turkey.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple lives in Istanbul. They used to travel back and forth to Ukraine, but now it is unlikely to travel to Ukraine because of on-going Ukraine conflict<sup>10</sup>.

#### Demographic information

36, female, university dropping out 2<sup>nd</sup> year in Computer Engineering, stay at home, Ukrainian

41, male, primary school, generator technician<sup>11</sup>, Turkish

#### Background of the couple's life

The couple is together for more than 15 years and they got married since 2006. They met through one of her friends when she came to Turkey. When asked how she decided to start living together with her husband, she said in Russian “*Пришёл увидел победил*”<sup>12</sup> one of the famous quote of ‘I came; I saw; I conquered’ said by Julius Caesar after a victorious battle. This might display that she is happy to win their romance battle and she is proud of taking a decision to start living together with her husband. She added “*since my husband is here, his work and his relatives are here and I love Turkey, that's why I am here.*”

In the question of family approval, she stated that “*my family approved our union for the reason that they respected my decision. His family partially approved at once, the rest approved later. At first, my father-in-law didn't want me to be a foreigner and he thought I desired to get marry because of his money. Yet, there is no money (laughter).*” She continued to say “*my family like him because of being a honest and determined person, also he always supports me. For my family, the distance is not a problem because a plane takes only 2 hours. His family also likes me. No matter how much my father-in-law was opposed me, now I am the favourite bride. You will love the person as you get to know them better.*” In terms of receiving advice from family regarding their relationship, she stated “*of course, we were raised in the family and around friends to be truthful and outspoken. My family said ‘listen to the voice of your heart’. I don't remember receiving advice from my husband's family.*” Her statements highlight the importance of having truth and transparency in interpersonal relationship and the importance of giving value on her family ideas.

In terms of living condition, she declared “*there are gossips in Turkey, especially some of the relatives of my husband living in the village, and some people gossip after their pray. Even if it's not so much, there's also gossip here (referring to Istanbul). We also have had financial difficulties. Additionally, I got a residence permit for being married to a Turkish citizen but I did not receive my Turkish citizenship when I first applied. 2 years ago, Ankara rejected my application and they did not make a statement, they said they should apply again.*” She carried on “*I did not have a culture-related problem. My father is*

<sup>10</sup> By the early summer of 2014, there was a war in Donetsk and Luhansk Oblast between the separatists and the Ukrainian armed forces. In the spring of 2015, there was an unsettled ceasefire took in place. The ceasefire still continues to hold with sporadic violations causing a worst escalation in violence over two years (further information is available at: <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-28969784>; <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/tymofiy-mylovanov/security-policy-for-ukraine>).

<sup>11</sup> Generator technician performs in the inspection, repair, preventive and corrective maintenance and modification tasks (further information is available at: <http://agency.governmentjobs.com/saccity/default.cfm?action=viewclassspec&ClassSpecID=826377>).

<sup>12</sup> The interviewee used ‘Veni, Vidi, Vici’ a well-known Latin expression said by Julius Caesar after a victorious battle (further information is available at: <https://www.thoughtco.com/latin-saying-veni-vidi-vici-121441>).

*a Tatars and we are Muslims Alhamdulillah so it was not too hard for me. My mother is a Ukrainian and a Christian. My family is Muslim from the father side and Christian from the mother side but we have not had a problem about religion. Both sides were respectful to each other in all religious festivals, and still they are.”* Since they love and respect each other, these challenges do not affect their relationship. She talked about how to deal with these challenges as follows: *“I’m deaf to the gossips. We also hope that Allah will help us to resolve our financial situation. For the sake of citizenship, the truth is that I am not unhappy with this situation because it is not certain (referring to the current political situation). Maybe better not to be a citizen”.*

She talked about the differences that are related to their relationship in the following: *“I did not know Turkish when I came, but I did not have any difficulties. For 5 years, I lived with my mother-in-law, sister-in-law and co-sister-in-law; I learned everything in Turkish by asking, thanks to Allah. For example, when I came first eating on the floor<sup>13</sup> was very different to me, but I got used to it. When my family come, it is also different to them but they love it. Another thing is that women wearing burqa<sup>14</sup> is strange to me; we do not have there (referring to Ukraine). Women do not work here, but husband and wife work there and the kids go to kindergarten. However, there is no social support here; the state does not provide kindergartens. Whether mothers work to pay for child’s crèche or not send to crèche and stay at home to take care of their children? I said to my husband, ‘I want to work because we did not talk about this’. Actually we never talked about it because I thought it would be same as Ukraine. Even when my family come, they are getting angry because I stay at home and not working and they say ‘he doesn’t have to look after you always.’”*

### **Previous expectations**

She talked about her previous expectations related to her future life, education and professional life before meeting with her husband as stated: *“I wished to get married after I finished my studies and I planned to lead a normal life. However, my plans had changed when I got older. Obviously, for my professional career, I did not want to be a computer engineer, my mother forced me. I entered that school and I got out before finishing it. I always wanted to be a hairdresser or a hostess, but I did not have the fortitude. Now everything is different, I didn’t finish my studies, I am not working and I stay at home with my two children.”*

### **Friendship & Socialization**

*“There is not so much place to socialize in Büyükşehirmece. Sometimes I take the child to the theatre and I go to my friends. Since our childhood times, we engrain in our culture to go to opera, ballet and theatre, I went there a lot (referring to Ukraine).”* She makes new friends in children’s parks, neighbours, and school and she said *“I like people very much regardless of their status, colour, and clothes.”* She keeps in contact with her old friends in Ukraine. When she is in Turkey, she talks in the Internet via Skype and WhatsApp; when she is in Ukraine, she meets with them face-to-face. She prefers to have face-to-face communication; even sometimes she does not have intention to use virtual communication as follows: *“I do not want to talk sometimes on the Internet; face-to-face communication is more warm and intimate. The Internet has broken the bonds between individuals. I prefer a face-to-face communication with warmth/intimacy, hug, and touch.”* She does not receive any advice from her friends regarding their relationship, but sometimes they exchange information.

### **Family relations**

Their families support their relationship both emotionally and materially. The couple do not have any family interference into their relationship, they decide their plans and they resolve their problems. She plays an important role to combine familial relationship, she visit all her husband’s relatives even the ones that her husband does not speak. *“Due to on-going war, we don’t go to Ukraine but we constantly talk on the Internet. My husband understands Russian but he cannot speak hence they talk about basic things. When we go to my husband’s family, we talk about every subject such as children, education, and health.”* Similar to speaking with her friends, she prefers to have face-to-face communication with her family and she also complained about the advance technology gives and takes many things from individuals. *“Even when my family come here or I go to Ukraine, there is nothing to talk about. In the past, we were sitting and talking for several hours, we were trying to catch up our missing time with each other but the Internet damage these patterns. Still, I prefer face-to-face communication because it is intimate and sincerity.”*

### **Couple’s daily life**

*“Respect” and “love”* are important patterns that make them to be a couple. Before the war, she used to go to Ukraine twice a year, she was travelling alone with kids and her husband was coming to accompany them back to Turkey. The couple used

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<sup>13</sup> Turks generally sit on floor pillows, on their knees or cross legged around a round tray known as a *sini*. The foods are brought on this tray, namely, foods aren’t brought separately from the kitchen. Villagers eat from a single dish while in the cities people eat at a table and on separate plates (further information is available at: <http://www.turkish-cuisine.org/culinary-culture-202/eating-habits-of-the-turks-199.html?PagingIndex=3>).

<sup>14</sup> Women covering completely in black, even wearing with the veil (further information is available at: [http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/details/WomenTravelers/women\\_wear.html](http://www.turkeytravelplanner.com/details/WomenTravelers/women_wear.html)).

to be separated for 2 months a year. Since 2014, she does not go to Ukraine; her family come to visit them. When they are apart, they frequently communicate through the Internet via Skype and they send messages and love words to each other. The advanced technology is quite helpful for the couple to maintain their relationship, when they fall apart. She described her daily life in Ukraine when she is apart from her husband in the following: *“It was so nice, I wake up when I want, the kids are dressed and they are fed so I’m at my mom’s house. I am doing what I want to do such as visiting my relative or going to concert. I did what I wanted. Here, I cannot go away from Büyükdere and my husband does not allow me to go inside of Istanbul. Also, I cannot go to somewhere without children. It was possible to go to everywhere there, before the war.”* She described her daily life when she is near to her husband as follows: *“When we are on holiday in Ukraine, we go out and we travel. Here in Turkey is not same, there is work to go, rent to pay, and housework to be done because I am in charge of everything, there is no one here to help me.”*

The couple watch TV, cook, talk, have coffee, travel, and have a picnic. If the weather is good, they go to picnic or go fishing on the weekends.

### **Parenting**

The couple has 2 sons at the ages of 5 and 14. The couple share parental tasks and she is satisfied with her husband’s support on child raising activities e.g. preparing food, feeding, dressing, taking them out and barber/hairdresser. The children are raised in a multilingual and multicultural environment. She speaks Turkish and Russian, and her husband speaks Turkish with their children. During interview, I also observed that kids have successful language acquisition in both Turkish and Russian. In addition to their linguistic competence in both languages, the couple encourages their sons to learn English language because it is an international language.

In terms of educational plans, the couple entrusts in their children’s interests and capacities. The couple wanted to move to Ukraine to raise their children but now it is unlikely to be due to the war. For now, their child study in public school in Turkey because it is affordable in terms of material costs. In terms of career building and professional plans, the couple wishes them to see their children as a judge, a public prosecutor or a doctor but she added *“still we have to ask them because they are the individuals of their own lives”*.

Their children have double nationality: Ukrainian and Turkish.

### **Mid-term plans**

In 5 years, the couple do not think to have more children. Her husband extremely limits her decision-making on her educational and career plans and she is totally under his sovereignty. It is clearly seen by her statements *“I wish I could have completed my education and have a career but it is impossible because my husband does not allow me, I respect. If he lets me work, I can work in everywhere and I believe that I can be successful. He doesn’t say ‘don’t work’; he says ‘you cannot work!’ He doesn’t say ‘don’t study’; he says ‘you cannot study!’ I still have a hope.”*

In 10 years, she said *“I am a believer, I have faith and I have hope. I believe I will resist to his dominance and sovereignty. My name means hope. I don’t lose my hope, I believe till the end.”*

She wants to become old in Ege [translation from Turkish to English: Aegean] and to live in two-story or one-story house. She wishes her husband to have either motorboat or rowboat.

### **Identity**

She identified her nationality as *“Ukrainian”*. After all this going back and forth between countries, she told *“I congratulate myself! I am open-minded person. I always advise my husband; if you want to work abroad, don’t think on us. Another wife might say ‘don’t go or let’s go together’. I believe wherever I go, I can live and easily adapt. It is a human nature.”*

When asked about whether life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures shaped her identity and sense of belonging, she responded *“I think I am same. Wherever I go, I am always the same. I feel myself as a Turkish woman in all cases: child care, respect for my husband’s relatives. Nonetheless I do not see myself only as a Turkish woman, or I do not separate women there (referring in Ukraine) from women here (referring in Turkey). What is a Turkish woman or a Ukrainian woman that I think women is woman. Human is human.”* She also added that there is no specific identity as a couple stating *“I don’t disguise into other identity. As I said, if human is human and has a conscious personality, s/he will not have dilemma in here or there. Humanity is the essence of being a human.”* Regarding her identity in her biological father, she stated *“I am the same again, I don’t disguise in accordance with situation. I am same there and I am the same here. Namely, I don’t wear masks in different places, I am always same.”* Her identity in her husband’s family she supposed *“I think I have gained a Turkish identity not only in my husband’s family, but also in his entire relatives. Even when I live in Ukraine, I do not think there is a difference between people here and there. I am able to adapt in every situation because I*

*was raised in this way. It is related to my family education.” With regard to her identity as a citizen of Turkey, she declared “of course, I see myself as a Turkish citizen, and even sometimes I get angry. I have two children,*

*who have Turkish citizenship<sup>15</sup>, will go to the military for Turkey. I am their mother, I am the one who gave birth to them and raise them. Actually, they have to give me a citizenship automatically. I even have to pay certain amount of money to receive this citizenship; I think how wrong it is. Isn't it wrong?”*

Owing to her competence in Turkish language, sense of humanity, adaptation skills and communication skills in interpersonal relations gave a head start for her to integrate into society. Notwithstanding, she has acquired cultural and national knowledge and hence she has adopted those she liked. Though she says to remain same, time and space has an important role in altering her identity and sense of belonging. On account of the differences of traditional women and men's role in Turkish society and the subjection to male dominance in her spousal relationship caused to reshape her identity role in society in terms of being woman, wife and mother.

### **Suggestion**

*“I think international marriages are great as long as there is mutual understanding and respecting. International kids will be very beautiful, they will be hybrids. I think being multiracial is a good thing. I think it would be nice and very different for the human race. For instance, the time of Genghis Khan lasted for 800 years in our land and everybody was a hybrid.”*

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<sup>15</sup> The Acquisition of Turkish Citizenship by Marriage: The eligibility requirements for Turkish citizenship are fairly straightforward: A person need to be of adult age (according to the country of origin), and the person must have lived in Turkey for at least 5 years, with a total interruption of less than six months. This is reduced to 3 years if the person is married to a Turkish national or if the person is a foreigner born on Turkish soil (further information is available in ‘Turkish Citizenship Law’ at: [http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalDB/docs/TUR%20Turkish%20citizenship%20law%202009%20\(English\).pdf](http://eudo-citizenship.eu/NationalDB/docs/TUR%20Turkish%20citizenship%20law%202009%20(English).pdf)).

## 8.11. Appendix 11

### Grid Analysis of Vietnamese-Turkish (ID-9)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with my particular interviewees through one of my neighbours; they are brother-in-law and sister-in-law of my neighbour. The couple hosted us in their own house for a family dinner and they prepared some Vietnamese cuisine. I interviewed with both of them. Since it is a family dinner, other people were present including my neighbour, her husband, and their son. Family members sometimes commented during the interview. I would say that this was not a disturbance, on the contrary, this helps to create friendly and enjoyable atmosphere for all parties because the couple has a different characteristic that everyone including me was eager to know how they transmit their thoughts to each other. Surprisingly, the couple builds their own communication by using some basic Turkish and English words, body gestures and Google translate from Turkish to Vietnamese or vice versa for the last option. To overcome this language barrier, they study together Turkish grammar and reading every day for 20 minutes. Both of them was open during the talk and I am glad that he was so attentive on listening my questions carefully so that he could comprehend well and transfer the questions to his wife in their own communication style. In addition to that she made effort to understand the questions and she was willing to ask her husband to rephrase the questions by saying '*another, another*' when she did not understand. It is clear to observe that she cannot transfer all the thoughts and emotions because of her language barrier either in Turkish or English.

In initial interview, some answers were missing because of her language barrier. For this reason, 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting held upon searching for missing aspects related to her perspectives. The answers are translated from Vietnamese to English via Google translate and her real statements are included in endnotes.

**Individual background of Vietnamese female:** She was born in Vietnam. She was married before and has two children (6 and 7 years old from her ex-Vietnamese husband). Currently, her left behind children are looked after by her parents in Vietnam.

**Individual background of Turkish male:** He was born in Turkey. He had two previous marriages with Turkish and Russian and he has two children (11 and 12 years old from his ex-Turkish wife). The kids are staying with their biological mothers.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple has a characteristic of being mixed couple and living together. The couple is married about 9 months, for now they do not plan to have a child but their current plan is to bring her left behind children from Vietnam. Obviously, he is willing to take their responsibility.

#### Demographic information

36, female, bachelor's degree in Pharmacy, working as part time in husband's workplace (packaging), Vietnamese

52, male, primary school, retired and store manager in paper manufacturing, Turkish

#### Background of the couple's life

The couple met through the Internet, more detailed information was not made available. They are together for 3 years. In the first year of their relationship, they were physically apart so they were calling each other every day through social networks: Facebook, FaceTime, Viber and Tango [messaging applications with video calling]. After a year, he travelled to Vietnam for 15 days to meet with her for the first time and also her family. It seems that before travelling to Vietnam, he already made a marriage proposal to her as they organized a traditional Vietnamese wedding ceremony for 60 to 70 people. Assuming that she might need to have her family approval and/or the couple might need to prove their serious by introducing themselves as a couple to her community. By doing so, she would hold the entitlement of his soon-to-be wife so she and her family might avoid the possible moral judgments within their community. When she came to Turkey, the couple officially got married by civil marriage, and he mentioned that "*it was hard to receive official papers for marital reason to travel to Turkey so it took one year her to come to Turkey and now we have been married for 9 months.*"

She was inspired by his real feelings and fatherhood which played an important role in her decision to start living together. This is sensed by her sentences in the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting: "*His feelings for me and the kids are very real. He is a good father, will definitely be a good husband.*"<sup>1</sup> In addition, he said "*at first, we didn't have an idea of getting married but after knowing each other day by day, we have started loving each other and we realized that we share same expectations then we decided to be together.*" While taking decision to live in Turkey, she said that "*I trust my husband.*"<sup>2</sup> Hence, because of her love she moved to Turkey and she told her husband "*we can live wherever you want.*" He also added "*currently we live in Istanbul but it is not certain that we will always live here. We may live in Vietnam as well but everything depends on the circumstances.*"

What makes them a couple mentioned by her as “*loving, helping, and giving time to each other*”. Her husband explained further in his statement that “*we take care of each other so closely and we give time to each other. I go to hospital with her and I ask whether she took her medicines or not, she like these things and even she shares with her mother. For instance, I like when she makes me wear my socks. These were things that I have never experienced.*”

In terms of living condition, language barrier is quite challenging for her because it limits her social interactions within her surroundings. She explained that “*only I no understand speak because I am in Turkey, only I want understand speak Turkey only abla and abi* (referring to her sister-in-law and brother-in-law).” In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting, she also added that “*for me is the language. I try to learn your language. My job in Vietnam is business. And I'm confident when I know my voice I will do a good job here. For me everything is good because my husband will help me. I am now working in packaging and I can earn 50TL per day. That was not a big amount but going to work helped me learn a lot.*”<sup>3</sup> To have better communication, she wants to learn Turkish and she sees working as a great chance of practicing her Turkish language skills meanwhile encouraging her to develop professional skills. When she will stop having a language barrier, she will recover her autonomy back.

In the first time, this language barrier used to affect their spousal relationship badly. He clarified that “*in the beginning I didn't understand why she had aggressive attitudes towards me. Currently, I can understand that leaving everything behind, not knowing what's expecting her in the destination country was hard for her. After the official marriage in Turkey, our plan was to travel back to Vietnam to collect her belonging and seeing her children again, nevertheless; the plan has been changed and we had to cancel her ticket. During this period, language barrier caused a great tension between us and we misunderstood each other but we coped with it, after some time she got used to here. When she realized that I am savvy and taking care of her, she started understanding me much better.*” Additionally, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting, she replied that “*maybe because love is too big for us to cross the language barrier to understand each other. As you have seen we can still default to the interface though my language level is very bad. Sometimes affects but love is big enough to overcome.*”<sup>4</sup> She also specified their coping strategy by the statement of “*victory of love*”<sup>5</sup>. The couple may not have a common language, yet it seems their relationship works quite well so far and their love helps them to talk heart-to-heart and soul-to-soul. Nowadays, their language barrier turns into something good for their spousal relationship because they spend quality time together while studying Turkish. “*In the first times, I was angry at her because I was repeating same things for 10 times. One day, I asked her to teach me something in her language, then I even didn't understand what she said and I told myself we are equal, be patient! Now, every day for 20-30 minutes, we practice reading and some grammar. I could register her to the course but I am helping her to teach Turkish because I want us to spend time together, fight together and accomplish this goal together.*” The notion of ‘togetherness’ gives power to the couple so as to cope together with the challenges.

About the differences they face in their relationship, for him they did not face with any. After that he referred same question to his wife as “*I speak what you see me no like?*” she expressed that “*only I want him speak me small small but he speak me big I am no like.*” Then, he rephrased and added that “*there are no cultural differences but when I get angry, I talk loud she doesn't like. The reason is that they are so silent; they don't shout or don't talk loudly.*” Even if this was not reflected as a cultural difference by the couple, being exposed to a variety of tones in the articulation of foreign languages might be understood differently by non-native speakers and this may be interpreted as a cultural difference. Still, they find a midpoint by becoming more tolerant and patience to each other.

### **Previous expectations**

He mentioned that “*I didn't have any plan regarding future life before I met with her but I wouldn't imagine that I would get married with Vietnamese woman*” whereas he did not mention about his previous educational or professional expectations before meeting with his current partner. Assuming that since he is retired and currently working as manager, he might think he has got everything he wished for. For her, she used to work in business sector in Vietnam and she still wants to continue working in her same sector. For now, the only difference is the language; after she learns Turkish, she will regain her economic independency.

### **Friendship & Socialization**

Her social life is quite limited due to her language barrier even her husband mentioned that “*we don't have activities like going to the theatre or cinema because she doesn't know Turkish. I am telling her 'let's go' but she says 'I won't understand' so we end up not going. We go to the cafes and restaurants or we do what she likes such as shopping.*”

With the help of the cultural meeting organized by Embassy of Socialist Republic of Vietnam in Ankara-capital city of the Republic of Turkey-, she made new friends throughout Turkey. She often keeps contact with the ones living nearby. Her husband told that “*she meets with her Vietnamese friends either in our home or their homes; they cook, eat and talk to each other. She also keeps her contact with her friends in Vietnam and America by video call in Messenger and Facebook.*”

Nonetheless, her following indication “*I like real talk*” showing that she prefers face-to-face communication with her friends and family.

In the matter of receiving advice from her old friends about their relationship, he did not receive any advice while she mentioned as follows “*first time I am married with him, I don't understand problem or no problem because I am married in small time. But now this time my friend speak me and him, and told me 'understand your marriage really because I see your family and your husband and I see him very good for you and see me very happy'.*” In addition to that her husband rephrased that “*her friends are telling her, 'she made a good marriage and she seems happy'.* However, they told her before “*there are fighting groups, if you go there (referring to Turkey) they will leave you among those groups'.*” These phrases might reflect that in the first times her friends were concerned about her safety and the reality of their relationship. Moreover, her friends unconditionally had biased attitude towards their union. He continued that “*when she wanted to receive advice regarding difficulties, her Vietnamese friends here (referring to Turkey) said 'go to course'.* She found them not helpful and they did not care much about her difficulties. This helped her to create a stronger bond with me, she started loving me more and more, and her attitude towards me changed because she understands that I am taking care of her.” Even though, her new friends gave social support by gathering and enjoying together, they did not play an efficient role in giving emotional or psychological support as she wished for. This resulted in both building a stronger joint with her husband and shaping their spousal relationship in a positive manner.

### **Family relations**

The atmosphere became more friendly and enjoyable when the talk contributes family issues. Related to her family approval about their union, she shared as follows: “*my parents love him very much for his sincerity. He is very playful and honest. During his time in Vietnam, he was able to do all the work for me including housework and taking care of my own children*”<sup>6</sup> whereas he did not ask any approval from his family and even his brother suddenly told that ‘we weren’t asked’ and everybody was laughing. After his brother’s statement, he continued “*I haven't ask any opinion from my family about our relationship or our union because I don't care whether they would approve or not. Additionally, there is no family interference in our relationship, we take our own decisions. Also when I went to Vietnam, my wife's family didn't ask me any question related to my job or my income. Maybe they trust in their daughter and her decision and also they had a chance to know me for 15 days.*” Not being asked about job or income might be quite surprising for him because in Turkish costume he might be asked for those questions before getting married. Although, he indicated that “*we decided together and her family approved*”, it is worthy to repeat that he might have to be present in Vietnam so that she could get family approval from her family by introducing her soon-to-be husband within her community. He also asked his wife in their own communication style whether she received any advice from her family “*you are ma and ba (referring to her mother and father) speak you, you speak ma and ba what you see he good no good, I marry no marry*” and she responded that “*first time I speak baba (referring to her father) I say him because I listen him speak very good. I say he really for me. I speak baba and mama (referring to her father and mother) he go Vietnam see family, speak baba and mama. Baba see he very good because he go Vietnam, he help me work. Baba see him real one.*” Her statements revealed that her family appreciated with his presence in Vietnam and her father believes that he is a good person and at the end her family accepted their decision. In terms of family support, the couple always keeps in contact with both families; especially his family has monthly family gathering events so they have social and emotional support. Relying on my observation, sister-in-law provides material assistance for their household items whenever possible. He was joking about his family with following statement “*generally, we gather with my family and my family likes her. They do not have any negative thoughts about her or our relationship but I don't know what they are talking behind us.*” Everyone started laughing again and they also mentioned that ‘they like her and accepted her as a part of family’. He added that “*most probably the biggest problem for her family is missing and long distance but advanced technology facilitates their communication. Every day, we call or they call us and she talks with her kids, mother, father, and siblings through Facebook, Messenger and yellow [one of the social network in Vietnam]. Although advanced technology shortens the distance, still it is not replaceable with face-to-face communication. Nevertheless, I think it is the best solution to fill the gap that this absence brings.*”

While communicating with their families, both couple puts effort on teaching their own mother tongues to each other to overcome language barrier either in Turkish or Vietnamese. “*As a couple, we prefer to build bridges or combine our families by gathering with my family and talking with her family including her father, mother, kids, brother and brother's family and aunties in America.*” Even though she is far away from her children now, she still maintains her motherhood virtually with them. He exemplified “*her mother is in charge of looking after her children so normally during conversation the kids are the central topic. They mainly talk about kids, their education, and kids' meetings with their father, familial problems and their solutions. Also kids are learning English, she helps their homework virtually.*”

### **Parenting**

The couple doesn't have a common child. Still, they both have children from their previous marriages, from her side two children (6 and 7 years old from her ex-Vietnamese husband) and from his side three children (11 and 12 years old from his



ex-Turkish wife and 15 years old from ex-Russian wife). The couple welcomes each other's kids into their life as their own. Her left behind children are looked after by their grandmother, he provides child allowance to her kids in Vietnam by sending remittances -\$400 monthly. Besides, his children are looked after by their own biological mothers and they do not receive any child allowance from their father.

During the first interview, she did not mention anything about her children's perspectives concerning her union resulted in leaving them behind because of her marriage migration to Turkey. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting, she told that *"my child is too young to understand my marriage. Kids love only because he loves them so much. He loved them and so did they. Because my kids were not very close to their father. My children are happy to hear that I am married to him (referring her current husband)."*<sup>7</sup> Her statement clearly shows that the children's perspectives were not taken into consideration about their union because of their young ages. Yet, kids are not sad with this situation, on the contrary; they welcome their step-father to their world by their own will. She mentioned that her ex-husband had alcohol-related problems comorbid with gambling, he was unemployed, and he was not attentive enough for the necessities of children economically. Also, she added that the children have a weak bond with their biological father. Those problems might reflect that her ex-husband was not enough either for giving emotional and psychological support to the children. During our talk, she also showed me a picture taken in Vietnam, the couple stands and holds children in their arms, and her daughter is smiling from the heart and one holding her step-father's neck tenderly. This might show that children have found closeness, caring, and tenderness in their step-father, which seems they were deprived from their own biological father because of his specific problems. For this reason, kids may accept their step-father easily to their life.

For the condition of leaving her children behind, she told that *"I miss them so much. I see and talk to them every day. Anything young children call me. I give them the feeling that I'm always with them everywhere and they are the same."*<sup>8</sup> and she added *"I am applying for their visa to Turkey. They would love to come here. I am awaiting notification from the embassy; requested papers are passport, birth certificate, petition, bank account. I must be responsible for all the paperwork related to my children in Vietnam. So I have to go back to Vietnam. My husband will accompany me on Vietnamese New Year."*<sup>9</sup>

The couple encourages each other to communicate with their children in their own mother tongue (they even whisper to each other the different message that they want to transmit to the kids). She communicates with her husband's children in Turkish and English and he speaks with his wife's children in Vietnamese and Turkish. In terms of languages, he stated that *"we will bring her children to live in Turkey so they will learn Turkish whereas if my kids want to learn Vietnamese, they are welcome to do it."* Since their all children are learning English, the couple wants their children to be fluent in English language. In terms of school choice, when her kids come to Turkey they will continue their education in a public school same as his children. For now, their preferred country to raise their children is Turkey, but he said *"it might change depending on the needs of children and certain circumstances in time."* Regarding children educational and professional plans, he mentioned that *"we will encourage and support our children in accordance with their own interests."* The couple asked in Vietnam about the procedure of bringing her children to Turkey. There is no problem of receiving kids or having their residence permit in Turkey while he is not sure that if they can obtain Turkish citizenship but still if possible, they will try to get citizenship<sup>16</sup>.

### **Mid-term goals and plans**

He did not mention about it, nevertheless; supposing that since he is retired, he might think that he got everything he wished for. So maybe he doesn't have intention or plan to enlarge his scale regarding professional and educational plans. On the contrary, she plans to learn Turkish so as to continue her job in business sector. Being capable in Turkish language will open the gates for her to socialize and gain individual independence as well as economic independence.

They do not have any plan regarding having more children. Now, their priority is to bring her children to Turkey and prepare conditions to receive them either in Turkey (school, home etc.) or in Vietnam (taking care of documents).

### **Identity**

Due to the language barrier, it was not very simple to answer fully the questions of identity. Also, since she is in Turkey for only 7 months, it is hard to expect whether Turkey and Turkish culture have played role in shaping her personality, identity and her sense of belonging.

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<sup>16</sup>The Acquisition of Turkish Citizenship to the Dependent Children: Children whose guardianship belongs to the mother or the father on the date of her/his acquisition of Turkish citizenship, in case the other spouse consents, shall acquire Turkish citizenship (further information is available in 'Turkish Citizenship Law')

### **Suggestion**

For him, *“I don’t see my wife as foreign but it is necessary to be more positive, more savvy, and respectful towards each other.”*

For her, she explained with a comparison in her statements *“man Vietnam no good drink beer a lot, but man Turkish work a lot for family. He very good for me, because first time I am married Vietnam and no good for me.”* This comparison might demonstrate that being responsible from family and having an alcohol-free environment are the keys to build relationship or family for her and that’s why she seems happy and satisfied to be married with her current husband.

### **Endnotes:**

In initial interview, some answers were missing due to her language barrier. For this reason, 2<sup>nd</sup> follow-up meeting held upon searching for missing aspects related to her perspectives. The answers are translated from Vietnamese to English via Google translate, her real statements in Vietnamese are mentioned below.

1. Cảm xúc của anh dành cho tôi và những đứa trẻ là rất thật. Ông là một người cha tốt, chắc chắn sẽ là một người chồng tốt.
2. Tôi tin chồng tôi.
3. Đối với tôi là ngôn ngữ. Tôi cố gắng học ngôn ngữ của các bạn. Công việc ở Việt Nam của tôi là kinh doanh. Và tôi tự tin khi tôi biết tiếng nói tôi sẽ làm tốt công việc này tại đây. Đối với tôi mọi thứ tốt đẹp vì chồng tôi sẽ giúp tôi đỡ. Hiện tại tôi cũng đã đi làm. Với công việc đóng bao bì tôi có thể kiếm 50TL mỗi ngày. Đó không phải là số tiền lớn nhưng giúp tôi học hỏi rất nhiều.
4. Có thể vì tình yêu quá lớn để chúng tôi vượt qua rào cản ngôn ngữ để hiểu nhau. Như bạn đã thấy chúng tôi vẫn có thể mặc định giao diện mặc dù trình độ ngôn ngữ tôi rất tồi. Thỉnh thoảng cũng có. Nhưng tình yêu đủ lớn để vượt qua.
5. Chiến thắng tình yêu.
6. Ba mẹ tôi rất quý anh He. He sống rất chất phát và chân thật. Thời gian ở Việt Nam, anh ta có thể làm tất cả công việc giúp tôi kể cả công việc nhà và chăm sóc con 6riêng của tôi (due to confidentiality, I changed her husband’s name into personal pronoun ‘he’).
7. Con tôi còn quá nhỏ để hiểu việc kết hôn của tôi. He yêu chúng và chúng cũng vậy. Trẻ con chỉ yêu thích bởi vì He rất yêu chúng. Vì con tôi đã không gần cha ruột từ rất bé. Các con tôi rất vui khi nghe tôi kết hôn với he (due to confidentiality, I changed her husband’s name into personal pronoun ‘he’).
8. Tôi rất nhớ họ. Tôi được nhìn thấy và trò chuyện với họ mỗi ngày. Bất cứ việc gì bạn trẻ đều gọi cho tôi. Tôi cho họ cảm giác tôi luôn bên họ mọi lúc mọi nơi. Và họ cũng vậy.
9. Tôi đang xin thủ tục cấp visa cho họ đến Turkey. Họ rất thích đến đây. Tôi đang chờ thông báo từ các đại sứ quán, yêu cầu giấy tờ: Hộ chiếu, giấy khai sinh, tờ xin bảo lãnh, ngân hàng tài khoản. Tôi phải là người chịu trách nhiệm các loại giấy tờ liên quan đến các con tôi tại Việt Nam. Vì thế tôi phải về Việt Nam. He sẽ đi cùng tôi vào dịp tết Việt Nam (due to confidentiality, I changed her husband’s name into personal pronoun ‘he’).

## 8.12. Appendix 12

### Grid Analysis of Macedonian-Turkish (ID-10)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with my particular interviewee through my social network because she is one of my neighbours. She settled the date and time in accordance with her choice. She wanted to be alone and free while doing interview because there are three families with their children living with their mother-in-law in the same house. That is to say, family members in the house contain her and her husband with their son, her brother-in-law and her co-sister-in-law with their daughter, her mother-in-law and father-in-law before he died. This collective way of life creates a burden in individual, spousal and familial relationships. Especially wives prefer to stay in their own bedrooms after evening whereas their husbands chill in the living room while watching TV, drinking their tea and talking among brothers. I also observed that she and her co-sister-in-law do not feel belonged to the home or they do not regard the home as theirs whereas their husbands are quite comfortable to live with their mother. On one hand, this collective family life might be seen as economical way to invest money to buy their own houses, on the other hand, it would cause having less privacy in their own individual, spousal and familial life especially for their wives. During our interview, other family members were not present and the interview went smoothly without any disturbance. She was particularly open during talk, but I also observed that she hesitated to answer some questions.

**Individual background of Macedonian female:** She was born in Macedonia. She moved to Turkey after getting married and she lives in Turkey for 14 years. She holds also Turkish citizenship due to her marriage. When she came to Turkey, she was not able to speak Turkish. Currently, she is fluent in Turkish; still there is room to improve her language skills because sometimes she has difficulty in choosing proper words while delivering her thoughts. In the past, they used to go together to visit family in Macedonia, in recent years, he is not able to accompany to her and their son because of lack of holidays. Every year, she travels back and forth to Macedonia with her son to visit her family every year.

**Individual background of Kosovon male:** He was born in Kosovo but his family had to escape from Kosovo war<sup>17</sup>. Hence, they were forced to migrate to Turkey. When they arrived to Turkey, they were directly entitled with Turkish citizenship so he currently has double nationalities: Kosovon and Turkish. Every year he used to accompany his wife and their son while travelling to Macedonia to visit her family, however; now it is not possible because he has such a strict working schedule.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple lives in Istanbul. In the past, they used to go together to visit family in Macedonia, in recent years, he is not able to accompany to her and their son because of lack of holidays. For this reason, she travels back and forth to Macedonia with her son to visit her family every year. They have a son at the age of 12 and they plan to have one more children.

#### Demographic information

33, female, middle school, working as part time in packaging, double nationality: Macedonian/Turkish

41, male, high school, electrician as a satellite TV installer<sup>18</sup>, double nationality: Kosovon/Turkish

#### Background of the couple's life

For a vacation, she came to visit Turkey. At that time, one of her relatives living in Turkey talked about her current husband by saying 'he is a good boy raised in a good family' so the couple met through their relative. After meeting with each other, they decided to get married and start living together. Her husband's family had a forced migration from Kosovo to Turkey during Kosovo conflict. She migrated to Turkey because of her marriage and also she would like to be here.

In terms of family approval about their union, she told "*before moving to Turkey, I wanted to meet with his family in the presence of only my mother because my father died. So we came together and my mother met with him and she told me 'they are a good family. If you agree, it is fine for me'. My husband family pressured on him by saying 'she is a nice girl, get marry' because his family was very eager about our union.*" Her family liked her husband and his family and they thought

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<sup>17</sup> Kosovo conflict (1998-1999) was occurred tensions increased between two ethnic groups of Muslim Albanians and Serbs. The coalition of Yugoslav and Serbian forces engaged in ethnic cleansing and slaughter activities to drove out all of the Kosovo's ethnic Albanians. The conflict was resolved with the intervention of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (further information is available at: <https://www.britannica.com/event/Kosovo-conflict>).

<sup>18</sup> A satellite TV installer normally works at a different location within his specified area each day. Besides installing new satellite dishes, he can repair and resolve the problems of satellite service for their existing customers (further information is available at: <http://work.chron.com/job-description-satellite-tv-installer-23024.html>).

that she would be comfortable in her marriage while they do not like distance because it is difficult to meet. The couple took their decision about their relationship and they did not receive any advice from their families.

In terms of living condition, she had different challenges when she arrived to Turkey. She stated *“countless complaints (laughing): my language and our language are quite identical so at home we communicated well but we couldn't communicate with people, e.g. even not being able to buy bread from the market. At that time, receiving resident permit, citizenship and obtaining Turkish ID was really hard. The process was really time consuming and stressful. This created a great tension in our relationship.”* The couple coped with these challenges by *“supporting each other, thinking that it would end one day, and my husband always supports and protects me”*, she said. There are several differences that she faced in their relationship and she mentioned as follows: *“Though there is not too much distance between our countries, there are a variety of differences: food, traditions and customs, language, music, clothing and the style of weddings. I disguise in Kosovon by learning their language, traditions and customs and trying to cook in Kosovon's style.”*

The elements of being a couple exemplified in her following indications: *“My husband is very compassionate, even I found the longing for a father and the need of father protection with him. We have same thoughts, we talk and we share same ideas but it will be what he says.”* For her, finding a compassionate partner seems to be a tremendous relief in her life because in somehow she found the existence of a father feeling in her husband. Her image to be good wife/husband is through *“sharing, respecting, talking, having a good communication afterwards loving comes in.”*

In the past, the couple used to go together to Macedonia though now it is not possible because of his lack of holidays. For this reason, she travels with their son so the couple is separated for 3 weeks in every year. When they are apart, they used to talk on the phone but it was hard to communicate. Thanks to the advanced technology, the Internet facilitates their daily basis communication. When she goes to Macedonia, her relatives constantly visit her so her daily life will be busy and surrounded with crowdedness.

The couple usually goes shopping and currently she helps her husband in house repair/maintenance. Also, the couple goes for a walk to the beach while leaving their son at home. On Sundays, they go out after breakfast. Since her husband continuously works, the couple does not have much time together on weekdays.

### **Previous expectations**

Before meeting with her current husband, her expectations from her future life *“having a good husband and establishing a family like everyone wishes for. The similarity is having a good husband but there are missing part in my expectations. For instance, we don't have a house, we are living with families: my mother-in-law and my co-sister-in-law's family. I had never thought this but it happened. Of course, this influenced me a lot and my adaptation was not easy.”* This revealed that she does not feel belonged to her mother-in-law's house and she does not regard as their home. This collective way of life creates a burden in her individual, spousal and familial relationships. When asked about her previous expectations regarding her educational and professional plans, she was regretful not to accomplish her studies. Also her statements revealed that she had role reversal by taking care of her family as follows: *“After my father died, I couldn't continue studying because of financial difficulties. I was the eldest children in my family so I had to work to take care of my family as a father. I quitted my high school to start working in boutique. Actually, I had a dream to study but I couldn't, I could finish until middle school. Then, I went to a tailor course for a year and I worked until 20 years old as a tailor after that I got married. I was a tailor but here I am working in a different job. There are many job opportunities here than Macedonia.”*

### **Friendship & Socialization**

When her husband is off, they go to shopping malls or visit their relatives. She makes new friends through her work and her neighbours. She talks once a month with her old friends in Macedonia by Viber, Facebook, WhatsApp and Skype (at earlier times). When she goes to Macedonia, even she intends to meet with her friends; their times do not match with each other because her friends are also married abroad. Regarding her preference related to communication style with her friends, she mentioned in the following *“now people closed themselves and they become cold and they talk via messages. Of course face-to-face communication is better because it is more sincere and more comfortable whereas virtual communication is fast and superficial.”* Her friends do not give advice to her related to her marriage or their relationship but they complained about the distance and not being able to meet.

### **Family relations**

Their families give moral and emotional support rather than material support. She also mentioned that *“my husband's mother and father interfere into our relationship by saying 'you don't know because you are inexperienced, this is a mistake'.”* Her husband's family are here including his mother, father, aunts, uncle whereas her none of family member live in Turkey. She alerted *“for my husband is easy because his entire family is here but for me is really hard. Everyone's mother is here, I wish my mother would be here to help me out. I and my co-sister-in-law don't have any family here so we support each other. I visit my family in Macedonia every year and I talk everyday on the phone. I had to get used to in time.”* Almost every day,

she talks with her mother about every matter in Macedonia; in every two days she talks with her brother about his work, children and our marriages and she talks with her aunt. Her husband frequently talks with her brother about delivering new news and he rarely talks with her mother. Regarding communication style, she maintained *“face-to-face communication is better than virtual communication, yet thanks to advanced Internet tools we are able to talk every day.”*

### **Parenting**

The couple has a son, 12 years old. She finds her husband very helpful in parental tasks. For instance, when she leaves home in early morning, her husband prepares their son, rides him to school and picks him up after his work.

The couple talks in Turkish at home. In Kosovo, her husband studied in Turkish school so he acquired Turkish language skills earlier than her. She expressed their decision about language acquisition for their children by stating *“I wished to teach my language (Macedonian) to my son so that he could communicate easily with my family when he goes to Macedonia. In earlier times, I spoke with him in Macedonian and the kid started speaking in Turkish (my kid started to speak late, at the age of 2). When he heard me speaking in Macedonian, and others and him speaking in Turkish puzzled his mind. For this reason, my mother-in-law told me ‘let him learn Turkish first because he will be living in Turkey otherwise he might have difficulty in language. Then he can learn Macedonian’. Afterwards, I started speaking with son in Turkish and he continued same.”* She continued *“I would like my child to speak Macedonian to communicate better with his relatives. We stayed in Macedonia for a year and he was in kindergarten. During the year, he started speaking with kids in Macedonian. After we arrived here (referring to Turkey), he forgot in time and I don’t force him.”* Her husband would like their son to speak only Turkish.

In terms of educational plans for their children, the couple will encourage their kid to follow his own interests. Additionally, she wishes to send him after his high school to study his university in Macedonia. At first, her husband denied but now he let his wife to decide. In terms of professional plans for their child, she expects him to learn foreign languages such as being a translator.

The child has double nationality: Macedonian and Turkish.

### **Mid-term goals and plans**

In 5 years, her plans are related to their child and establishing their own home and their own organization.

In 10 years, if their child would be studying in Macedonia, she will go to Macedonia more often. She also wants to continue her studies by registering in government correspondence school. She is not willing to have more children while her husband wants to have a daughter.

She sees herself becoming old in Macedonia and she wishes to have their house in both in Macedonia and Turkey so as to be connected to the both countries.

### **Identity**

She identified her nationality as *“so complex, I am in both sides but I am more Macedonian.”* After all this going back and forth between Macedonia and Turkey squeezed her in the middle of two countries, she explained further: *“Before receiving my Turkish citizenship, I had to make entry-exit for several times. I stayed waiting for a year in Macedonia to come back to Turkey. It was very difficult for me. That time I felt myself stuck in between of these two countries. Also, I had difficulty in adapting because our life was so ambivalence and disorganized. Now, at least is certain where we are.”*

Life across two countries, languages, and cultures shaped her identity and her sense of belonging as follows: *“Changed a lot because I get used to here (referring to Turkey) and every day I feel more belonged to here. In somehow, I leave my country a little behind but I want to gather them by having houses in both countries.”* She described their identity as a couple *“Turkish, at home there is no Macedonian or Kosovon identity”*; her identity in her family as a *“Macedonian”* and in her husband’s family as a *“Turkish because we reside in Turkey, we are exposed to Turkish customs and we eat Turkish meals”*. Last but not least she added *“I still don’t feel like a Turkish citizen because my family is there (referring to Macedonia). If they would live in Turkey, I could count myself more Turkish. For instance, my husband’s family is here and he can identify himself being more Turkish but I can’t. I am still in between because I still have Macedonian identity in me.”*

### **Suggestion**

*“We shouldn’t leave our mother tongue behind, we shall teach to our kids. We should transmit our cultures, traditions, and customs to our children. Even you travel all around the world; your native identity will follow you wherever you are. The expression of ‘there is no place like home’ is so true. Sharing, loving, respecting, being honest and being transparent to each other are important matters in relationship.”*

## 8.13. Appendix 13

### Grid Analysis of Turkish-Dutch (ID-11)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** I got in touch with my particular couple by one of my relatives. I talked with her on the phone to arrange our meeting, and we met in their company. The interview took place in the showroom of the company, can be counted as a private space because during interview I was alone with interviewed couple. The interview was held in three languages: English between me and him, Turkish between me and her, and German between couple (while transcribing, in order to not miss valuable information given by the couple, my mother helped me to translate their conversation from German to Turkish). In the interview, when I was talking with his wife, sometimes he lost his attention and was playing with his phone one or two times. Later on, I understood that he was expecting a phone call from his daughter in the Netherlands. He kindly apologized to answer the phone and I continued interviewing with his wife until his phone call finished.

I observed that current political complexities created a great burden on his individual, familial, and professional life and some questions disclosed his tension and anger about political condition in Turkey. Even couple has plan to move to the Netherlands in the nearest future. While transmitting his thoughts in some questions, I also observed that he was not as comfortable as his wife. Before answering those questions, he chose to project some questions to the characteristics of my marriage (regarding married with different race, living apart, residing in Africa etc.) and we chat a little about my way of life. There was no disturbance during the interview.

**Individual background of Turkish female:** She was born in Turkey. She travels back and forth to the Netherlands to visit her husband's family.

**Individual background of Dutch male:** He was born in the Netherlands. He has 3 children (18, 22, 24 years old) from his previous marriage. Taking advantage of EU passport holder, he travels a lot in Europe additionally he travelled to many countries in African continent. Since 1999, he was coming to Turkey. Due to his marriage and business purposes, he moved to Turkey for 5 years. Now, he travels back and forth to the Netherlands for visiting his family and children from his previous marriage and also arranging business meetings.

**The couple's specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** Currently, the couple lives in Istanbul but thinking to move to the Netherlands. They are married with one child, 3 years old. They are textile distributors and working as business partners. The couple can be characterized as transnational couple since he travels every month for 10 days to the Netherlands to precede business meetings and visiting his family and children.

#### Demographic information

39, female, high school, textile sales representative<sup>19</sup>, Turkish

52, male, high school, textile sales representative, The Netherlands

(Both are working as business partners)

#### Background of the couple's life

They met through friends and they have been together for 12 years. He was always going back and forth between Turkey and the Netherlands. The couple was flexible to find the best way to satisfy both parties in the decision to start living together. She mentioned "*he was constantly going back and forth to Turkey and sometimes I was going to the Netherlands. We could not be separated from each other; we got married with a great love.*" He continued that "*I was 2 months away and 1 week here (referring to Turkey), then 2 weeks here 2 weeks there (referring to the Netherlands), and then it is 3 weeks here and 1 week there. We are used to it and it is good for both of us also.*" He moved to Turkey with good expectation, yet it seems turning into a regretful decision for him clearly seen by his statement "*I thought it was a nice country to live and my wife was here. Now, I am thinking to leave again to the Netherlands. I am coming here since 1999 so I know what happened this was a European or mixed time, metropolis. Now I am making jokes with Islam 'we are in Islamabad, I don't want to live in Islamabad.'*"

On account of family approval about their union, he said that "*in Dutch culture, you don't have to get approval from your family*" whereas she informed her family and was not problem for them. Regarding both family members opinion about their

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<sup>19</sup> They identify and target potential customers and answer their inquiries about products, prices, credit terms and other matters. They suggest products to customers depended on their needs and interests by showing detailed information with samples and catalogues (further information is available online at: <http://work.chron.com/jobs>).

union, in his family, he mentioned that *“there is no problem, of course they would like us to be more in Holland, but...”* and in the case of her family, she told that *“they are happy with our marriage because they wished me to get married and have children. They knew that if I wouldn’t marry with him, I won’t get married with any Turkish man.”* Receiving advice from their family regarding their relationship, he said *“it was not appropriate in the Dutch culture”* and she added that *“even though I did not asked, my uncle and neighbours told me that ‘since this will be his second marriage and he has 3 children from his first marriage, it is going to be hard so you cannot accomplish’.”* Nevertheless, she determinedly added that *“I am stubborn, I can do whatever I want and I become deaf in front of these people.”*

In Istanbul, there are main challenges affecting his life including not knowing Turkish language, traffic jam, the upcoming Islamic forces and terror. He asserted that these challenges do not affect their spousal relationship. In order to cope with these challenges, he said *“we are more like cocoon, we don’t go out much. There are some places in Istanbul, you can feel safe or comfortable such as Yeşilköy and Şişli where we live in, but in other places I don’t feel at home.”* This highlighted his concerns about security (especially last 5 years in Istanbul) so the couple prefers to stay in their own zone to maintain their familial safety. His following indication reproduced that there are differences in their relationship but still they are capable of finding midpoint: *“We are from two different cultures with different religious backgrounds. The language is not problem because we speak German. There is not much difference; I feel my wife is very European so we take best option for us. For instance, I take my shoes off because I think it is a good idea.”* His latter statements revealed that he has tendency to frame his conservative Europeanist views values over his wife. On the other hand, his wife’s further indications about family relations, parenting, and making future career plans for their child revealed her point of view is based on both oriental and occidental values.

### **Previous expectations**

He didn’t have any specific expectation about his future life before meeting with his wife and his statement clarified that he shed light on the importance of short term plans: *“Nothing. I am kind of person would like to point where I go to and I do short term plans.”* Although he achieved his goal or expectation about professional life, the current situation in Turkey made him concerned clearly shown that *“I expected what’s happening now we have a good business. There is only one point Turkey is changing so much for 5 years. We both are thinking to leave Turkey because we are not feeling comfortable when we are not in our surroundings and we feel the same way.”*

### **Friendship & Socialization**

He described his social life as follows: *“Poor, barely I go out dinner, something like that I don’t go concert, football game or cultural meetings because of current situation. I am here for 5 years, it is a big town, and you could go anywhere. Because of the political situation, I am not feeling comfortable outside of my own situation. When I am at company or home, I am ok but I don’t like to go out. Because I feel I could make a big fight with people on the street so I don’t go out to the street.”* This stressed his point of view about living and working in Turkey has extremely influenced by current political situation and created discomfort in his life. In addition to that his indication about barbarism and/or savageness in the streets is far from reality because unpleasant and unexpected events are not planned by the citizens. Hence, his way of generalization is beyond the reality.

He makes a few of new friends through his wife and business, and neighbours in their surroundings where they live. He keeps contact with his friends in the Netherlands. Whenever he travels back every month, they talk face-to-face. Even he identified himself as stating *“I only have face-to-face communication with my friends in Holland, I just send short messages. I am old-fashioned.”* His ‘old-fashioned’ personality as well as his ability to mobilize every month back to the Netherlands does not require the necessity of using virtual communication. He does not ask/receive any advice from his friends regarding his relationship, only sometimes they share their private life to each other.

### **Family relations**

In the matter of family relations, she cited *“I get along well with his parents and his children. Both of our families support and also respect to our decisions.”* He confirmed *“my family, everybody loves her.”* As regards family interference into their relationship, he responded *“I am from Holland and Western European culture; they don’t mix in marriages or whatever unless I ask for it of course. And she is of course from Turkish culture but she is a very strong woman and also they don’t intervene with her marriage. Don’t think like Turkish people, like your mother will say something for your boyfriend or your father will also beat you for being with this man. We are both European in this matter. Turkish people do that a lot spontaneously but Dutch people don’t do that a lot.”* His aforementioned statement represented his cultural clash and misunderstanding about mother and father’s role in Turkey. Bearing in mind, he took an ethnocentric or Dutch centric stance while making a generalized assumption.

Whether building bridges or separate familial relationships about their families, he said *“I don’t separate, if possible I bridge”* and she proceeded *“since our families are in two different countries, it is not possible to build bridges. If they would*

live in here, we could gather 2-3 times in a month. Still, on holidays, they visit each other either in Turkey or in the Netherlands. I love and respect to his mother and I am happy to have such a mother-in-law who is a good person, joyful, and intelligence. He has a lovely family. In family visits, my husband drinks Rakı (Turkish traditional alcoholic drink) with my father and he enjoys eating my mother's meals. My parents used to live in Germany so they can communicate with him in German, however; because of language barrier he cannot communicate with my siblings." Even though there is a distance factor while maintaining familial relationship across two countries, she keeps virtual communication with his family on the basis of daily subject and their child. Also, when she goes to the Netherlands in every 2-3 months, they prefer face-to-face communication and they talk about the good sides of the life consisting music, interpersonal relationships, cultures, and travelling experiences.

### **Couple's daily life**

The elements that make them a couple are mentioned by him "for me most important, we respect each other, we can talk together, and we have good sex together is also important [wife is laughing]. Yeah, you can laugh about it but if you don't have good physical contact with your man, forget about it. I think if you have these, you will have a good marriage."

They are an example of being transnational couple referring they are separated from each other every month for 10 days, for the reason that he travels back and forth to the Netherlands. During this moment, they maintain their relationship by calling each other daily. There was no difference observed in his daily life with or without his wife, he mentioned the same style of life e.g. "do my work, visit my family, go to bed and stand up in the morning." He added that "we have to realize our relationship was built like that since beginning. So we used to it, we always knew there was a period we were separate by country. It used to be I was 2 months away and 1 week here, then 2 weeks here 2 weeks there, and then it is 3 weeks here and 1 week there. We are used to it and it is good for both of us also." This may be related that the couple demonstrated flexibility and mutual understanding in decision-making phase so they are aware of their transnational condition and its prospective consequences since the beginning of their relationship.

Since their child is so small, the couple does not work from home stated by couple "it is impossible to bring work to home because he always wants all our attention on him". In terms of social activities in Turkey, the couple put some limitations to their social life activities by personal choice (because of aforementioned political situation). Hence, they prefer to have family visits, go for a walk or a dinner. On the contrary, when he is back to the Netherlands, he has more social life such as going to concerts, game and doing sports.

### **Parenting**

He has three children from his first marriage at the ages of 18, 22, 24 and they have a common child, 3 years old. About parenting, he mentioned that "I don't help too much, if you will be asking my wife, she will say not too much" and she continued "I always do these things: making him sleep, changing his diaper and feeding him. If I say something, he tells 'you wanted a child' so I don't say nothing back. The man are different either Turkish or European; they withdraw themselves once they become a father. Also, mothers are looking after much better. For instance while changing his diaper, I am washing him, wiping and putting a cream, but he doesn't know how to do, he looks after more superficially (e.g. giving Ipad to the child while looking after him). He is right I am looking after our child, even when he is away for 10 days, I am totally in charge."

The couple is highly attentive on teaching their own mother tongues to their child. This creates a multilingual atmosphere for child development. He declared "I am speaking Dutch, and his mother speaks Turkish. We decided it would be better to know two languages." Furthermore, German is a common language for the couple and she mentioned "apparently the kid is exposed to German language, and now he started saying 'Schatz' [translation from German: darling]. Also, he comprehends Dutch and he fulfils the commands given by his father." He would like their children to learn Turkish, Dutch and German and his wife added English to these 3 languages. Since German is their common language, the couple wishes their kid to learn German, as well as English because it is one of the international languages.

Regarding their children's educational plans, he thinks "now 3 years old, he will go most likely to basic school in Holland then we will see his capacity and his interest." His wife completed "I respect my child and I don't expect more than his capacity." In terms of preferred country to raise child and the type of school, she told "I wish to raise my child here but the conditions are not convenient." They prefer to move back to the Netherlands and send their child to the basic school -the type of without religion- because both of couple has different religious backgrounds. He asserted "in Holland, it is not like that what we preferred or not, that is a basic school has three types of it: Christian, Catholic and without religion. This choice will be without religion for us but we will see. I would like to send to Catholic school but I think my wife would like to send without religion school. The problem is without religion, it is mostly Islamic people because they don't want to be in Christian or Catholic school" and she carried on "my husband's family can be Catholic but my son will decide his religion when he is grown up. Now he doesn't have any religion even I received a paper declaring that he is without religion." In this



point, even they do have agreement but their wishes are different. Also, it seems that the couple puzzled their mind with their religious backgrounds and they are concerned about their child would be imposed by religious affiliations either in Catholic or Islamic manners in the school. It is necessary to remind that schooling might differentiate with names of Christian, Catholic and without religion under the same educational roof. Still, children are educated in the secular framework regardless of the names of their schools.

In terms professional plans for their children, he replied *“this is for me very strange question. We are not like Turkish people making plans for children when they are 2 years old, we need to see what his capacity, level of intelligence and of course his interests are”* whereas she added *“thinking about child’s future occupation is typical thing for Turkish people, they (referring to Dutch people) do not have it. If you ask what’s my dream about him is being an important man who does his favourite job and I want to be proud of him. If he comes and tell me ‘mum I want to be a mechanic’, for me it’s not a problem.”* His earlier ethnocentric or Dutch centric approach created an atmosphere of having hierarchy and extremely conservative attitudes while shaping his wife with Europeanist view and values, however; her indications revealed that she holds both oriental and occidental values.

Their child currently obtained both Turkish and Dutch nationalities.

### **Mid-term goals and plans**

In his point of view, 5 years from now, *“I don’t think we have more children. If everything goes perfect, we still have this office but we will be not here. This is the ideal situation”* and 10 years from now *“I may be dead, I won’t live that far. I hope to be healthy but I don’t make plans for 10 years, it is not helpful.”* His wife imagines *“I will be travelling to other countries by a boat and our company will make good money and I will come to collect them. I also don’t want to have more children is not easy.”* The couple shares same opinions related to having no more children, and professional life, but his statements differ owing to his personality and his age.

When he gets retired, he wants to be *in Caribbean, lying on the beach and Piña colada in his hand* (laughter).

### **Identity**

He identified his nationality as Dutch and European. Going back and forth between foreign countries, he said *“it doesn’t affect me, this is how I live. I don’t feel like something special effect as I say I do it long time.”* Life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures did not shape his identity and sense of belonging but enhanced his knowledge about the world and he expressed as follows: *“I still feel a Dutch man. I don’t feel like I am different or something because of travelling. I don’t feel like changing, it makes me richer when travel more and see other cultures.”*

He explained identity as a couple: *European couple*; identity as a member of his biological family: *Dutch*; identity in his wife’s family as *yabancı* [translation from Turkish: *foreign*]; and identity as a citizen of Turkey: *foreigner*. His further indication *“but as I told you in the beginning, Turkey is not the same and that’s a shame. So what we can do?”* and his overall statements related to his concerns about safety, not feeling comfortable, Islamic forces and terrorism attacks, unsurprisingly have an enormous effect on his sense of belonging to Turkey. Seemingly, it is hard for him to feel belonged unless feeling secured or protected, and feeling integrated into Turkish society.

### **Suggestion**

*“It is impossible to give advices because every situation is different”*, he said.

*“All the couples -either foreign or not- need to know how to listen in order to understand each other better”*, she said.

## 8.14. Appendix 14

### Grid Analysis of Brazilian-Turkish (ID-12)

**Descriptive summary on the fieldwork:** While searching for potential expatriate organizations in Istanbul, I came across with his article called ‘International marriages in Turkey’. After reading his article, I figured out that he was interested in the topic of mixed marriages due to his own. I got in touch with a particular interviewee from my personal membership in one of the expatriate social networks in Internet, namely Internations: Community for Expatriates & Global minds. I sent descriptive message in order to introduce myself and my topic and I inquire about his possibility to join the research. In his mail, he mentioned that he was amazed to take part in the research due to being his interested subject, and we settled a date and time for a meeting. Our interview was based on online interview via Skype because it was the easiest way that helping us to converse in real time by using video chat meanwhile observing facial expressions and other visual cues. During the interview, his family was sleeping so there were no other people present. Because of the fact that the Internet signal did not reach inside properly, our interview took place in an open environment in front of his bungalow house. I was told about possible communication cut because they live in a small island. So when communication cut occurred, we repeated our words or sentences. At the end, it was not a big deal for data collection. Since the topic was awe-inspiring for him, he was friendly, excited and comfortable while conveying his thoughts and ideas.

**Individual background of Brazilian female:** She was born in Brazil. She has acquired different language skills such as English (going to Canada to learn English) and Turkish language skills (after moving to Turkey). She has also taken a really important role in directing her husband not only reinforcing his Turkish language skills in language transmission in child-raising but also empowering his Portuguese language skills in personal life.

**Individual background of Turkish male:** He was born in Turkey. When he did not want to continue studying in Turkey, he decided to study abroad in Canada. After settling in Canada, he thought none of education systems were suitable with his will and desires; hence, he quitted his second university programme in 2<sup>nd</sup> year. Before he got married, since 2002 he adopted a backpacker life style, he has been in several countries. Besides his mother tongue-Turkish-, he has acquired other language skills, for example; he developed English language skills at university, basic level of Portuguese language skills with his wife and basic level of Spanish language skills due to being in Spanish-speaking countries.

**The couple’s specific context at the moment they were interviewed:** The couple has a characteristic of mixed-nationality relationship. Specifically, in the course of the interview, they just moved to one of the islands called Arraial d’Ajuda in São Paulo, Brazil from Istanbul, Turkey. Due to their recent mobility, they were taking care of the settlement process and they were preparing for new season in order to start working. The couple was cohabiting before getting married in 2014. They have a 2-year-old son and they wish to have more children.

#### Demographic information

35, female, university, stay at home, Brazilian

35, male, dropping out 2<sup>nd</sup> year in bachelor’s degree in Journalism, stay at home, Turkish

#### Background of the couple’s life

The couple is together for 7 years and they got married in 2014. They met with each other in the journey of searching part-time work in Canada; they were working as colleagues in the same restaurant. He stated as follows: “*When I met with my wife, I was living in Canada. I left two universities. I had not believed university education so I also left my second university. When I was in university, I used to work in restaurant. My wife came to Canada to learn English and she started to work in restaurant, where I worked. Then we meet at there and our relationship began. After that we began to live together. Finding a lover is very common; I encounter lot of couple who have met with each other at part-time job.*” When the condition of his subjective reason which sparked by his rental house, the couple decided to move in together to the same household in order to facilitate their lives and conditions on that moment. He explained “*I think in the six months of our relationship, the house which I lived in, was planning to destroy so I had to move. We have been together since 6 mounts so we said why not we live together. Then we started to live together. Of course, the first spark was economical, I could live in a separate house like before, but it was an opportunity for us to move together. For 2 years, we lived in Canada and 4-5 years in Turkey, after that we currently moved in Brazil.*” He further explained their decision to live in Turkey by stating “*We decided in 2012. I have been on the move in different countries since 2002 and I haven’t been at home for a long time, but I have had a family loss. Normally, when I was planning to come a few months later, but I suddenly had to return to Turkey at that time. She made a decision to move a step further for our relationship and said ‘I will come with you’. Even if Canada was a meeting point for*

us, it was not a place where both of us were based or where we could live together. Still, we did not even know where we would live or live together in another country. This event was again a spark so we decided to continue in Turkey.”

In terms of family approval, their families’ opinions were not central factor in their union formation since their basis of relationship started in Canada. He described that *“We started in a place where there were not two families present so our relationship started with our own initiative and continued with our initiative. When we came to Turkey, they only accepted, though this did not bother them. In the case of foreign girlfriends, my family was used to, hence, they did not have any kind of stereotype. On the contrary, her family was not as comfortable as my family because their daughter would go to a country that they do not know and secondly in Brazil there is a bad picture of Turkey in social media. This bad image was adopted from 1970s media so this kind of negative thought is still continuing in Brazil. There have still perspectives for Turkey as in between of Iraq and Saudi Arabia, or somewhat like Iran, or a place between Iraq and Egypt. However, my wife conveyed different information given by me, and then she also perceived more information after arrival so this condition helped them to build awareness about the reality of Turkey. Whether thinking or learning about Turkey or another country, they do not question much if the information was true or social media was reliable. After talking with my partner, they were aware of how shallow that information was and how it was media-based view. Also after seeing their daughters happier, their concern turned into a curiosity, and they came to visit a year later. And then both of our families were comfort about our union formation.”* When asked about what the members of both families like or dislike about their union, he answered *“There was not a big issue. If I think about the cultural matter, I guess I could not keep up with traditional Turkish family structure even when I was in Turkey. Especially since I have been in different countries for a very long time, it changed me more as well. Consequently, my life style turned in a way that they would not regard me as a stranger. There is nothing that they dislike any cultural value for both sides. Yet, if they do not like, this is completely personal. It can be in any Turkish girl or can be in any European.”* In the account of receiving advice from their families about their relationship, he told *“We did not need advice, this might be related that we are not in our 20s. While we were setting our life in Turkey, we made a distinction between what we like or not. It would be useful to understand that I do not see any culture neither top nor bottom, I think that all cultures do the same things but in a different way, e.g. all cultures put different priorities to the different things and these priorities change from one country to another. I mean all people might have different life styles but they fight for same reason: to survive. Though, in this sense, there are things that I do not like anymore after marriage. In Turkey, the notion of ‘privacy’ is not understood well, and there is not even a Turkish word for it. In this matter, we had to put a line because we did not want people to enter our house without letting us know that they would come. Albeit they were 5 minutes away from our home, it did not mean we would accept them as guests and we said ‘no’ if necessary. Henceforth, we told our relatives or friends to inform us 1 or 2 days before because we –as husband and wife- were both working. This became quite impossible, particularly when our child was born. The constant gathering movement is a widespread habit in Turkish culture, if we shall compare between East and West as well as East cultures usually accept by means of a sincere movement. Then again, we believed it was not suitable for our way of living and we decided to draw that line. In this phase, instead of receiving advice from families, we try to teach our Turkish family the importance of having privacy by letting them know that they are welcome to our home when we are available. This was a hard step to take for us and it was also hard for my family to accept it. My mother was sensitive at first, but she understood our intention later on.”* His aforementioned statements highly symbolized that couple took initiative step to organize their way of life while setting their rules in order to avoid possible cultural problems which may occur further.

In terms of living condition in Turkey, the couple faced with several challenges. Above-said drawing line can be possibly understood that the couple developed as a strategy to avoid prospective cultural clashes between family members. However, this situation was not first and last situation for the couple, as his statement follows: *“Another thing is that neither I nor my partner does drink tea, we only drink coffee as a result we do not have tea in our house. For example, when guests or our relatives or our close friends came, they were all surprised for such small details but then they understood. When they come, coffee was served instead of tea, or maybe Asian Fried Rice instead of pilav [translation from Turkish to English: pilaf] or feijoada was served. Basically, the dishes and drinks were different. While I was with my wife, I like and I have habituated to these dishes so they become part of our life in Turkey. For sure, it was different for them but they did not take any negative stance for different cuisine. I guess this was just a bit of our (referring to Turkish) picker style.”* In addition to having a different cuisine, the couple especially his wife faced with language barrier in Turkey and seemingly it was a great challenge for the couple’s life. He mentioned with different exemplifications *“Before we came to Turkey, we both have lived in other countries and experienced of encountering different cultures. The country we met was a place like Canada. In case of need of a Portuguese-speaking person, they would assist even in the simplest level in the departments of social security and health, or they could be reachable through phone with someone who speaks directly in Portuguese. Although my wife speaks English, we had problems in Turkey with it. My wife has learned Turkish within 6 months with my guidance and suggestions, at the end she came the position to work. However, there are some special issues such as medical topics. Even though English is not her native language, it was easier for her more than Turkish. It was a big trouble for us not to have English-speaking personnel serving in government offices. Moreover, the problem was not only language barrier but also we both were not able to understand on-going procedures. Because of the fact that I was 20 years old when I left Turkey and when I returned I was 30 years old and I was a person about to be married. There were structural procedures that I even did not know or understand their functions because I was not in Turkey for a while and they had changed a lot. We have experienced quite challenging times with public offices, private hospitals and post offices due to having difficulty in exchanging information. Even myself as a Turkish-speaking person I also experienced difficulties, but my wife had a lot of trouble because of lack of English-speaking personnel. An additional issue to the topic of language, there is a saying in Turkey ‘who knows more, talk a little’ and this issue disturbed my wife a lot. She was uncomfortable and was complaining that our doctors talk less, give less explanation. Indeed, they were doing their job seriously but for her they were working like a machine, e.g. consultation, treatment, prescription and few suggestions with 1-2 sentences if necessary. This cultural and*

governmental working style disturbed my wife. Still, when they were prescribing, we ask about what the problem was and what the medications were for. Until she has acquired Turkish language skills, at first I was not going to work or cancelling my daily plans on that time so as to accompany her. Later on, she has changed herself in accordance with the structural functions and the behaviours of personnel. These situations all coincided with our first 2 years in Turkey. The main reason was that I become a foreigner to my own country so we both started adapting together. When she got pregnant, it was necessary for us to find a doctor who knows English at the same time gives suggestions. On the other hand, it is not hard because there is a social group of married Brazilian women in Turkey. They have a really functional relation between them, through them we found a special doctor. Even we have learned a lot before they have published in the news.” Given big picture of challenges highly reflected upon how their life hardened in micro, meso and macro levels. Even supposing he was a great supporter for her, learning a host language –in this case Turkish- was a great facilitator to integrate into society as well as to obtain equal rights while accessing services.

Moving to the next questions of ‘how these challenges affect their spousal relationship’, he responded as “no way” and to the questions of ‘how they cope with these aforementioned challenges about living conditions as well as differences in their relationship’, he told in detailed “*There are two issues even you passed through in my correspondence article (referring to ‘International marriages in Turkey’). I surely assert that different nations, cultures or their different way of life styles are not cause of problem. If there is a problem in the relationship; the opposite side of culture, religion, country, and city may reflect. Contrarily, I never believed or I never experienced that these differences were a source of problem. Before we came to Turkey, since I am very interested in mixed marriages and it was also a necessary matter to be prepared for it at that time. The knowledge of my wife’s family was partly same with my wife’s own, she changed with me, but I had to put extra effort on her reformations. In a non-judgmental way, I must have explained her whole of culture, living conditions, facial expressions, mimics, a sense of humour, cuisine, clothing, and how personal and emotional relations begin and how people develop them in Turkey. Apart from that, I felt the need of telling other matters in time. On the basis of this, I would hope that if she would surprise fewer things outside of home, it would ease her adaptation process because adaptation becomes a very important thing here. Just like a baby, how the baby is born and starts perceiving the mother, father and surroundings. In a similar way, while a migrant adapts to a new environment including neighbourhood, colours, sounds, accents, people, and a new world, the more unhabituated things perceived, the more people pull themselves back and feel fatigue. Irrespective of ages in 20s, 30s and 40s, everyone feel adaptation process in different levels. Just imagine, before coming to another country the person who is well equipped with educational and professional skills, has been able to provide his own livelihood with their own survival skills and life experiences. Nevertheless, one day s/he moved to a country that cannot speak the host language, cannot tell about feeling they experience, end up being unemployed due to being a language handicapped. This circle of inability and difficulties diminish the demonstration of survival talents and it may result in commencing a feeling of homesick that might comorbid with some psychological effect; for sure, later on transmitting these problems into the relationship. I did not want it to happen, because it is easy to reflect. In a new country, I am her friend, mother, father, family, girlfriend, and I am also the one that she will be crying, being angry, and losing her temper to, this is a very difficult situation for both of us. That is the reason why, I wanted to make such a preparation to deliver all the information about Turkish culture that I have learned until my 30s in the hope of facilitating the process of adaptation.*” It is clearly seen that he plays a really important role as a culture broker husband while helping his wife in the adaptation process.

### **Previous expectations**

Before he met with his wife, he expected to lead a backpacker life as he did. He stated as follows “*Like I said, since I was 20 years old, I’ve been travelling. Instead of taking pictures in many countries, I travelled to many countries in the purpose of living in their cultures, understanding local people, enjoying the atmosphere, learning things that they are having fun of, and working to save some money so as to go to another country for at least 2-3 years. I wanted to shape my life like this before I met with my wife. Probably if I had not met her, I would still be on the move in somewhere.*” Moreover, the similarity between his previous expectation before meeting with his wife and his current situation, he stated that “*The same thing is that the point of view about life that I have believed theoretically is the thing that I have practiced principally. After my wife instead of seeing the world with borders, countries, flags, religions, or things that are not seen when viewed from space, I have seen the world as a giant creature with full of human beings including me living in it. I do not compare anywhere beautiful or ugly than other one, I believe due to countries and their borders people may not completely visit their own house but still they live in it. This remained same as I have met a person who has lived and believed in a similar way with me. We both see the world in the same way, we adopt similar point of view in our way of life. Now we will inspire by them in our child-raising style; our son will neither see Turkey nor Brazil as his house, his house will be the whole world. He will be raised in multilingual environment so he will not hesitate to learn other foreign languages.*” In order to clarify differences with the comparison of his previous expectations with his current situation, he expressed “*I have more settled way of life now. Therefore, I decided not to travel much at least for a while, and we will have the trips mostly touristic purposes, or family and friends visits.*”

Turning into the topic of his previous expectations from future education and professional life before he met his current partner, he stated “*Since I lost my faith in the education system from the beginning, professional life has taken a function in my life. The life style I have experienced for a while brought me to this point. The jobs related to communication and human relations and foreign languages were easy to find at the end they play a functional role in my travelling life. Due to the fact that after settling in a country, I had to find a job but learning the host language was sometimes obstacle. Yet, the life I wanted to live was that going and experiencing there, so money was necessary because I did not have any financial support*

from the beginning. Even my family had a financial difficulty so I had to stand on my feet. For this reason, I fully thought as functional between the ages of 20 and 30, meaning simply receiving payment with working hours and I thought maybe I needed to learn the language or a language I know. I have worked part time at restaurants, customer relations, business companies, big airports, construction work, and foreign schools. I completely worked for what I needed without any promotion plans.” He further explained the similarities with the statement of “After marriage, this situation partially has continued because the condition of having a foreigner wife and having different working experiences in different countries directed us to work in Istanbul which has a lot of foreign population and tourists flow increased our chance to work in customer service and tourism.” Later on, he detailed the differences with the following indication “I have changed this function, especially after we have a child. Yet, since the elementary school, as the system taught to climb the stairs promotion or higher profile which again I haven’t chosen to do so. Currently, the condition is working less and spending more efficient time with my family. Maybe this difference highly correlated with my age and my current condition of being a father because every offspring including my child and animals, watch their parents to learn about survival modes not their teachers or professors. I want my child to see me and his mother at least until the age of 5 or 7 so this is the priority I have given in my work - less work, enough money to live, and more family- this is also another reason why we came to Brazil.”

### **Friendship & Socialization**

At first, he explained his wife’s social life quite narrow with his social circle of family and friends as follows “At beginning, I, her and my family was her social life. The reason was that she was not adapted to Turkey, and that’s why she always wanted to be with me. While doing family visits, she preferred to do in short time period because she wanted to use her time properly either talking with her family or watching Brazilian Soap Opera.” This situation changed quite a lot once his wife acquired the host language. Learning language opened door for her to the opportunities of improving social and professional skills, he added that “When she acquired Turkish language skills, she started working and then her social life circles spread. In this way, she reached to 50 to 60 Brazilian couples who were Brazilian women mostly married to Turkish men and personnel in Consulate General of Brazil in Istanbul. In those times of adaptation, she spent a lot of time with those Brazilian women. When she became a mother, she got in contact with mothers in Brazilian community in Istanbul as well as Turkish mothers, my friends and her friends. So her social network increased day by day.”

About the question of keeping contact with her old friends, he kindly suggested useful tips (in his belief) for her to increase her adaptation skills in a new environment. He added that “She entrusted in my previous experiences of living in another country and adaptation to different cultures. When our decision to come to Turkey was clear, I advised her one strategy which I use and I acquired its utmost benefit. I believe physically presence should be complied with emotional presence to the host country; the more people apply this, the more they will feel adapted to that country. For this reason, when we were in Turkey, I recommend her to read the news about Brazil and talk less with her parents, and I told her to focus more on Turkey. For instance, rather than craving Brazilian food in Turkey, I told her to try to create her own cuisine with Turkish ingredients while in Turkey. I always told her to focus on real time meaning friends, food, emotional and human relationships nearby her because I found it useful when I apply. So she called her mother once a week, talk with friends from Brazil or other countries for once or twice a week, and he preserved the rest of her time to her friends in Turkey.” When the topic comes to describe face-to-face communication and virtual communication with friends and to distinguish them from each other, he said that “She was using Skype, afterwards she started talking in WhatsApp. In general, she did not feel any difference between them but she wanted to be in Brazil at special times. For example, she lost her grandfather when we were in Turkey, and it was impossible to leave because of our job and living conditions we had at that moment. She felt very intensely as she could not go. Another time while we were in Turkey, her brother was getting married and she had to go. In family matters, not going for any reason made her upset whereas when the conditions were met and she could go, she was absolutely happy about it.”

Regarding receiving advice from friends, he articulated that “I obviously did not need such advice because our relationship was not new. We have already been living together for 2 years when we come to Turkey. Then, of course, instead of receiving recommendation, we have shared information about mixed marriages especially we gather with foreign families or Brazilian girls. The concept of having mixed marriages with a combination of two different nations, learning the sociological side of this alerts us rather than personal or private relations side. Everyone has a different way to start and precede the relationship, everyone has a different story. Consequently, since they form a new way of life as a married woman with foreigners, those girls from Brazilian community have continuous subject of mixed marriages but I do not know if they share about everything (laughter). Apart from this there was no advice received. Apparently, people give intense information before starting the relationship, but experiencing oneself is different due to the pace of the life because without noticing you are applying alone.”

### **Family relations**

Their families have supported their union formation. Even though the couple encounter their families’ opinions, they choose to keep their own rules. He mentioned as follows “We set rules and draw some borders to have our own privacy but we had

hard times especially by my mother I was associated with a stone-hearted or alienated person. Always we have made our plans and decisions. If we need advice or if we want their support, only that time we ask for their support. They also follow and respect our rules for us. Of course we exchange information with our families, but what relates to only me and my wife stays in our family. We wanted to create our familial form and we wanted to shape the way we wanted. When we receive continuous support or guidance by our family related to our decisions, we prefer to think about them rather than directly accepting. We always wonder about if they say because of cultural reasons or is there another reason, especially about our alienation towards Turkey. That's why we tried to make more valid decision." In terms of whether their family intervene into their relationship, he asserted that "I'm sure they wanted to interfere into our relationship, but as I said earlier this is something I do not like about Eastern cultures. I don't know why maybe after a certain age or maybe I have lived abroad quite longer time or maybe those countries in which I have lived brings something to my life. So we decided we should not have let them intervene in any stage of our life. At first, my mother was the first one to experience all of our boundaries, to get sad to us and also she was the first one to get used to. Even when our uncles, aunts, cousins hesitated to ask or tell something to us, my mother played a role as a mediator. Sometimes they say things directly or indirectly because communication in Turkey is quite multifaceted (laughter), so my mom understood my attitude at times when we did not want to include their ideas. But, of course, the way they saw it, it changed from person to person, and it changed according to the closeness of our relationship. Whether you are from another nation or not, if I would be married to a Turkish, I am sure that similar things will happen again. Generally, a person who you love, you can often make them tired of you or misunderstand you, but if you have such a strong relationship with them (including spouses, relatives and even friends) at the end the person will understand your real intention." This illustrates that after living abroad for many years, he has realized the differences between host cultures and his Turkish culture with the realization of becoming 'other' in regard to both the home and host cultures.

When he was asked whether they build bridges between families or separate familial relationship, he replied that "I think it changes in respect to the contexts of the countries. Where our both families were not nearby, they were only audiences, and in general, our families are audiences. Then, when it comes to Turkey, my family was nearby to the topics related to us, and now we come to Brazil, for example, my family is watching from a far and her family is very closely watching and knowing the things about us. But then again, of course, there is a cultural difference here. For example, her family is well aware where to include and stop because they highly value the aspect of 'privacy' which I want to form with my family and relatives in Turkey. It doesn't matter for them which school or university, whether a child loves or not the school, the colour of the car, whether rental or sale house are not issues that they decide upon. Normally the child or the person decides and after taking decision if necessary they receive help from their parents but if they don't ask for help, the parents will be informed and they will be audiences." His following indication also mentioned about the role of distance while connecting familial relationship across two countries, "We did not make extra effort, since our families are physically in separate countries. There was no case that her and my family gathered to decide. Thanks to us, they become friends and we become friends with them. They came to Turkey -her mother and father live separately- his father came and then his mother came when our child was born. Whenever they came, they stayed in our house, but they often visit my mother. Of course, they understand each other with the gestures and cuisines because the food makes everyone merge in the same table when they visit Turkey. Despite of distance between countries, her family had frequent visits to Turkey, by doing so my mother met my wife's mother, father, uncle and aunt. Even though they are from Western cultures, there are things that are similar to Eastern cultures e.g. a barbecue time helps my mum to know her family members. When my mum comes here (referring to Brazil) in 1-2 years, they will meet again."

In terms of maintaining familial relationship in each territory, he mentioned that although language barrier cause a communication loss, they try to solve with possible solutions. This demonstrated in his indication of "I talk with her father, brother and aunt. Since they don't know English and I don't know much Portuguese, we talk usually about social issues. For instance, we talk with her brother about women, marriages, football, and computer games, and with her father about sociological issues and culture. It is a very tiring and difficult job when we are alone or when a person translates between all family members and spouses. So even if I were with my wife, sometimes I even needed to use Google translate. In the case of my wife, when we were in Istanbul, she has talked with my uncle and aunt in every 3 weeks. Their topic usually was depended on house organization, our habits, the Turkish TV series which my wife is expert on this subject (laughter), learning a different language, how Brazil is and what she thinks about Turkey and arranging the next meeting." His abovementioned indication clearly reflects upon the role of language in maintaining generational links between family members and also in playing role in improving their interaction with the amount of subjects.

When they settled in Turkey, his family was nearby and her family was at distance. Hence, in the case of describing face-to-face communication and virtual communication with their families, he continued "With my wife's family, when they visited Turkey, we used to see each other face-to-face. While they were in Brazil, I used virtual communication such as web cam or voice recording in only special moments such as their birthdays, mother's and father's day but for other times I didn't call. When my wife called them in every 2-3 days, I greeted and talk with them but normally I left them alone to talk with each

other. Even when we were in Canada, my wife used to talk with her mother, father, brother and aunt, still they are the ones who I frequently see and talk with while living in São Paulo.” He also added that “Of course, she would prefer face-to-face communication, but she kept in contact with her family at distance due to the current situations. Still, when we were in Turkey, she used to go to Brazil once a year meaning she went 5 times, I could go 2 times. It doesn’t matter how much time to spend, face-face-communication is always worth because missing and longing always exist, but the distance and financial condition affect our plans.” This illustrates how their mobilized condition from country to another change due to the factors of distance and economy.

### **Couple’s daily life**

His following answer synthesized the questions of ‘what makes them a couple’ and ‘his image to be a good wife/husband’ as follows “Mutual respect, acceptance and understanding, having empathy. The foundation of our relationship is based on mutual respect to each other as well as to our personal boundaries. At first we established our friendship on the base of these values, and then naturally our relationship changed from friendship to partnership.”

The couple lives together in the same household but still they fall apart 1 month from each other due to the condition of visiting families. When they are apart from each other, he explained how they maintain their relationship with the statement of “Definitely, we often talk with each other and inform about our daily activities.” In order to maintain their relationship at distance, the couple use the advanced technology to communicate with each other. He stated along these lines “Earlier times, we used to talk in Skype but nowadays we talk through WhatsApp and FaceTime. We used to update each other with daily messages and in two days we used to talk via webcams but this changed quite a lot after our child was born. Now we talk always by webcams and we share video recordings.” Revealing that the couple has experienced some alterations in their communication layers in accordance with the condition of having child, obviously their communication turned into more visualized version in order to catch up virtual form of parent-child attachment. When he was asked whether he found helpful to use recent information and communication technology, he memorized his past childhood. Obviously, advance technology facilitated human interaction as his indication follows “To be away from beloved ones is part of life for human beings. I have experienced since my childhood times because my father was a captain and I grew up seeing my father once in 8-months or sometimes once a year. In my childhood, we didn’t have a phone in our house. If my father’s ship was passing from the Bosphorus Bridge in those 8 months, he used to call by radiotelephone to the phone in another neighbourhood in order to let us know he would be passing by. After setting a time, we would get ready by wearing our darkest t-shirts and we would go to the middle of the bridge where he would pass. While his ship was passing by we were waving our hands, this was our communication. After some time, technology developed and we had a phone in our house and he had a phone in his ship where he was working, so he started calling us frequently. Yes, day by day communication gets easier and though video-based communication makes people more visible, still missing and longing always stays inside us.”

He described his daily life when he is apart from his partner as follows “When my son was 3-months, my wife went to Brazil and we returned together. On that moment, I met with my friends, whom I could not have a chance to meet because of work and marriage. I spared time to meet with them but those meetings ended up in a week. I felt a large part of my life was taken from me and I felt so empty because my wife and my child were not near me, and obviously I didn’t know what to do. At that time, I spent my time efficiently on reading and writing, and it was the time that I have started writing my blog. Besides that, we talked on the phone and on the video about our baby. Since this part of my life had been taken away from me, I felt incomplete. I still enjoyed the feeling of missing for my baby and my wife.” Even though he used his time efficiently, the feeling of missing was always present in his daily life when he fell apart from his wife and his son. On the contrary, he describe his daily life nearby his family as follows “Even in the big cities or here, I still have to go and do something in general. For me, the house has to be a place where I will be understood utmost and I will be happiest. For this reason, I always pay attention to create this atmosphere in my house setting. This was the same when I was single, after marriage and still same when we have a child. Generally, what I want in my home environment is to speak freely and make important decisions in a collaborative way and I am happy to do things even very simple things with the ones I love.” These two cases of being together or far from each other affect his life in terms of personal, spousal and parental development.

Since the couple recently moved to Brazil, they were unemployment. In order to understand their routine of working and leisure time out of work, he exemplified with their latest working dynamic in Istanbul. He responded “Journalism was the programme which I haven’t completed. When I came back to Turkey, I started working in Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) as a journalist in a weekly documentary program. I certainly had to bring working task to home, even though I worked longer hours in everyday, time was not enough because I always had to transcript the interviews. If I was doing some at work, I was writing some texts at home. For the rest of the time, I was sleeping or going to have breakfast with my wife. I has 2 working days and 2 off days while my wife was working in Atatürk airport from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. from Monday to Friday. We had some leisure time sometimes on weekdays and sometimes on weekends but we were not pleased. When we were at home, we were both doing housework and the rest of time we were going out. After the child, the routine of taking care of domestic and outside matters is still same because we work as a team since the beginning. For instance, while she is

*cleaning the windows and mirrors, I am washing dishes and cleaning toilets. This is one of our agreements. We have always made an agreement what we like and do not like, we work together, we finish together and we rest together. This became our formula.”*

Regarding his usual activities together with his partner, he stated that *“Sometimes we talk about country issues, or we talk about past and future plans. As a matter of fact, we are doing a lot of things such as childcare, housework, and everything together, but I realize just now while answering the questions, it is important to do together. I think doing the things together is the real pleasure. We give time to each other to do our things alone such as hanging out with our friends, reading, resting, or watching a different program. If I want to sleep, she lets me alone and lets me listen myself while she does housework and looks after our child. And I also let her do her things by respecting her duties and boundaries.”* Seemingly, the notion of ‘togetherness’ gives pleasure to him while doing responsibilities and leisure activities. He also added that they engage different activities by stating *“We love to go out together for visiting the city we live in or other cities or for eating. Even when we lived in Istanbul, we visited Istanbul slowly because it is a big city. While we were out, we watched movies or we bought the movies and watched at home. Or we talked about something that we read. Every week, Friday and Saturdays were our movie nights that we both usually prepare appetizer, take our drinks and watch movies. Once a week, we meet with our friends who could have a comfortable dialogue with us and also one day we also visit our relatives. Additionally, if there was a photograph exhibition or any subject that she is interested in on our way, we were attending in order to improve her understanding about Turkey and Turkish culture.”*

### **Parenting**

The couple has a 2-year-old son. The couple share caregiver roles in equal level. The couple has created a specific system for nursing their little boy as he stated: *“We certainly share caregiver roles, we don’t have other choice. Generally, for instance, who sees a dirty diaper, will be the one who cleans, and this is same for other tasks but of course it is a humorous part of it. Usually we are able to do every task; when we do not have patience or do not have enough power physically, we divide the tasks to each other. Especially in child care or nursing, we do have a particular system. In earlier times, my wife loved waking up late in mornings, and that’s why I became a responsible one for nursing our child in early mornings. So when our son wakes up at 5 a.m., 6 a.m., 6:30 a.m., or 7 a.m., these are my shift times. We used to live in Beylerbeyi -one of the regions located along the edge of a sea in Istanbul-; I used to take the child to the beach hoping to see an animal that he doesn’t know yet, to watch the sun or to smell the sea. For discovering, learning and enjoying different things of the child, I was responsible in the mornings. I and my wife usually have looked after at the afternoon and my wife has taken turn in nursing at the evenings and nights. Our system has started in this way and it has continued in this way.”* This also illustrate that the couple highly gives value on gender equality in child-raising activities, and also they do not mind to take roles when they have burn-out moments.

The child is raised in multilingual environment because the child has Portuguese-speaking mother, Turkish-speaking father and English-speaking parents since their common language is in English. Still, the couple puts extra effort on learning each other languages so that they children will be raised in two languages. For this reason, she has acquired Turkish language skills while residing in Istanbul and he also started learning Portuguese as well. Learning by experienced individuals facilitates the couple’s decision related to keeping both of their native languages while raising their children. He said *“We started communicating in English with my wife, it still didn’t change or we didn’t make an effort to change. So my wife will always speak Portuguese with our child, I will always speak Turkish and our child will hear English while both of us speaking so he will be growing up with two and half languages. While deciding, it was necessary to do investigation on people who has histories of being married to different nationalities like us, or people who were raised in bilingual atmosphere. I investigated on social media or in real life, for instance we have a girl friend whose father was American and mother was Brazilian, and we learned that her parents raised her in this way. She told us that we should not compromise on this so that she spoke of both languages as dominant languages. We think her recommendation was reasonable because she grown up by experiencing and we made such a decision.”* The following statement will show that the couple is pleased with their decision in regard to raising their son in multilingual environment and they also think that this multilingual environment will facilitate his comprehension skills for learning Latin-based languages. He mentioned as follows: *“I would definitely like him to learn other languages, it does not matter which languages they are. In fact, as I said at the beginning of the interview, when a person speaks another language, a person becomes another, meaning another combination emerges within that person. For instance, to understand a joke made in Spanish language, you have to be in that environment when you translate into Turkish, the joke is not funny anymore. While I speak Spanish or Portuguese, or English and Turkish, I become a different person. The feeling richness, diversity, variability, and capacity of the person are really nice, and I would like my child to grow up with these feelings. But, of course, it will be his own choice, and as far as I can see, he will have a tendency for Latin-speaking languages because of acquiring Portuguese language. For example, it will be easy to learn Italian, French or Greek than Chinese. He won’t spend a lot of time like me (laughter). Since we do not have such a future plan about what he should do, we do not take a specific stance on this. Of course, we are happy that he will grow up in*



*multilingual environment resulting in having different language skills. Later on, he will have a tendency in Latin-speaking languages, but we do not know specifically in which languages.”*

In terms of educational plans, the couple would like their children to study in education without school borders but still they respect the choice of their son will make in the future. He mentioned *“Even though it is not clear yet, I am planning for my child education without school. In fact, what we really want is that at least until the age of 14-15, we do not want him to receive any information from school. It doesn’t matter whether it is home schooling, following the curriculum from home, or never have to follow it. There are a lot of unwanted things that a child or a person has given at school until the age of 10-15. Whatever the name is, we do not want him to be an experiment. We want our child to see and live in different countries in the purpose of travelling, school, or internship. Whatever will be necessary both material and spiritual support, we are here to provide. If he is going to have education within school environment, for instance, he can study in Turkey and do his internship in Europe or vice versa, or he can study in Brazil and do his internship in America. Like the way I did, he can do in other countries so that he can build a way of thinking while feeling with diversity and he can find his way in life.”* It can be sensed as well that this idea might related to his previous experience of dropping out from university (because of the fact that he believes teaching methods are so clear-cut and far from teaching realities regarding life) and of learning from real life experience while exploring the world. His statement may also demonstrate that he values their son to hold cultural sensitivity while blending into other societies.

When he was asked whether they have any preference ‘related to professional plans about their child’, he indicated that *“I do not have any specific professional plans for him, I just want to encourage him in accordance with his wishes. I wish he will choose his profession on the basis of his talents so that he can feel happy at the moment of working without having dilemma of past and future expectations. I hope he will chose a profession that he can always improve his personal skills. If he follows like these working preferences, I believe his life can be more colourful, livelier and happier. On the contrary, I really do not know because the world is changing a lot. We grow up with profession and position concerns, but the world is changing, they make money from professions that even they didn’t exist 5 years ago. Now, people want to discover things they love. My partner takes more systematic, classical and assured stance about professional plans for our child, but she knows that her habits and thoughts are transmitted from her family. Therefore, she is ready to change her way of thinking. When our child reaches to that age, we will decide together.”* His excerpt clearly demonstrates that although the couple has different point of views, they are ready to support their child in accordance with his talents and wishes.

On the account of a preferred country to raise their child, they moved to Brazil. He explained their reasons as follows *“Early in the morning I wake up at 5 a.m. and my son wakes up 6-6:30 a.m. I spend time with him, we go to the beach like 8 a.m., and we spend 1 or 2 hours there depending on the condition of my child and the weather. We start our day with a combination of sun and sea, and if we have work to do, we try to take care of them at home, outside or on the internet. In general, when we start to work before the evening, we have a siesta break between 12 and 2-3, and after the dinner we start our life. However, what we are trying to do is trying to keep our communication at maximum level with the natural surroundings: especially with the sun, the natural field, and flora. We do not want to live with full of traffic, cars, walls, tall buildings, and noisy environment because we cannot hear the voices of such as trees, birds, and sea since all the voices of nature are covered by this cosmopolitan way of life. Instead of searching for a variety of social life activities, different life styles, or different cultures in big country or in big cities, we want to be in a small town believing that it is more natural. We wanted to show him that this planet is composed of beautiful colours and sounds of nature, not of motor sound, of traffic, of crowd, or of high-rise building. The location of our home was also important matter for us as it is easier to reach to this little district; it is also my wife’s country, and it is a town that we knew before. We chose to lead a slower and more natural way of life for him but afterwards he will decide for himself.”* This reveals that the couple as parents highly wish to improve their son’s well-being and development in their new settlement with natural environment.

Their son currently obtained both Turkish and Brazilian nationalities.

### **Mid-term goals and plans**

When he was asked about his professional career plans, he said that *“In general, whatever I say now will be the same after 5 years. I would like to work in communication business for 4-5 hours a day. Therefore, I can spare time for myself and my family within a more natural environment including sun and beach so that we can raise our children within these natural beauties. When we completely settle down here and find a job, these wishes will become true in the next year and will be same 5 years from now. Then, of course, it just takes time for these to happen. What I see in the big cities like Istanbul, London or New York, the people are always in rush of doing things but their time is never enough to accomplish their goals and at the end they cannot finish at all. The time between earning money and spending money is called life, and when we think about what we sacrifice for is our time. I think time is a factor determinates the lifestyle and what remains for me and for my family is only time. It will be like this wherever we are. I guess when I moved here, I have decided where I would live until I die. Here or another place doesn’t matter but I am sure about this lifestyle. When I came here, I realized that I took this decision because I feel it will be same even 10 years or 20 years later.”* When the question of educational plans was

referred, his answer was as same as aforementioned statement. Since he does not believe the accuracy of education systems in any country, he does not have any further plan to continue. In terms of having more children, they wish to have later on.

With regard to their retirement plan where they want to settle down, he asserted that *“There is no country that I can say no, can be anywhere, but still it seems to be Brazil. In circumstances of living in a small place with a slow-motion life in which you can feel less the effects of money, work and culture as there will be less cultural responsibilities and/or taboos imposed by society. I just want to earn how much I need to spend and I will be proud of myself when I have overcome the idea of needing more, one of the habits adopted while living in big cities. When we made a decision to come here, our ideas were aligned with each other as a result we are here, otherwise it won’t be possible. Either in Brazil or in Turkey, or in other countries, while working in the plaza, drinking coffee from Starbucks, wearing expensive clothes from famous brands, having higher position to buy a car, walking with bunch of colourful bags or watching movies at cinema in shopping malls were not my dreams. I do not think there are people who can accept to give up this lifestyle because I want to leave. Maybe there are a lot of people who think like me but there are few people who can align their ideas with mine. Consequently, this is one of the things I feel most fortunate to be in this relationship because if she would just say no, we would not be talking about three-quarter of this interview.”* Their aligned ideas about their current and future plans clearly show that the couple empower each other decision and seemingly they are ready to follow each other steps in every circumstance.

### **Identity**

He identified himself as a citizen of the world. His indication underlines his personal image about it along these lines *“I do not see myself as belonging to any country and this thought has given a direction to my life since the age of 20. Certainly, I am a citizen of Turkey and born in Istanbul. These are things that I do not need to hide, but I view myself as a citizen of the world. The name of the earth was different 1000 years ago, and now it is also different. Yet, I am earthman, all of us are earthman.”*

After all this going back and forth between Turkey, Canada, Brazil and other foreign countries, he specified himself a happy person due to his courage. He mentioned as follows: *“I am really happy that I have acknowledged all the experiences of travelling and learning differences in my earlier age. I do not know where my courage came from but I am really happy to have it. I am also really happy as my family or someone else did not or could not prevent me experiencing all these. This bravery attitude has been continuing since that time and will continue for both myself and for my family.”*

Life across two (or more) countries, languages, and cultures as well as a variety of studying, working, living and travelling experiences have influence on shaping his identity and sense of belonging though he did not have a particular concern about the topics of identity and sense of belonging as stated. He continued *“It was not a matter of particular concern, but obviously every place I go, every smell I sniff, every tree I saw, every language I heard did not sound like anything new. It seems as if I have relearned, reacquired and re-kn now about myself. For the first time in my life, when I saw a whale with my own eyes, I felt that wow I am a part of such a world. I always watch documentary, but when you can see with your own eyes, you can feel a real heartbeat. Whale is the same whale and source is the same source, rather than learning new things, you just renew yourself. Probably, in every country, city and culture I felt in a similar way when I like cultural things, voice expressions, and mimics. I guess I like very much thus I plan to live like this.”*

In the matter of identity as a couple, he stated that *“While looking after our child, we noticed that we do not have hold a position of citizenship or nationality. The Brazilian girls who live in Istanbul gifted toys which have buttons after pressing the toys are speaking in Turkish so that our child would not forget Turkish. It was quite interesting for us because we did not see such sensitivity from our Turkish relatives. Or she constantly warned me by telling ‘find an excuse and speak in Turkish, otherwise he will only learn Portuguese and Turkish will remain as a second language’. Also in Turkey, I was the one who found Portuguese cartoons and videos until the age of 1. We are a couple who lives according to our desires and feelings. For instance, I do not have a perception to compare Portuguese language with Turkish language by saying good or bad languages. Thanks to our child, I think we have discovered that we are two people who live the way we they want.”* With regard to his identity as a member of his biological as well as his wife’s family, he identified in this way *“Before I left Turkey, I was 20 years old. In comparison with old times, I was a child of my family and I was raised with the caregiving patterns of my mother. Since my father who was a sailor was not home for a long time, I was labelled with the norm of ‘the son of the house, the man of the house’. All of my relatives, family, and neighbours viewed me with that norm and from the beginning till the end I see that I have always tried to please my family. I realized I was a little child of the family at earlier age not at the ages of 30s and 40s like other people. Living alone and seeing other countries changed my perception a lot. At the time, my mother used to compare me with my peers, and when I looked at back I am no longer mama’s boy. Indeed, I was born in that house, especially after having a child I feel I am not a member of that house any longer but still I can do whatever necessary for my family and for my mother. But I noticed that if I support myself I am fine. I have learned not my own, not from my family name, not from my family, but I have learned from my father that the more I feel better, the more I will stay strong and I will be useful for my child, family and relatives. It took some time to be at peace with myself. In terms of my wife’s family, we are friends to each other. They do not become a mother and father for me after marriage; I think if I call them as a father and a mother would be very strange for them too. Owing to my wife, they started knowing me better and*

*we respect to each other. They have such an understanding of equality, there is no difference in status in the family, and everyone is an individual and equal. So I count myself as their yokefellow who joined their family.”* His aforementioned statement revealed how living abroad and independency resulted in building broader perspectives in familial contexts. Last but not least, in the context of his identity as a citizen of where he lives in, he defined as follows *“I’ve always been a little different, sometimes I am pleased and sometimes I complain about it. We have always been a bit different. After residing 5 years in Canada, when we moved to Turkey, I was a stranger in my own country and now my wife has experienced same situation since we arrived in Brazil. We alienated as a stranger but we still do not have a certain complaint. Especially when turning with my child, you become a part of here. Once they see your baby smiles, they also smile back and they appreciate your effort. If I greet 10 people until I reach to the centre, I got to know 8 of them with the help of my son because when they see my son’s smile, they also smiled at him, then we smiled at each other and adapted to each other. I think the feeling of alienation diminishes after having a child.”* The latter indication clearly exhibits that how the person’s life changes in accordance with the concepts of time and space especially when living abroad for a longer time. This might cause estrangement towards their own country and culture because they had to catch up with changes when they are back to their countries.

### **Suggestion**

*“...The common figure in international marriages in Turkey, I can see clearly why most of Turkish men who married to foreigners face with big problems. There are some people they got married because of coincidence in their life, not because of having different point of views. Sometimes life can merge people. Especially when foreign women come to Turkey, most of the husbands expect them to become a Turkish woman... The biggest problem appears when one spouse doesn’t accept their partner as the way they are, or if they do not create harmony in their relationship, this relationship inevitably breaks down. What I will recommend is valid for all relationships, but still especially for international marriages ‘accepting their spouse as the way they are’ is really important... In my opinion, social, cultural or religious differences should not be thought as a factor that change the dynamics of the relationship, rather couples should focus on living with this diversity and take advantage of this pleasure.”*