

## **Abstracts**

### **Marie Fjellerup Bærndt: Tensions of care in nightlife experiences among Muslim women in Denmark.**

Danish youth cultures are oftentimes characterized by frequent participation in parties and nightlife intoxication, often to the extent where some youngsters find it challenging to participate in parties without drinking alcohol. This paper takes as its point of departure the nightlife experiences of young women with Muslim backgrounds, who are a neglected group within the alcohol and drugs field. A focus on their participation in the Danish nightlife brings forth questions of tension and care: How do young Muslim women balance care for their ethnic minority community, where drinking and partying are practices usually regarded as harmful and un-Islamic, with care for their peers and the youth cultures they are part of, where partying is almost imperative? And, how do their individual projects of self-care and self-formation take form within this field of tension? Through empirical cases, this paper exemplifies how care for the self and others inform the nightlife space that young Muslim women navigate in – a space, which is already circumscribed by various power structures. For example, to be positioned as both a (female) Muslim and a non-drinker might produce a double marginalization in the social context of parties, creating a different nightlife space than what is available for majority Danish youngsters.

### **Jeppe Christensen: Fatherhood under transformation in ethnic minority families in Denmark.**

Based on fieldwork carried out in “Brøndby Strand”, a large housing project southwest of Copenhagen, this paper investigates how second generation of Danish-Arab men renegotiate what it means to practice good fatherhood. By attending to fatherhood as my primary site of exploration, I try to unfold a dimension of my Muslim interlocutors lives that are entangled into the lives of others in the form of past and future generations. I explore how fathers attempt to create generational change by drawing on various Islamic concepts when engaging with their children. I take up the case of a young father who struggles to leave his criminal past behind in order to become a proper role model and a caring figure in the life of his son. On the basis of this and other ethnographic examples, I argue, that the task of caring for, and ensuring better futures for ones close kin, becomes a way of transforming not only ideas of good fatherhood, but also religious ideas between generations.

### **Thomas Fibiger: Ancient Hatred or Ancient Love? Forms of emic primordialism among Sunni and Shia Muslims in Bahrain and Kuwait.**

In current press on conflicts in the Middle East there is much talk about ‘ancient hatred’, in particular between Sunni and Shia Muslims. While there is much ground for talking about sectarian issues in contemporary politics of identity, most scholars denounce the notion of ‘ancient hatred’ for being primordialist and a static reading of history. In this presentation I will approach this discussion from another perspective, pointing to the widespread attempts to better relations between sectarian groups by identifying common roots and social bonds of care among Sunni and Shia Muslims. These attempts, I suggest, highlight ancient love over ancient hatred. Emic forms of primordialism are therefore varied and may reflect love as well as hatred, trust as well as mistrust, care as well as neglect, but at the same time all such forms must be analysed within their historical and political context. The empirical basis for my presentation rests on impressions from ethnographic fieldwork in Bahrain and Kuwait over the past 15 years, two countries where Sunni and Shia Muslims live closely together, sometimes in relative peace and harmony, sometimes in relative conflict, mostly both at the same time. Moreover, I draw on discussions within the cross-disciplinary research group SWAR – Sectarianism in the Wake of the Arab Revolts – at Aarhus University.

### **Abir M. Ismail and Mikkel Rytter: Caught Between Care and Contract: Ageing Muslim Immigrants and Family Members as ‘Self-Appointed Helpers’**

A relatively small proportion of the growing number of elderly Muslim immigrants in Denmark live in municipal nursing homes. Instead, research indicates that immigrant families often take care of elderly family members in their own homes. Furthermore, a growing number of these families utilise the option presented as §94 in the Service Act (Serviceloven), under which municipalities can contract a family member to take care of an elderly citizen in his or her own home. In the recently started AISHA-project, researchers will explore how the employment of a family member as a ‘self-appointed helper’ influences the everyday life incl. family relations, spatial organisation of the home, time consumption and labour market participation in Turkish, Pakistani and Arab families in the Danish municipalities of Aarhus and Ishøj. In this paper, we present the overall project and discuss some of our methodological, ethical and conceptual challenges at this early stage. Furthermore, based on initial findings in Arab families, we discuss how ‘care-scripts’ and obligations are negotiated between family members of different generations and gender within the household and in relation to expectations from

the wider community. We also explore how the morality, incentives and obligations of care may be legitimized and/or contested with reference to ‘cultural traditions’, the ‘religion of Islam’, or ‘the Danish welfare state system’, respectively.

**Christine M Jacobsen: Dieu vous le rendra: Caring for others and the self in the context of ‘migration crisis’ and ‘secular suspicion’**

Abstract: Muslims have in recent years become more visibly invested in humanitarian work in France. In this paper, drawing on material from ongoing ethnographic fieldwork, I examine individual and organized initiatives by Muslims to care for ‘precarious others’ in the city of Marseille. Engaging with Butler’s notion of precarity as a politically created condition wherein precariousness is experienced and distributed differently, I examine practices of care for those lives that within the current French political regime are neither materially supported (food, housing, clothing etc.) nor socially recognised (racialized migrants lacking a legal status). I argue that in a context of ‘secular suspicion’, Muslims who care for precarious others carefully negotiate Islamic and secular concepts and ideas of care. In conclusion, I address some aspects of the relationship between care for others and Islamic ethics of care for the self.

**Mette Louise Johansen: Ambiguous parenting: raising children across the private/public domain**

This paper explores images and performances of good parenting among Palestinian migrant parents in Denmark. For migrant families, parenting has become a battlefield in which they need to position themselves in order to be politically and socially recognized. This battlefield is informed by a variety of moral ideals on childcare in the migrant community and in the Danish welfare state. In this paper, I explore how children’s whereabouts are being contested between state officials and migrant parents, focusing particularly on the role of “the street” (as public space) and the role of “the house” (as private space) in the raising of boys and girls. The paper is based on one year of ethnographic fieldwork in the largest and poorest Danish migrant neighborhood, Gellerupparken, publicly known for high crime rates and social problems. In order to explore how parents negotiate between different, sometimes irreconcilable moral orders, I have coined the term “ambiguous parenthood”. This concept allows me to hold concrete social relationships and competing moral orders together in order to explore how parents seek to manage everyday dilemmas on gender issues, child-rearing, and citizenship. I focus on

three arenas where parenting encounters take place in the families' everyday life: the state, the Palestinian community in the neighborhood, and the family. This paper points out the limits of biopolitics, suggesting that parenting practices are inherently ambiguous and shaped within a multi-vocal moral field.

### **Maria Louw: Atheist care for the self and for religious others in contemporary Kyrgyzstan**

In dialogue with Emmanuel Levinas and his ideas about ethics and alterity, the paper explores how care for religious intimate others affect how atheists in contemporary Kyrgyzstan are able to explore and express atheist sentiments and identities. While many are drawn to atheist communities on social media, as they offer possibilities for encounters with like-minded in a context where atheism is seen as highly controversial, what they encounter there are often images of atheism and its religious others they cannot identify with and which often seem irrelevant to the challenges of practical life where co-existence with, and caring for, religious others are central concerns to many.

### **Ida Sofie Matzen: What is love? Food, care and the concept of oneness among Sufi devotees in Lahore, Pakistan**

In this presentation my aim is to examine notions of care and love among Sufi devotees in Lahore, Pakistan. In order to do so, I shall be concerned with the key shrine practice of langar, that is, the distribution and sharing of food that is considered to be purified by the blessings of the deceased saints and their living descendants. There are several elements to this practice, ranging from matters of material concern and subsistence over issues of obtaining saintly blessings by tending to the needs of fellow human beings to the subject of divine and supreme love (ishq) – none of which necessarily exclude the others. While langar certainly is a more or less instrumental affair relating to the various (mundane and/or spiritual) interests of individuals, it simultaneously suggests an alternative notion of the human being: following certain Sufi teachings on the oneness of being (wahdat al-wujud), the human is fundamentally interconnected with other beings and hence unbounded. Based on 12 months of ethnographic fieldwork in 2009 and 2011-12, I shall examine how the concepts of oneness and love are invoked and deployed by my Pakistani Sufi interlocutors in their partaking in the langar kitchens at shrines in Lahore. Langar, I intend to show, offers an ethnographic laboratory in which to investigate

how love is considered to be the prime motion in the cosmos, and I suggest that by purifying the food (along with devotees and their surroundings), a living Sufi saint also intensifies love.

### **Amira Mittermaier: Non-Compassionate Care: Giving and Receiving at an Islamic Charity Organization**

Drawing on fieldwork at one of Cairo's largest charity organizations, I reflect on a bureaucratized Islamic ethics of care. Founded in 1975, the Mustafa Mahmoud Association today offers free medical services, funds micro-projects, and provides financial support to about 10,000 families each year. The bulk of that financial support comes from donors' private donations (*zakat* and *sadaqa*). Untangling the "care" that shapes these transactions and money flows, this paper ethnographically moves from the organization's small office where donations are collected, to a nearby office in which petitioners try to convince cynical employees of their need and deservedness. Donors explain that they purposefully choose to give via the charity organization (rather than directly) because organizations are not confused by "feelings" and are not easily manipulated. What emerges at this charity organization – but what also pervades more immediate forms of giving, I argue – is a significant gap between "caring for" and "caring about." Caring *for* those in need is seen as a duty and is frequently articulated in calculative terms by donors, as a way of "trading with God." Caring *about*, by contrast, is dismissed by some of my interlocutors as a particularly Christian preoccupation, foreign to an Islamic logic of almsgiving. While this seemingly careless form of care might seem cold and heartless at first sight, I suggest that it offers a powerful alternative to the liberal illusion of "compassion."

### **Hayder al-Mohammad: 'What is the 'preparation' in preparing for death'?: New confrontations with death and dying in Iraq'.**

Tracing the illness and death of a woman I became close with in southern Iraq between 2005-7, I show how the work and struggles that went into comporting to life in the face of death must be taken as powerful responses to the ways in which death is received in life. I place this narrative within the context of the devastating attacks on Iraq in the Gulf War of 1991, and the subsequent twelve-year sanctions, which decimated the Iraqi healthcare system, particularly oncology. This decimation of the

healthcare system has left many thousands of Iraqis to face serious illness and diseases on their own, which has given rise to new confrontations with death and dying.

### **Emilie Lund Mortensen: When sharing is caring: An ethnographic exploration of experiences of sharing suffering among young Syrian refugees in urban Amman**

This paper explores care as it is played out in the liminal space of displacement, and the implications of displacement on relationships of care. During a recent fieldwork among Syrian refugee youth in Amman, Jordan, I frequently came across the expression of “sharing is caring”. In this paper, everyday aspects of this expression and its role in the lives of young male refugees are explored. The paper thus looks into the cultural demand of sharing as an expression of care and the potential tension between care for intimate Others and the self. This is done through an exploration of ethnographic examples of guilt generated by not sharing and volunteer work as a means of sharing emotions. Exploring various practices of sharing, not only material resources but also burdens of emotions, memories and experiences of war and displacement among Syrian youth in Amman, it is suggested that sharing suffering is the possible act of care in the context of displacement in which resources are scarce and families scattered.

### **Marie Bjerre Odgaard: Moral community as a gift and a curse: Orientations of a queer community in Jordan**

In recent years younger generations of queer Arabs have begun to argue that their sexual orientation and gender identity has importance for choices they make in life - far beyond their sexual practices. One of these emergent communities are based in Jordan, and includes a group of activists in Amman who argue that their identities as gay or queer should be accepted also in moral terms: As an individual matter, as a (complicated) matter between the Creator and the individual, and as a universal social fact. In addition to this, being queer in Amman has become associated with a form of “avant-garde” cosmopolitanism that has found its way into certain urban milieus in Amman. Portrayed continuously by local politicians, religious authorities and in the media as deviant (or شاذّ), queer Jordanians engage these perceptions in their everyday lives in forms of both resistance and negotiation. Through the activities of a group of queer activists, the avant-gardism of being queer has emerged as a life-style with certain collective characteristics. This is reflected also in a commentary stance, where activists have

pleaded for an artistic, humanistic role in society - not a political or defensive one. Engaging in recent anthropological theories of morality and ethics, I explore how these queer Jordanians engage new forms of life, whilst at the same time risking to claim exactly the moral absolutism that they reject – exemplified in recent clashes with the Muslim Brotherhood in Jordan.

### **Sara Lei Sparre: Educated hope in Cairo: Young Muslim volunteers between God and the nation**

In this paper, I address the relationship between individual sadaqa, non-formal citizenship education and ways of caring for the larger public good among Muslim middle-class youth in the large youth volunteer organization Resala in Egypt. The paper is based on findings from nine months of fieldwork carried out in Egypt from 2009-10 as well as shorter follow-up fieldtrips in 2011, 2012 and 2015. In Resala, young volunteers explained their involvement in social work by referring to the Islamic idea of sadaqa, e.g. obligations in Islam to provide for the needy and with this a need to cultivate certain virtues as Muslims. This echoes findings by Saba Mahmood (2005), Amira Mittermaier (2015) and others about self-cultivation and/or fulfilling of an individual religious duty as central in volunteers' motivations and intentions. Mona Atia (2013, 155) takes a slightly different path, placing Resala and how volunteerism and Islam is linked as part of an encroaching pious neoliberal rhetoric of 'individual responsibility, proactiveness, self-help, choice and accountability', in which the subject is seen as responsible of its own spiritual and material success. While these observations also apply to the young people I followed, I propose an additional reading in which involvement in Resala and the possibility of meeting and interacting with beneficiaries offered a space and an opportunity for the volunteers to reflect upon the poor and their own role as caring and participating citizens within the larger framework of Egyptian society. Overall, the paper argues that in the case of young Resala volunteers, the 2011 Egyptian uprising can be seen as a catalyst for the unfolding and manifestation of a new and more political dimension of a social engagement and civic consciousness that had been in the making for a while. Resala is – apart from being a means of striving towards divine life – a place which fosters “educated hope” (Giroux 2011), i.e. it offers alternative models that give rise to new, yet context-dependent, questions, problems and possibilities as regards divides, community and national belonging in Egypt.

**Christian Suhr: Free choice and respectful coercion: Experiences of being treated for jinn possession and psychosis in Danish psychiatry**

In this presentation I discuss the experiences of a Palestinian refugee, living in Aarhus, Denmark, who was sentenced to long-term and intensive psychiatric care after a severe case of jinn possession which caused him to smash up the interior of a mosque, crash several cars, and insult a number of people. In particular I analyse the dynamics of a particular kind of psychoeducation that applies what in Danish psychiatry is conceptualised as “respectful coercion” in order to facilitate a situation in which patients may freely choose to comply and submit to the psychotropic treatments they have been sentenced to take. I analyse these dynamics with tools from ritual theory, studies on the effects of placebo, as well as theories on religious conversion and ethical self-cultivation.

**Mille Kjærgaard Thorsen: ‘Subhan Allah, let go of your mind and draw your mandala intuitively’ Exploring care as emotional and spiritual work in Cairo, Egypt**

Based on fieldwork among families in various parts of Cairo, Egypt I explore how expectations to care for intimate others (e.g. brothers, sisters, husbands, mothers, fathers) often evoke great amounts of pressure, *daght*, on the individual. The paper explores how such care relations are often mutual – as a sister, for example, cares for her schizophrenic brother who then cares for her in return; or as a daughter-in-law, for example, cares for her diabetic mother-in-law who then cares for her in return. The pressure, *daght*, of taking care of intimate others may result in actions to take better care of oneself, for example, by attempting to better accept the life one has been given by Allah. In this paper I specifically explore how some people in Cairo do this by combining teachings of Islam with practices of Asian spirituality (such as yoga practices, meditation and drawing mandalas) as well as through therapy sessions with both psychologists and psychiatrists. Here people work towards an acceptance of their specific life situations in an attempt to relieve the pressures, *daght*, of one’s mind and body – brought on, in parts, by the intimate relations constituting one’s everyday life. Overall, this paper shows that accepting the life granted one by Allah – including the pressures, *daght*, of taking care of others – is a continuous process of emotional and spiritual work among the people of my field.



## **Karen Waltoorp: (Muslim) care for others in Afghanistan and Denmark: The Case of AYAD**

Afghan Youth Association Denmark (AYAD) is an organization of young Afghans in Denmark founded in 2009. Their aims are to promote voluntary and relief work and spread knowledge about Afghanistan on a national scale in Denmark: they focus on career- and study counselling, bridge-building between cultures, and helping those in need in Afghanistan (paragraph 2, Articles of association 2009). It is the last point which forms the starting point for this paper, and how helping those in need - care for others – converge with the two former: cultural bridge-building and career-focus. How is the importance of relations (near and far), belonging to-, responsibility and care for- various categories of others balanced with individual self-cultivation, religious and/or in terms of career and networking? How are the various forms of ‘care’ enacted in the articulations of AYAD, in its events, social media activities, and in the understanding of various members? AYAD members welcome all religions, and not all are Muslim, though the majority are. In an inter-ethnic, intercultural and interreligious organization, how is it agreed upon whom one should care for as a ‘joint’ body of young Afghans in Denmark? Is care understood in terms of the Islamic concepts of zakat or sadaqa, in terms of universal human rights, or which ideas and ideals meet in the work of AYAD?