'But we're just the same humans as you':

Refugees negotiating exclusions, belonging and language in Sweden and New Zealand

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Abstract

Refugee settlement is a complex process requiring the navigation of new linguistic and social spaces and the renegotiation of belonging and identity. The process can also be complicated by the contested nature of national belonging and the politicisation of social cohesion, as well as by forms of everyday exclusion.

Drawing on a Bakhtinian dialogical framework, this study used qualitative data from interviews with language teachers, settlement support workers and refugee-background residents in New Zealand and Sweden to investigate dimensions of belonging, social cohesion, and language in relation to refugee settlement. The study sought to discover how belonging and social cohesion are perceived and experienced by refugee-background residents in these contexts, how they are promoted by the two settlement nations, and how they are operationalised in political and public discourse to enforce boundaries and construct national and refugee identities. Of particular interest was the intersection of public discourse and lived experience, and the tensions and contestations that may arise in these spaces. Language learning and use were seen as crucial aspects of belonging and social cohesion and were investigated both in terms of linguistic inequalities in the settlement location and in terms of the unique language learning journeys of adult learners.

The findings suggest that there are significant gaps in the understanding of refugee experiences among policy makers and that discursive representations of refugees, particularly in terms of social cohesion and belonging, often impact negatively on the settlement process. The politicisation of belonging and the appropriation of social cohesion discourses as tools for differentiation, and potentially exclusion, can have negative impacts on individuals' rights and settlement prospects while reductive representations of refugees lead to unrealistic expectations in terms of language acquisition and labour market participation and to restrictive policies that hinder the settlement process.

The thesis concludes by arguing that in order to strengthen social cohesion and belonging, it is imperative that refugees are included as dialogical partners, practically and ideologically. It identifies theoretical, methodological, and practical implications of the research and raises further questions in relation to gender, language acquisition, incentivisation and dialogical practice in the context of refugee settlement.

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Ethics approvals

This research has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, applications SOB 20/22 (pilot study) and SOB 20/51 (full study). The Swedish component of the research was also approved by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635).

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'We're refugees but we're just the same humans as you'

In saying 'we're just the same humans as you', Fariba, a young refugee from Afghanistan living in New Zealand, may seem to be stating the obvious. Yet, both in public and private discourse, refugees are often presented reductively or negatively, and such representations have the potential to impact on the settlement experiences of refugees. In this dissertation, I will argue that the ways in which refugees are represented, and the ways in which social cohesion and belonging are discursively created in public and political discourse, influence the policies that guide settlement; equally, they have a direct influence on how refugees perceive themselves in relation to their new society. Arguably, dehumanising or reductive representations of what it means to be a refugee may mean that individuals have to engage in ongoing contestations to legitimise their status in their new country and establish a full and valued identity. Further, negative or reductive representations along with exclusionary constructions of belonging, social cohesion, and language learning may lead to restrictive and exclusionary policies and provisions that impact negatively on settlement outcomes.

Drawing on a Bakhtinian dialogical framework, this study uses qualitative data from interviews with language teachers, settlement support workers and refugee-background residents in New Zealand and Sweden to investigate dimensions of belonging, social cohesion, and language in relation to refugee settlement. As Western countries with a history of refugee settlement, the two nations have adopted different approaches and have developed in different directions over recent years. New Zealand which, since the end of WWII, has had a controlled and limited intake of refugees has gradually and cautiously increased its settlement quota in the past few years while Sweden, with traditionally generous asylum policies, has restricted its intake after the significant increase in forced migration in the mid-2010's. The study seeks to discover how belonging and social cohesion are perceived by refugee-background residents in these contexts and how they are conceptualised by the two settlement nations; it also investigates how they are operationalised in political and public discourse to enforce boundaries and construct national and refugee identities. Of particular interest is the intersection of public discourse and lived experience, and the tensions and contestations that may arise in this space. Language learning

and use are seen as crucial aspects of belonging and social cohesion and are investigated both in terms of linguistic inequalities in the settlement location and in terms of the unique language learning journeys of adult learners.

My decision to undertake this research was influenced primarily by my work with adult English language learners in New Zealand, in an institution where refugees constituted the largest portion of the student cohort. In my various roles relating to teaching, work experience facilitation, and, later, academic leadership, I felt frustrated by the inequalities experienced by our students as they sought to become part of their new society, engage in further education, or seek suitable employment. At the same time, as a native Swede, I was increasingly concerned about developments in my native country. Over the years, I had gone from holding up my country as something of a model of humanitarianism, with solid educational pathways for refugees, to feeling disillusioned and, at times, embarrassed over the increasingly strict policies accompanied by a more explicit nationalist and exclusionary rhetoric. Undertaking a Masters project in 2016 on how the concept of 'integration' was handled in Swedish language classes (Brookie, 2016, 2018)[1] increased my interest in that context. The choice to investigate refugee settlement in both New Zealand and Sweden was thus based both on my own dual identity and on the fact that the two national settings provide interesting differences as well as similarities.

In the remainder of this introduction, I will outline some of the key concepts employed in this study: representation, belonging, social cohesion and language. I will then introduce the two contexts, Sweden and New Zealand, and finally the conceptual framework. As this is a thesis with publication, each chapter will also contain a review of relevant literature as well as an explanation of the elements of the conceptual framework that relate specifically to that chapter. An outline of the thesis is included at the end of this chapter.

1.1. Key concepts

1.1.1. Representations of refugees

The ways refugees are conceived of and represented in public and private discourse have significant impacts on policies as well as on the lived experiences of refugees (Mahendran et al., 2019). In many contexts, refugees are subject to overtly negative representations which portray them as potential threats in terms of cultural values and national security. This includes 'civilisation' discourses that portray refugees as less progressive than their nations of settlement and therefore a threat to liberal values (Bauer et al., 2023; Brubaker, 2017; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019; Kamali, 2016; Welfens, 2023) and also securitisation discourses that portray refugees as

[1] My last name was changed from Brookie to Svensson in 2022.

potential terrorists (Smith & Waite, 2019) and threats to law and order as well as to national security (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Dehumanisation can also occur through metaphors of forced migration in terms of natural forces or disasters, such as floods or waves of refugees; metaphors that were heavily used during the increase in forced migration in 2015 (Gonçalves, 2024; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017).

Even when representations are less overtly negative, they are often reductive. One of the most prevalent representations of refugees is that of vulnerability, a representation focusing almost exclusively on victimhood and trauma (Marlowe, 2010, 2018) with the refugee conceived of as 'frozen in the initial act of flight' (Mahendran et al., 2019, p. 578) without any orientation to the future. A representation as vulnerable, while necessary for gaining resettlement or refugee status (Marlowe, 2018; Maryns, 2005a; Smith & Waite, 2019), risks portraying refugees solely from a deficit perspective (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019; Smith & Waite, 2019) and fails to recognise them as full participants in the new setting. This, in turn, can lead to exclusions (Delanty et al., 2008) and impact negatively on settlement outcomes (Marlowe, 2018). Further, the vulnerability discourse seldom leads to increased provision for settlement support for refugees, as refugees are also expected to adapt to a neoliberal representation where self-sufficiency is expected and failure is seen as the shortcoming of the individual only (Darrow, 2018). These contradictory expectations of deservingness – vulnerability and self-sufficiency – may form the criteria for selection of refugees for third country resettlement (Welfens, 2023) and are also evident in incentivisation laws requiring self-sufficiency as a pre-requisite for ongoing residence for those who have obtained asylum (Emilsson, 2020; Hagelund, 2020).

Dehumanising and reductive representations of refugees serve several purposes. The vulnerability discourse, for example, assists the depiction of a nation-state as humanitarian and hospitable (Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019) while civilisation discourses present the nation-state as liberal and progressive (Bauer et al., 2023). However, dehumanising and reductive representations are also important for garnering widespread acceptance for what may otherwise be seen as inhumane policies. Representing refugees as floods or waves justifies initiatives by nations seeking to restrict immigration policy (Gonçalves, 2024). A reductive representation of the individual as a neo-liberal type responsible for their own settlement success (Piller, 2016; Sullivan, 2012) is useful for justifying punitive 'incentivisation' measures that impact on financial support (O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014), language learning provision (Cooke, 2006; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021) or possibilities for family reunification (Emilsson, 2020; Hagelund, 2020; Palander et al., 2023).

Studies suggest that commonly accepted representations of refugees have significant impacts on the settlement process, impacting both on policy and on the daily lived experiences of refugees. Public perception, influenced by media coverage and political discourse, impact on how refugees are received and how others in society interact with them (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017). Refugees themselves, striving to construct their identity in a new context, often need to contest the various identities imposed on them in public and private discourse (Kostogriz, 2005; Mahendran et al., 2019; Vitanova, 2010). These contestations are carried out by individuals in response to imposed identities (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021; Mahendran et al., 2019), though these contestations may have little effect in terms of changing well-established reductive representations on a larger scale (Mahendran et al., 2019).

This dissertation aims to investigate what discourses are drawn on to construct the imposed 'refugee identity' and how these discourses impact on policy and – directly or indirectly – on the lived experiences of refugees residing in New Zealand or Sweden. It will seek to contest negative or reductive representations by analysing them and by bringing to the fore the voices of those impacted by these representations. In particular, it will look at how negative representations impact on the multiple belongings of refugees, on social cohesion and inclusion, and on language learning and use.

1.1.2. Negotiating belonging

Settlement in a new country requires the negotiation of local, national and transnational belonging on a personal level (Marlowe, 2018), but also a negotiation of 'the politics of belonging' (Yuval-Davis, 2006) which seeks to determine who belongs in a particular location. *Belonging*, or feeling at home in a place and part of a location or community, while arguably undertheorized (Antonsich, 2010; Jones & Krzyzanowski, 2008), has been conceptualised as relating to place (Antonsich, 2010), material surroundings (Fozdar & Hartley, 2014; Mathisen & Cele, 2020), attachments (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008), relational ties (Antonsich, 2010), and sense or emotional spaces (Bird, Brough, et al., 2016). When conceptualised primarily as social and affective (Antonsich, 2010) and involving a range of attachments (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008), belonging can be understood as taking place on multiple levels locally and transnationally (Bird, Cox, et al., 2016; Marlowe, 2018, 2020; Wise & Velayutham, 2017). Therefore, while developing a sense of belonging to the destination community is essential for successful settlement, the maintenance of transnational belonging and transnational relationships is also significant for wellbeing (Marlowe, 2018). These multiple belongings may be perceived as ambivalent (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008); however, identities can also be individually complete and coexisting (Mason, 2007), thus allowing individuals to develop a local sense of belonging while also maintaining their transnational ties.

The development of belonging in the destination community is not only impacted by the individual's place-belonging, or 'feeling of being "at home" in a place' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 645) but also by the ideological and political constructions of belonging in that context. The politics of belonging involves boundary drawing (and redrawing) as well as contestations, negotiations and reinforcement of boundaries (Croucher, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2006). For nation-states, belonging is often based on a conception of the nation as 'an imagined political community' (Anderson, 1991, p. 6) with clearly marked boundaries which, though open to renegotiations, always retain an element of exclusion. Maintaining the limits of the imagined community often entails boundary drawing along identity lines (Croucher, 2004), where the perceived sameness in identity and assimilation to the dominant group become a requisite for belonging (Antonsich, 2010) and those who are perceived as culturally *other*[2] are discursively constructed as non-belonging (Kamali, 2016). These discourses can, in turn, impact on the sense of belonging newcomers experience and on the level of recognition they receive in their communities (Delanty et al., 2008; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008). While some studies have indicated that local neighbourhood belonging can be possible, even when there are nation-level discourses of exclusion (Christensen & Jensen, 2011), the political dimension of belonging and exclusion is likely to impact on the individual's creation of place-belonging at least to some extent (Antonsich, 2010; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008; Mason, 2007). Developing a sense of belonging requires social validation of attachments and social recognition as a 'full partner in social interaction' (Fraser, 1998, p. 3). It is therefore not sufficient for a newcomer to identify with their new community but they also need to be recognised as part of the community by other members (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008; Mathisen & Cele, 2020). This includes institutional recognition but also recognition in day-to-day social interaction, with studies suggesting that popular perceptions of ethnic and cultural difference can lead to an absence of social recognition even where institutional recognition is strong (Eliassi, 2016).

In this dissertation, I will explore how the development of a sense of belonging in the destination community is impacted by the politicisation of belonging (Christensen & Jensen, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006), particularly in relation to discourses of exclusion and inclusion (White, 2015). I will also investigate transnational belonging and transnational care relationships, and how these impact on settlement and belonging in the destination community (Marlowe, 2018). Further, I will consider how politicised belonging, through exclusive or reductive representations, seeks to justify family separation, thus necessitating transnational care relationships and obligations that may impact on settlement outcomes and on the development of local belonging.

[2] '*other*' (italicised) is used throughout this thesis to refer to the excluded *other*, perceived as different from the main collective. See also section 1.5.

1.1.3. Constructing social cohesion

Forced migration, and migration and diversity more generally, often involve a consideration of social cohesion on public, political and policy levels (Boucher & Samad, 2013). Social cohesion is constructed in discourse as a concept that defines what constitutes a cohesive society (Boucher & Samad, 2013; Council of Europe, 2005; Jenson, 2010; Peace et al., 2005; Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012) but also, more practically, constructed through policies designed to promote and maintain social cohesion and inclusion (Council of Europe, 2005; Jenson, 1998; Peace et al., 2005).

The concept of 'social cohesion' was introduced by Émile Durkheim in the late 19th century to denote solidarity, shared values and mutual dependencies (Jenson, 1998; Kamali, 2016; Peace & Spoonley, 2019; Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2017) and has since been developed, reconceptualised and applied to a range of contexts. Interpretations of social cohesion differ, with some interpretations focusing solely on how well members of society stick together, collaborate and maintain social connections (Burns et al., 2018; Chan et al., 2006; Duncan, 2012; Schiefer & Van der Noll, 2017), while others focus on social justice, equality, and individual wellbeing (Berger-Schmitt, 2002; Council of Europe, 2005; Fonseca et al., 2019; Hulse & Stone, 2007). Approaches that focus on well-being, justice, and equity, like those of the Council of Europe (2005), require interventions to address inequality and exclusion, and thus conceptualise social cohesion primarily as social inclusion (Jenson, 2010). 'Social cohesion' and 'social inclusion' are sometimes used almost interchangeably and policies may have similar aims with either designation (Office of the Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2021; Webb, 2020). The approach taken in this dissertation is one that acknowledges the strong link between social cohesion and social inclusion, though social cohesion is seen as the more encompassing term. As suggested by Jenson (1998) and Peace et al. (2005), social cohesion can be seen as encompassing not only inclusion but also belonging, recognition, legitimacy, and participation: aspects that often interact in the settlement process.

In the context of refugee settlement, social cohesion, and particularly inclusion, is often measured in terms of labour market engagement (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014) and the failure to gain access to employment tends to be attributed to deficiencies on the part of the individual (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021). Thus, measures taken to improve social inclusion often involve policies designed to incentivise rapid labour market engagement (Cooke, 2006; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021) through reducing welfare payments (O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014), imposing restrictions on residence permits (Emilsson, 2020), and denying family reunification (Palander et al., 2023). Incentivisation measures tend to have poor long-term outcomes (Hernes et al., 2022), as they ignore one

important aspect of social cohesion: access to markets, services, and spaces (World Bank Group, 2014) which need to be faciliated by the state.

The concept of social cohesion is further complicated by the way it is politicised and utilised to discursively create a homogeneous nation-state with clear boundaries against a different and threatening *other*. One of the main drivers of debates and discourses on social cohesion is social change that is perceived as a threat to the social order (Boucher & Samad, 2013; Council of Europe, 2005), particularly in the context of migration and ethnic diversity (Jenson, 2010; Peace et al., 2005). Countries like Australia (Neerup, 2012) and New Zealand (Peace & Spoonley, 2019) have, over time, adopted selective immigration policies which have privileged groups that were culturally and linguistically similar or, in later years, had the economic and linguistic capital required for integration. Dominant ideologies in Europe have, for a long time, identified migration as the main challenge to social cohesion, security, and access to resources (Boucher & Samad, 2013) with an increasing focus on managing threats from parallel societies, terrorism, radicalisation and violence (Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012). Viewing social cohesion as a state that can be under threat by migration means that one-sided societal integration, and particularly values integration, on the part of the newcomer becomes the primary focus (Biles, 2012; Boucher & Samad, 2013; Jenson, 1998; Papillon, 2012; Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012). These integration discourses presuppose a homogeneous host culture, thus ignoring existing diversities and indigeneities (Papillon, 2012; Peace et al., 2005; Spoonley & Peace, 2012) and promoting a view of the collective based on the views of the privileged groups in that society (Cheong et al., 2007; Kamali, 2016).

In this dissertation, social cohesion will be investigated both from the perspective of discursive constructions and from the perspective of specific policies designed to promote cohesion and inclusion. Importantly, these higher-level discourses and policies will then be considered in terms of how they impact the lived experiences of refugee-background residents.

1.1.4. Navigating language

Although the Western world has become increasingly linguistically diverse (Blommaert et al., 2005; Piller & Takahashi, 2011), the nation-state is often still conceived of as a monolingual homogeneous community (Anderson, 1991; Blommaert et al., 2005; Douglas Fir Group, 2016; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Piller, 2016) where social access is granted through competence in the dominant language (Barkhuizen, 2017) and non-dominant linguistic resources are devalued (Blommaert et al., 2005). Practically, this monolingual stance may impact on the affordances available for speakers with different linguistic repertoires (Blommaert et al., 2005), leading to a range of inequalities where they are denied access to services and spaces (Piller, 2016). Studies have suggested that for refugees, linguistic inequalities impact on wellbeing and access to health

services (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Mortensen, 2011; Shrestha-Ranjit et al., 2020; Tip et al., 2019) as well as housing and employment (Blake et al., 2017) and thus present significant barriers to inclusion.

Learning the dominant language in the settlement location is therefore typically seen as the common-sense key to integration and social inclusion (Li & Sah, 2019; Rydell, 2018; Warriner, 2016), essential for self-sufficiency, wellbeing, and integration (Blake et al., 2017; Morrice et al., 2021; Tip et al., 2019). At the same time, language learning provision is often insufficient, particularly for already disadvantaged learners (Morrice et al., 2021; Piller, 2016) and fails to acknowledge individual and contextual factors that may impact on progress. These may include physical or emotional health (Field & Kearney, 2021) and age (Morrice et al., 2021) but also gender (Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021; Sharifian et al., 2021) and earlier educational disadvantage (Field & Kearney, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021; Sharifian et al., 2021), especially where learners also have emergent print literacy (Minuz et al., 2022). Women are particularly disadvantaged as they may have had limited access to education in the past (UNESCO, 2023). They also remain subject to gendered expectations and significant care responsibilities in their country of settlement which impact on their opportunities to learn (Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017). In addition to this, refugees often lack informal language learning opportunities as they may have limited interaction with proficient language speakers willing to provide these opportunities (Cooke, 2006; Duff, 2019; Norton, 2013; Piller, 2016; Yates, 2011).

However, contextual and policy factors that act as barriers to language learning are often not taken into consideration due to common conceptions of language learning as an individual endeavour facilitated by strong motivation and commitment (Warriner, 2016) and impeded only by lack of effort or desire (Miller, 2014; Piller, 2016). This view, coupled with unrealistic expectations of language learning progress and rapid labour market entry (Cooke, 2006; Morrice et al., 2021) mean that policies rarely recognise or seek to minimise language-learning barriers, but instead focus on incentivisation measures (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021) even though there is little evidence that these are effective (Kosyakova et al., 2022).

This dissertation explores language in terms of how it relates to social cohesion and belonging and, particularly, how linguistic inequalities impact on the settlement experience. It also investigates language learning in terms of available provisions, individual variations, and the structural and social barriers to successful acquisition. Within these contexts, the learner is situated as an agentive individual, navigating the new linguistic space and their learning journey within contextual constraints.

1.2. Understanding the contexts

This research investigates two different settlement countries, Sweden and New Zealand, which offer both differences and similarities in relation to refugee reception and settlement. Both are refugee-receiving first-world countries, but they have significantly different histories of migration and refugee reception as well as geographical differences. Sweden is historically a country of emigration, conceived of as culturally homogeneous and with a traditionally generous asylum policy that has become increasingly restrictive since 2015 (Stern, 2019). Its location in Europe and its reputation for humanitarianism has seen it receive significant numbers of asylum seekers over the years, culminating in 160,000 in 2015, before policy changes and disincentivising measures were introduced (Emilsson, 2020). New Zealand, on the other hand, is officially bicultural and, although a settler country, has historically very restrictive refugee reception, which has only recently started increasing (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a). As a remotely located island nation, it receives very few asylum seekers and has therefore primarily welcomed refugees through strategic resettlement processes. However, while there are significant differences between the two contexts, there are also similarities in terms of how refugees are perceived, the barriers they face to language learning and inclusion, and how the journey to self-sufficiency is conceptualised. Both contexts presume a straightforward process of settlement for those who possess sufficient motivation and desire to be included in their new social context, and both contexts present a range of barriers that complicate this process. My focus in investigating these two contexts is not that of direct comparison, which would require controlling for a range of factors and much closer controls on participant inclusion. Rather, as I take a dialogical approach (see section 1.3), my aim is to engage dialogically with these contexts, and also to bring them into dialogue with each other. This dialogical engagement is intended to highlight the uniqueness of each context, discover places of agreement and disagreement and in the end provide a clearer understanding of both Sweden and New Zealand in relation to refugee settlement.

1.2.1. New Zealand

As a settler nation, New Zealand is a nation of immigrants, although it does not have a strong history of official multiculturalism. Prior to the 1970s, the Pākehā (New Zealand European) majority generally conceived of the nation as white and dominated by its colonial British heritage, to which the indigenous Māori, or tangata whenua, were expected to assimilate (Peace & Spoonley, 2019). Immigration policy privileged British and northern European migrants as racial and cultural similarity was perceived as the strongest indication of assimilation potential (Beaglehole, 2013; Peace & Spoonley, 2019). Of the total number of immigrants to New Zealand over the years, only a small portion have been refugees, although New Zealand has resettled

refugees since the Second World War (Marlowe, 2018; Ministry of Health, 2012). Refugee policy in New Zealand has depended both on worldwide humanitarian crises and on political priorities (Beaglehole, 2013). Post-war New Zealand focused on maximising assimilation – racial, cultural and economic – through its refugee selection processes, privileging Europeans able to meet shortages in skilled labour (Beaglehole, 2013). An increased tolerance of diversity in the 1970s in immigration in general (Peace & Spoonley, 2019) was reflected in the settlement of refugees from Southeast Asia, and while the focus was still on skills and economic integration, humanitarian concerns became increasingly prominent (Beaglehole, 2013). Initially, the number of refugees to be received was determined on a case-by-case basis, with each humanitarian crisis requiring separate debate and decision making but, in 1987, a yearly refugee quota was set at 800 (later reduced to 750) (Beaglehole, 2013; Marlowe, 2018; Ministry of Health, 2012). After extensive campaigning (Stephens, 2018), the quota was raised to 1,000 in 2018, and officially raised to 1,500 in 2020 (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a), though, as this coincided with the COVID-19 pandemic, the new targets were not met until the 2022-2023 financial year (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d).

In addition to UNHCR-approved quota refugees, New Zealand allows a limited number of family reunification cases and also receives a small number of asylum seekers. Due to its isolated location, very few people are able to seek asylum in New Zealand and the approval rate is only 20-30% (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d). Thus, the number of protection approvals for asylum seekers is generally less than 150 yearly (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d). In addition, New Zealand aims to accept up to 600 family reunification cases each year, through a system which enables sponsorship of extended family members for some refugees (Community Law, 2023; Immigration New Zealand, 2023e, 2023f). The number of actual family reunification cases declined significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic and did not meet targets again until the 2022-23 business year (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d).

New Zealand is generally regarded as an ethnically diverse but cohesive community (Peace et al., 2005; Spoonley et al., 2020) that is also relatively welcoming, caring and humanitarian (Slade, 2019). Recent COVID-19 responses relied heavily on the perception of New Zealanders as a cohesive team (McGuire et al., 2020) with solidarity particularly evident in public compliance to the first nationwide lockdown in 2020 (Spoonley et al., 2020). However, studies on the COVID-19 response suggest that the nationwide cohesion was not experienced by all, and that refugees and other culturally diverse populations experienced marginalisation and exclusion (Jayan & Dutta, 2021; Morgan et al., 2022). Cohesion across ethnic, religious, and cultural groupings was also witnessed in the aftermath of the Christchurch terror attack in 2019 (Peace & Spoonley, 2019), where national identity was framed in terms of inclusivity and solidarity by the Prime Minister of

the time, Jacinda Ardern (Yogeeswaran et al., 2019). Again, investigations prompted by the 2019 attack challenged this image of solidarity by revealing significant undercurrents of racism in New Zealand (Royal Commission, 2020b; Webb, 2020) as well as 'consistent and systematic disparities in health, education, justice and other wellbeing outcomes' (Webb, 2020, p. 6). The findings from the enquiry into the 2019 attack led to new social cohesion initiatives (Ministry of Social Development, 2022; Office of the Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2021; Royal Commission, 2020a; Webb, 2020), based on the social cohesion model of Jenson (1998) and earlier social cohesion initiatives in New Zealand (Peace et al., 2005) and with a strong focus on social inclusion (Office of the Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2021; Webb, 2020).

Social inclusion in relation to refugee settlement is conceptualised primarily in terms of self-sufficiency and labour market integration. The official Refugee Resettlement Strategy current at the time of data collection placed significant emphasis on refugees rapidly decreasing their need for government support (Marlowe et al., 2014). Its five 'integration outcomes' were measured against markers for success (Immigration New Zealand, 2020), and a closer analysis of these markers suggests a one-sided and limited view of social inclusion with an emphasis on rapid economic self-sufficiency and service uptake, rather than on structural support and access to services. Education outcomes were only measured in relation to children and young people (Immigration New Zealand, 2022), thus ignoring the language-learning progress of adult learners. The Refugee Resettlement Strategy has since undergone a 'refresh' (Immigration New Zealand, 2023c), leading to a strategy that on the surface appears to be more focused on meeting the social inclusion needs of refugees, than on refugees meeting self-sufficiency requirements (MBIE, 2023). However, it is too early to tell whether this will lead to changes in how success is measured, or to changes at the policy level.

Refugee reception, and immigration, is further complicated in the New Zealand context as New Zealand has officially been acknowledged as a bicultural nation since the 1980s but remains dominated by the Pākehā (white New Zealander) identity (Peace & Spoonley, 2019). Integration discourses thus predominantly adopt a dichotomy of host and immigrant, where the immigrant, generally perceived as non-white (Lyons et al., 2011), has to integrate into an imagined homogeneous Pākehā host community (Kukutai & Rata, 2017; Peace & Spoonley, 2019; Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019). The continued privileged position of Pākehā has meant that immigration and moves towards diversity have threatened to undermine the position of Māori as tangata whenua (indigenous) (Kukutai & Rata, 2017) as they become classed as one of many minorities in a discourse that acknowledges their ethnicity but not their indigeneity (Bell, 2010; Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019; Spoonley & Peace, 2012). Scholars suggest that recognising Māori indigeneity would

involve some significant changes to immigration policies and processes but could also improve diversity practices. To enhance relationships between tangata whenua and immigrants, Kukutai and Rata (2017) propose the model of *manaakitanga* ('hospitality') where the *mana* (power or authority) of tangata whenua is recognised and a reciprocal relationship of respect (*aki*) is created between tangata whenua and *manuhiri* ('guests'). Relationship building or *whakawhanaungatanga* could also, according to Rata and Al-Asaad (2019) take place between Māori and settlers of colour through shared experience, reciprocity, respect, and compassion. Full recognition of Māori indigeneity in relation to immigration would also require substantial changes on the political level (Bell, 2010; Kukutai & Rata, 2017). As a tauiwi (foreigner), I recognise the importance of these conversations and the need for substantial changes but also acknowledge that I do not have the expertise or the mandate to investigate these perspectives to any depth in my study.

1.2.2. Sweden

Compared to New Zealand, Sweden has traditionally been a country with very generous policies for asylum seekers and refugees going beyond the requirements of the Refugee Convention (Emilsson, 2020) and refugees have long constituted an important portion of overall immigration (Rojas & de Torres Barderi, 2018). These have included European World War II refugees, refugees from Middle East and Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, and later asylum seekers from a range of countries (Rojas & de Torres Barderi, 2018). Generous asylum policies and conditions for settlement meant that significant numbers of asylum seekers sought and were granted residence in Sweden (Hagelund, 2020) until 2015, when a total of about 160,000 individuals sought asylum in Sweden (SCB, 2023). This caused significant strain to asylum reception systems (Emilsson, 2020) and led to a number of interim measures which have since gained a level of permanence (Hagelund, 2020). Measures included tougher immigration rules but also less desirable conditions for those receiving asylum in Sweden: temporary residence permits became the norm for all except quota refugees, with requirements for financial self-sufficiency for those wanting to transition to permanent residence or apply for family reunification, including that of their spouse and children (Emilsson, 2020; Hagelund, 2020). As a consequence, the number of residence permits granted for humanitarian migrants have decreased. In 2022, Sweden accepted a total of about 9,000 quota refugees and asylum seekers and, in 2023, the number had dropped to around 6,000 (Migrationsverket, 2024a). These numbers do not include Ukrainians granted temporary asylum under the Temporary Protection Directive (Migrationsverket, 2024b) which applied to over 47,000 individuals in 2022 and 11,000 individuals in 2023 (Migrationsverket, 2024a).

Official 'integration'[3] policies in Sweden have varied through the years. In the 1960s and 1970s, Sweden adopted a largely multicultural approach to integration, where immigrants were encouraged to maintain their own language and culture, though linguistic and cultural preservation was primarily conceived of as an individual concern (Kamali, 2016; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). However, from the mid-1980s and into the 1990s, new policies were brought in to address perceived integration failures through increasing immigrants' social competence, language ability, and cultural assimilation (Kamali, 2008; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). At the same time, neoliberal policies led to welfare reductions and widening socioeconomic gaps, meaning that many immigrants became socially and economically marginalised (Schierup & Ålund, 2011). Thus, while Sweden has generally been seen as a welfare state committed to equality, it has gradually become one of the OECD nations with the highest racial segregation (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014) and the quickest growing gap between rich and poor (Grander et al., 2022).

Ethnic and socioeconomic segregation in Sweden is often linked to suburbs with multilevel apartment complexes constructed as part of a housing project in the 1960s and 1970s. These suburbs were created to address the post-war housing crisis and provide affordable housing for working-class families, but as supply quickly outstripped demand, instead they were often used by municipalities to provide accommodation for refugees and immigrants (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Grander et al., 2022). Over time, social mobility of ethnic Swedes and the concentration of resources in inner-city areas and the more affluent suburbs have meant increasing marginalisation and ethnic segregation (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Grander et al., 2022; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2019). Many of the suburbs are now listed with the Swedish Police as 'vulnerable areas', that is, areas with significant socioeconomic disadvantage that are also impacted by organised crime (Grander et al., 2022; Polisen, n.d.). Additionally, the areas have become symbolic representations for societal segregation, marginalisation, exclusion, crime, and cultural differences, discursively construed in political discourse as parallel societies with conflicting values (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2019) and subject to securitisation discourses (Gressgård, 2016; Schierup et al., 2018; Thapar-Björkert et al., 2019). However, on a practical level, they present real social problems based on long-term structural inequalities (Grander et al., 2022; Schierup et al., 2018).

Concurrent with the changes in policy and the increases in inequality, there has been a move towards nationalist sentiments, fuelled by discourses on threatened social cohesion, integration failures, and dangerous segregation (Aylott & Bolin, 2023; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019). This change is perhaps most evident in the success of the nationalist party

[3] 'Integration', while a contested term, is used here and elsewhere in relation to Sweden, as it is used in official policy and discourse in that context.

Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats, or 'SD') which has gradually increased its voter base over the years (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). SD first entered Parliament in 2010 with a marginal vote of 5.7% but by the 2022 elections it had grown in acceptance to the point that it received 20.5% of the votes and entered into a formal collaboration with the governing parties (Aylott & Bolin, 2023). There have also been significant changes in more mainstream parties in relation to immigration, with discourses portraying immigrants as less civilised (Brubaker, 2017) and as threats to social cohesion (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019) becoming widespread across the political spectrum (Aylott & Bolin, 2023).

While the rise of overt nationalism and anti-immigrant sentiments in Sweden may appear to be reasonably sudden (Schierup & Ålund, 2011), Sweden has long been imagined and self-described as culturally and ethnically homogeneous (Hübinette & Lundström, 2014; Lundström, 2017; Rojas & de Torres Barderi, 2018) with demarcations between Swedes and *others*. Thus, the concept of 'Swedishness' tends to be exclusive to the extent that even the Sámi, indigenous to Sápmi in northern Sweden, are often excluded in representations of Sweden, including representations in introductory materials for newly arrived refugees in Sápmi (Carlsson, 2020). In relation to immigration, official statistics in Sweden use the term *utländsk bakgrund* ('foreign background') to describe not only residents born abroad but also citizens born in Sweden to two foreign-born parents (Rojas & de Torres Barderi, 2018). Despite multicultural polices, immigrants (including second-generation immigrants) continue to be perceived as temporary visitors based on appearance and origin (Dahlstedt et al., 2017; Eliassi, 2016; Hübinette & Lundström, 2011; Lundström, 2017; Rojas & de Torres Barderi, 2018). Though Sweden has strongly distanced itself from its past of race biology and race is no longer an acceptable marker for differentiation in discourse, culture has now taken its place but with very similar effects (Kamali, 2016; Schierup et al., 2018). Thus, foreign cultures are perceived as threats and *otherisation* of immigrants is effected through portraying immigrants and refugees as threats to Swedish values such as progressiveness and gender equality (Alinia, 2020; Brookie, 2018).

With social cohesion conceptualised as the protection of a homogeneous in-group with a shared values system from those viewed as *others* (Alinia, 2020; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018), social inclusion becomes a matter of one-sided 'integration', including values integration (Hudson et al., 2023; Muftee & Lundberg, 2016) in combination with labour market participation (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017). The focus on values integration and the duty to work is evident in civic orientation classes for refugees (Hudson et al., 2023) as well as language courses (Brookie, 2018; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017). In addition, incentivisation measures are used to promote labour market engagement by making permanent residence as well as family

reunification contingent on financial self-sufficiency in the shape of permanent employment (Emilsson, 2020; Migrationsverket, 2023; Palander et al., 2023).

1.3. Conceptual framework

To investigate the many and complex dimensions of refugee settlement outlined above, a Bakhtinian dialogical framework was chosen as it recognises the importance of interactions between individuals, and between individuals and their sociohistorical contexts (Vitanova, 2010). It recognises individuals as 'unique, unrepeatable selves' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 80), uniquely situated in their social context, and ethically responsible for their actions towards the Others[4] they engage with in society (Holquist, 1990). At the same time, it recognises that identity is intersubjective and that the Self is never created in isolation but is dependent on the recognition of Others (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2005). Further, it also acknowledges the significant impact of ideology and discourse on the life of the individual while also presenting the individual as engaging in creative acts (Dufva & Aro, 2015) and contesting imposed representations (Bakhtin, 1981a; Hall et al., 2005; Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). In short, it situates individuals in a social context that may impose a range of constraints but in which the individual is still agentive and morally responsible. It also recognises that any process, including that of migration and settlement, must be dialogically negotiated.

The origins of Bakhtinian dialogism are in the writings of the thinker Mikhail Bakhtin who concerned himself with literary theory and more especially with the novel as a literary form. The choice to engage in literary criticism rather than social criticism and developing a theory of the fictional narrative rather than of social organisation, was likely conditioned by Bakhtin's political circumstances (Vitanova, 2010). Beginning his writing in the Soviet Union soon after the 1917 Revolution (Holquist, 1990), overt social criticism was not a possibility. It is therefore likely, as Vitanova (2010, p. 22) suggests, that 'the structure of the novel in his work served also as a metaphor for the discursive spaces in very real social settings.' Dialogism has thus been fruitfully adopted by a range of scholars within the social sciences, including within applied linguistics (Baynham, 2006, 2015; Dufva & Aro, 2015; Hall et al., 2005; Kostogriz, 2005; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Marchenkova, 2005; Vitanova, 2005, 2010, 2013; White, 2018).

As *dialogism* is 'not a systematic philosophy' (Holquist, 1990, p. 16) but rather an umbrella term for a range of concepts introduced by Bakhtin, this section will outline my interpretation of dialogism and the concepts that are significant for this research. My understanding of dialogism is based on the writings of Bakhtin himself (Bakhtin, 1981a, 1984, 1993; Bakhtin et al., 1986), but also on the interpretation and elaboration of dialogism by Holquist (1990). It is also significantly

[4] 'Other' (capitalised) is used throughout this thesis to refer to the dialogical 'Other'. See also section 1.5.

influenced by the works of Vitanova (2005, 2010, 2013) and her investigation of the settlement experiences of East European migrants and by Kostogriz (2005), Kostogriz and Doecke (2007), and Marchenkova (2005) and their understanding of dialogism in relation to cultural and linguistic diversity. Further, my understanding of dialogical agency has been enriched by the works of Dufva and Aro (2015) and Sullivan and McCarthy (2004).

1.3.1. Intersubjectivity: Self and Other

One of the fundamental understandings of dialogism is that identity is intersubjective; that is, it is constructed and negotiated in the multiple interactions between Self and Other (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Sullivan, 2012; Vitanova, 2010) and that dialogue with another consciousness, different from one's own, is essential for developing a sense of Self (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2005). In these interactions, where the individual engages with the Other, the Self is acknowledged and revealed to Others as well as to the individual themselves (Vitanova, 2010). The dialogical Other must, by definition, be someone distinct from the Self, sufficiently different to enable dialogue (Marchenkova, 2005).

The dialogical Other that the individual engages with can, in the first instance, be the interlocutor in a conversation but it can also be an individual outside the interactional context whose statements and voice the speaker includes in their conversation or narrative (Vitanova, 2010). The idea of engagement with an absent Other means that individuals can engage dialogically with a range of subjects, including a specific Other or a generalised Other (such as 'Swedes' or 'New Zealanders') but also more abstract Others such as a sociocultural norm or discourse (Brookie, 2018; Vitanova, 2010). By bringing these absent Others into a narrative or conversation, speakers 'enter into an active dialogue with these' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 155) and can thus appropriate or contest their voices as they reveal and construct their identities. Dialogue can also exist within the consciousness of the individual as internal dialogue (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010) where the individual constructs their Self through 'real or imagined interaction with some else's words, through someone else's eyes, and evaluations' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 114).

Dialogue also occurs on the level of words and utterances, where each word has dialogically interacted with a range of contexts and meanings, thus becoming 'overpopulated… with the intentions of others' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 294), and 'becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 293). Thus, in a conversation or narrative, the speaker must wrestle with the ways words and statements have been used and interpreted in the past before they can impose on them their own meaning, particularly when these are contested terms such as *refugee*, *integration,* or *inclusion*. Since words and utterances can only be 'understood against the background of other concrete utterances on

the same theme' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 281) and are connected in socially constructed discourses 'in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances' (Bakhtin et al., 1986, p. 69), they always bear traces of dominant or widely acknowledged interpretations. Thus, dialogues and individual narratives are often populated by dominant or common discourses with which the speaker interacts, either through echoing these, or through contesting them.

1.3.2. Addressivity and answerability

As the speaker interacts with earlier utterances and the multiple Others in the immediate context of the dialogue as well as in their broader social context, the speaker is engaged in a complex sequence of responding and addressing. In the words of Bakhtin, 'addressivity, the quality of turning to someone, is a constitutive feature' of the dialogical utterance (Bakhtin et al., 1986, p. 99) and speakers in dialogue must address themselves to an Other. As suggested above, this may be the interlocutor or one of the absent Others that the speaker chooses to address in order to position themselves in relation to the utterances, contesting or appropriating their voices (Vitanova, 2013). The speaker's utterance is affected by the addressee, not only through the addressee's preceding utterance, but also through their anticipated response (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Sullivan, 2012). An analysis of how subjects choose to address and respond to Others can be an important analytical tool (Sullivan, 2012), and this is developed further in the Methodology.

Just as the utterance must address an Other, it is also in response to an Other and to their utterance, and this *answerability* – the right and duty to respond – is a fundamental aspect of dialogism. Dialogical answerability stipulates that the individual has the right to respond when addressed, but also, importantly, that they have a duty to do so. In the words of Holquist (1990, p. 30):

> …we are alive and human to the degree that we are answerable, i.e. to the degree that we can respond to addressivity. We are responsible in the sense that we are *compelled* to respond, we cannot choose but give the world an answer.

As suggested above, *address* is not confined to a conversation or direct interaction but a subject may also feel addressed through general statements, public discourses, or prevalent ideologies that are reproduced in private, semi-private or public spaces. The act of responding to these and contesting the value positions of others enables individuals to become agentive subjects within their social context and establish their unique selves (Vitanova, 2005).

Answerability extends beyond the act of responding to an utterance and is also an ethical construct that entails responsibility towards 'everything that is "Other"' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 134). Morality is thus based on the dialogical interaction between Self and Other, and the degree of answerability evidenced in our actions and utterances. As 'unique, unrepeatable selves'

(Vitanova, 2010, p. 80) with unique positions, our responsibility is also unique and cannot be avoided (Holquist, 1990). As moral subjects, we are therefore answerable for 'authorship of… responses' (Holquist, 1990, p. 167), in word and deed, towards those 'who share the situation of existence with us' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, pp. 11-12), whether those responses are in the form of utterances or of acts. Answerability can be seen as a moral principle in that it entails a 'sense of orientation to the needs of another' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 98) in everyday relational encounters and carries obligations that cannot morally be deferred (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). This moral obligation also includes recognising the uniqueness of Others in 'intersubjective encounters where difference is not reduced to sameness' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 14) and including those perceived as culturally or linguistically different as dialogical Others.

1.3.3. Authoring self and others

In interactive encounters, subjects are continuously engaged in self-authoring where they author their own Self in relation to others around them (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). From a dialogical perspective, identity is not a given but must be created (Holquist, 1990), and is constructed through language, through the act of communicating and positioning oneself (Vitanova, 2005). However, this authoring is dialogical, and the subject thus needs to respond to how others have authored or positioned them (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004; Vitanova, 2013) and author their own Self in alignment with or in resistance to this authoring (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005, 2010). As subjects are never finalised but are constantly authored and (re)created in dialogical interactions with individuals and society, identity transformation never ceases to be a possibility (Vitanova, 2005, 2010).

Subjects not only author themselves but also author others and are, in turn, authored by others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). In the act of being authored, subjects may be authored as valued individuals, enriched and unique, or as 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 298). The latter can be done in an attempt to reduce other subjects and avoid dialogical answerability towards them. Actors will thus determine who is a legitimate Other and therefore included in dialogue (Vitanova, 2010) and, conversely, who should be excluded and subject to a monological authoring that presents only the author's or dominant narrator's point of view. As the opposite of dialogue, monologue, at the extreme, occurs in totalitarian settings, where only one truth is accepted (Holquist, 1990) but can also be used in projects of nation-building that present a homogeneous, often monolingual, national identity (Kostogriz, 2005). In this context, the culturally and linguistically *other* becomes excluded and is portrayed as one-dimensional, stereotyped and without uniqueness (Kostogriz, 2005). Monological, authoritarian discourses were resisted by Bakhtin on a theoretical level

(Holquist, 1990) and homogenising nation-building discourses often need to be resisted, dialogically, by individuals in their daily encounters (Vitanova, 2010).

Bakhtin's focus on literary criticism provides additional tools for understanding monological representations and reductive other-authoring. Bakhtin analysed a range of genres in terms of the relationship between the 'author' and the 'hero' (the person being authored) and how much power and self-determination is given to the 'hero' (Sullivan, 2012). Sullivan (2012) refers to 'outside-in' discourses, discourses where the hero (or other) 'is shaped by the author, has no agency to disagree with the author or to introduce their own intonation and point of view' (p. 44), something that is particularly salient in the epic genre. In the epic genre, the hero is completely and finally determined by the author and is portrayed as a character or type who is without uniqueness, individuality, or inner struggles, but who must be infallibly victorious, virtuous, and admirable. Their character will be tested through challenges where success is always guaranteed if they have the character of a hero and 'pass a test of virtue' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 46). Therefore, an epic discourse does not contain any space for debate as to the validity of the quest or the fairness of the obstacles (Sullivan, 2012). An 'epic' authoring becomes a useful tool for powerful actors desiring to create a reductive representation of marginalised groups where the responsibility for social inclusion lies solely with the individual and failure to achieve is attributed to the individual's moral failings, rather than to structural inequalities. The epic narrative also ties in well with neo-liberal conceptualisations of self-determination and deservingness (Park, 2010; Warriner, 2016).

1.3.4. Contestation

A dialogical understanding means that subjects retain their ability to contest meanings and discourses even when situated within monological contexts and, in that way, 'transcend their subject positions' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 166). Dialogical contestations are carried out primarily through multi-voicing, or polyphony, where a range of voices are introduced into a narrative or dialogue in an 'encounter among the various subjective points of view' (Steinby & Klapuri, 2013, p. 40) allowing the speaker to agree with the reproduced words or impose on them his or her own meaning (Pavlenko, 2007). Thus, speakers may bring other voices into an interaction by addressing an absent Other in response to one of their utterances, thus repositioning themselves in relation to others' authoring (Vitanova, 2013). Speakers may also contest other voices through parody, where the author appropriates the words (or presumed words) of the Other and ridicules them 'by changing the intention and intonation of another's discourse to suit its own ends' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 50). In parody, the narrator is engaged in rearranging power positions (Vitanova, 2013, p. 254) and thus parody is particularly useful 'if the other's discourse is invested with social authority' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 50).

1.3.5. Agency

Agency, from a dialogical perspective, is embedded in the exchange between Self and Other through responding to and addressing Others and contesting voices and values positions (Vitanova, 2010) but also in the concept of an 'ethically acting subject' (Steinby & Klapuri, 2013, p. xiv). Agency is thus closely related to answerability and acknowledges that each individual is uniquely placed for 'engaging in responsible acts in relation to others' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 134), a responsibility that cannot, morally, be avoided (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). A dialogical understanding of agency differs from both cognitivist and sociocultural paradigms. Unlike cognitivist perspectives that locate agency primarily within the individual, a dialogical view conceptualises agency as 'a border' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 136) between Self and Other, or Self and the world, acknowledging the impact of contextual factors on the individual's ability to act (Dufva & Aro, 2015). However, unlike subjects in sociocultural paradigms, a dialogical subject is not predetermined by power structures but is 'actively engaged in appropriating systems of governance' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 41). Further, dialogism also acknowledges 'the affective and emotional aspects of the agentive experience, that is, the viewpoint of the individual agent' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 39), situated in 'the messiness of lived experience', (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 304) as they creatively respond to their circumstances (Vitanova, 2005, 2010). Thus, a Bakhtinian framework conceptualises agency 'both as subjectively experienced and as collectively emergent' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 38) and negotiated in the dialogical interaction between the individual and their social context (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004).

1.3.6. Chronotopes

From a dialogical perspective, agency, while a creative act, is also situated within a particular chronotope, a particular time-space, with its entire temporal, social and spatial environment, and the ideologies manifest therein (Dufva & Aro, 2015). Bakhtin introduced the concept of *chronotope* as a way of expressing 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' (Bakhtin, 1981b, p. 84) and applied the concept to literary studies to investigate how time-spaces served as 'organizing centers' in literary narratives (Bakhtin, 1981b, p. 250). While focusing on literary studies, Bakhtin also acknowledged real-world chronotopes and suggested that chronotopes may serve an organising function in a range of contexts outside literature (Bakhtin, 1981b; Holquist, 1990; Parslow, 2020; Steinby, 2013). The concept of the chronotope has been adopted by humanities and social science researchers, particularly through the work of Jan Blommaert (2015), who conceptualises chronotopes as 'elaborate frames in which time, space, and patterns of agency coincide, [and] create meaning and value' (p. 110). In dialogue, chronotopes can be referred to as uncontested spatiotemporal entities but they can also be contested and set against each other in discourse as there are multiple chronotopes

representing different world views and contexts (Blommaert, 2015; Steinby & Klapuri, 2013; Vitanova, 2010). The chronotope and its recognition of the interconnectedness of time and space, as well as its dialogical contestability, is a particularly useful concept for understanding narratives relating to migration, where both time and space are subject to change and to different interpretations (Baynham, 2015; Blommaert, 2015).

1.3.7. Dialogism and diversity

Dialogism is also a useful framework for exploring diversity. A dialogical perspective on cultural diversity conceptualises difference not as a dichotomy, where the culturally *other* is perceived as a threat or a curiosity, but as dialogue where difference has the potential to develop ones' understanding of the world and of the Self (Kostogriz, 2005; Marchenkova, 2005). As Kostogriz (2005) argues, approaches to cultural diversity, whether conservative or liberal, commonly tend towards monological and reductive narratives of the culturally different. Conservative approaches aim to either limit immigration or assimilate the culturally and linguistic *other* into a homogeneous and monological nation. Liberal approaches, on the other hand, tend to focus on difference and thereby reduce the Other to a curious ethnic *other* with reified cultural differences. A dialogical perspective, however, involves an acknowledgement of difference and the creation of a 'thirdspace' (Kostogriz, 2005, p. 183), a multicultural space of creative dialogue. In this space, difference is not seen as a hindrance, but rather, 'outsidedness' is seen as 'a condition of creative understanding' (Marchenkova, 2005, p. 175). Just as the distinction between the Self and the Other is a precondition for meaningful dialogue and identity construction (Vitanova, 2010), so cultures are best understood when each is permitted to remain distinct, but engaged in dialogue:

> In the realm of culture, outsidedness is the most powerful factor in understanding. It is only in the eyes of another culture that foreign culture reveals itself fully and profoundly, but never exhaustively, because there will be other cultures that see and understand even more. (Bakhtin et al., 1986, p. 7)

Recognising the right of the Other to remain different is thus a central part of dialogism (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007) and is also crucial for understanding the collective Self and the collective Other (Kostogriz, 2005).

1.3.8. A dialogical perspective on belonging

As belonging is an important concept for exploration in this dissertation, it is necessary to consider how it can be conceived of from a dialogical perspective. This requires a consideration of collective discourses and representations, social interactions, and self-authoring, but also an understanding of the relationship between identity, or subjectivity, and belonging. I will argue that belonging, as embedded in social locations (Yuval-Davis, 2006), dependent on the

recognition of an Other (Antonsich, 2010; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008), and defined through self-and-other representations (Croucher, 2004; Yuval-Davis, 2006), can be understood from the perspective of dialogical identity construction (see also Vitanova, 2010, who links these two concepts).

Belonging is thus, like identity, created in the dialogical interaction between the subject and the Other, including other individuals, society, and the world in general, as well as in the dialogical interactions within the Self. Belonging is negotiated dialogically, as the individual is 'in dialogue not only with human beings but also with the natural and cultural configurations we lump together as "the world"' (Holquist, 1990, pp. 29-30). Cultural belonging, like culture, is thus 'located in the discursive spaces between the self and the other' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 108) and belonging involves 'a negotiation between internal identifications and external ascriptions' (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008, p. 201). It is also, more directly, negotiated in everyday experiences with individuals (Vitanova, 2010), and negotiated within the Self as the individual engages in internal dialogue with the voices of others in order to structure their identity (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Vitanova, 2010)

The individual's sense of belonging is, however, also dependent on how their identity is authored by powerful actors in society (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008), and how belonging is politicised (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The politicisation of belonging and projects of nation-building often lead to a reductive or negative authoring where certain subjects become excluded from the imagined collective (Kostogriz, 2005). As words, discourses and utterances are discursively linked and 'overpopulated… with the intentions of others' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 294), the way belonging is demarcated affects the dialogical negotiation of belonging of the individual. To claim belonging, those who have been otherized through discourse thus need to contest the imposed authoring (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005) and create a storied Self with a legitimate claim to belonging.

1.3.9. Dialogism and language

Dialogism is inextricably linked to language and to the ability of the subject to participate in dialogue which means that a change in linguistic environment can have significant impacts not only on practical aspects of life but also on the individual's ability to author themselves and construct a subject position in the new context (Vitanova, 2005). This is particularly the case where nation-states focus on homogeneity and adopt a monolingual ideology (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007), thus delegitimising linguistic expressions other than the dominant one (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008). When monolingualism is seen as normative, speakers of the dominant language may fail to take their 'discursive responsibility' to understand and make themselves understood in interactions with new users of the language (Vitanova, 2010, p. 97),

thereby complicating interactions further. Thus, second language users may find themselves in unequal power relationships (Vitanova, 2005) and without a voice in the new context, meaning they experience a significant loss of status (Vitanova, 2010). Contesting imposed subject positions requires significant levels of proficiency, meaning individuals may struggle to 'contest others' voices and… resist them in a voice of [their] own' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 153). The non-native speaking subject then has the double challenge of being positioned as powerless and at the same time struggling to linguistically challenge this unequal relationship.

1.4. Research aim and research questions

The intention of this research is to engage with a range of concepts relevant to refugee settlement, drawing on data from refugees themselves but also from language teachers, support workers and political discourse, and situating this in two different contexts. By taking this broader approach, my aim is to explore a range of dialogical interactions: between newcomers and hosts, between discourses and lived experiences, between policies and individuals, between teachers and learners, between Self and Other. In addition, in my writing, I also bring into dialogical interaction two different contexts, New Zealand and Sweden, and allow these to interact in such a way that each context is revealed more clearly.

Engaging with the concepts of refugee representations, belonging, social cohesion and language, I will address the following research questions:

RQ1: How are refugees represented in public and political discourse and how are these representations experienced and contested by refugees?

RQ2: How is local and transnational belonging negotiated in the face of politicised belonging, reductive representations, and exclusionary polices?

RQ3: How are social cohesion and inclusion constructed discursively, and how does this impact on policy and outcomes?

RQ4: How does language proficiency and use impact on social cohesion, inclusion, and belonging, and how do exclusions and inequalities impact on language learning outcomes?

1.5. Definitions

The descriptions and labels used to refer to those who have fled from a place of crisis or danger and settled in a new country are highly contested (Ghahraman, 2020; Marlowe, 2020; Slade, 2019). However, for the sake of consistency and ease of communication, I have chosen to use the term *refugee* for anyone who has received asylum, been resettled under the UNHCR quota system,

qualified as a family reunification refugee, or in other ways gained residence in a country because their original situation was not safe. However, I will also highlight other aspects of an individual's identity, such as *learner*, *mother*, *woman,* or *participant*. Where clarity is needed, I will qualify these other designations with *refugee-background*, as in *refugee-background learner* or *refugee-background participant*. Further, while I acknowledge that the word *integration* is a problematic and contested term, it will be used in this thesis where required to reflect the discourse employed in particular settings, most prevalently in the Swedish context. Additionally, following Marlowe (2018), *resettlement* will refer to the UNHCR process of finding permanent solutions for the protection of a refugee while *settlement* will refer to the process of becoming at home in a new country. Lastly, as I am employing the word 'other' to refer to both Bakhtin's dialogical interlocutor and to refer to excluded or otherised individuals, Other (capitalised) will refer to the dialogical Other while *other* (italicised) will refer to the excluded *other*.

1.6. Thesis outline

Chapter 1 has provided an introduction to the thesis, the key concepts, the contexts of the study, and the conceptual framework used.

Chapter 2 outlines the methodology in detail, including ethical considerations, research design and data analysis. It also indicates the different datasets used in the research and which datasets are applicable to each chapter. The methodology chapter is unpublished.

The following chapter, Chapter 3, supplements and extends the methodology by focusing on the particular challenges and affordances inherent in working in a multilingual research context. It argues that while multilingual research interviews have a number of challenges, they also provide opportunities to understand the agency of participants in terms of how they utilise a range of linguistic resources to achieve communicative purposes and how they appropriate language learning opportunities. The perspective taken in this chapter, on participant agency, is also significant as it establishes refugee-background participants as agentive even in the face of limited affordances. Chapter 3 has been published as an article in the *International Journal of Applied Linguistics* (Svensson, 2024c).

Chapters 4 to 9 present the findings of the research and each of these chapters has been written as a publishable article and submitted to a journal. Published articles are reproduced with only minor changes, including stylistic changes necessary to ensure consistency throughout the thesis. To enable each chapter to stand alone as an article, some aspects of the methodology and conceptual framework have – of necessity – been repeated.

Chapter 4 introduces the findings section by exploring the links between official discourses, policies, and lived experiences, drawing on data from all participants in both contexts. In it, I explore the social inclusion narratives that are applied to refugees in Sweden and in New Zealand and argue that in these narratives, language learning is conceptualised as an individual endeavour that will inevitably lead to employment while linguistic fluency and social inclusion tend to be presented as the inevitable outcomes of engagement in the labour market. Lack of success is attributed to individual failures and is typically addressed through policies designed to incentivise the individual to try harder. Drawing on the dialogical concepts of authoring, monologue, and epic discourses, I challenge this narrative and argue instead that a range of exclusions prevent successful language acquisition, labour market entry and social engagement, and that incentives, while potentially increasing the individual's desire for success, are insufficient unless structural inequalities are addressed. This chapter has been published as an article in the *Social Inclusion* journal special issue 'Adult Migrants' Language Learning, Labour Market, and Social Inclusion' (Svensson, 2023b).

Chapter 5 further elaborates on a number of the matters introduced in Chapter 4 by focusing on refugees who have had limited experience with formal education and literacy prior to settling in Sweden or New Zealand. As gender often has a significant impact on educational opportunities, the chapter also discusses the intersection of gender and education. It focuses in particular on fourteen of the refugee-background participants who had no formal education or literacy prior to displacement. It investigates their lived experiences of education and language learning in terms of agency, affordances, and identity and argues that the complexity of the task is often underestimated. Moreover, it suggests that teachers and policy makers are at risk of misinterpreting lack of progress as lack of commitment or motivation. This chapter has been published as an article in *Linguistics and Education* (Svensson, 2024d).

Chapter 6 builds on the understanding of the settlement narrative from Chapter 4 and of the language learning challenges from Chapter 5 and investigates how linguistic inequalities may impact on settlement, social inclusion, and social cohesion. To do this, it focuses on the New Zealand context, where there are recent social cohesion initiatives that seek to embrace cultural diversity. Based on the ethical perspective of answerability, I conceptualise social cohesion as situated in the interactions that occur between the 'speaking subject' and the 'Other' and argue that social cohesion is significantly impacted by a range of linguistic inequalities as well as exclusionary practices. This chapter has been published as an article in the *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* (Svensson, 2023a).

Chapter 7 looks specifically at how belonging and social cohesion are politicised and constructed in discourse, and how these discursive constructions impact on the lived experiences of refugees.

To explore these dimensions, I focus on a very particular chronotope, the 2022 election year in Sweden and draw on data from political discourses prior to the election as well as interviews with language teachers and refugees in the four weeks immediately following. I argue that in this context, refugees are authored as distant from the Swedish culture and as threats to Swedish democratic values and that this authoring, while contested by refugees themselves, can have significant impacts on their lived experiences. While the context of the analysis in this chapter is strictly limited in time and space, negative other-authoring is apparent in other chapters as well. This chapter has been published as an article in the *Journal of Intercultural Studies* (Svensson, 2024b).

Chapter 8 broadens the perspective by going beyond the settlement location and investigating how refugees utilise the chronotope of 'home' to author themselves. Their narratives challenge reductive identity constructions that focus solely on displacement and vulnerability through constructing rich and multifaceted identities, highlighting agency, and anchoring the individual in an earlier chronotope of belonging. The narratives also challenge widely accepted chronotopes by contrasting mass-mediated representations with lived experiences, raising the question of how well a situation or a life history can be understood by an outsider. The chapter has been published as an article in the *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* (Svensson, 2024a).

Chapter 9 brings together the settlement location and the 'home' location to investigate the transnational connections of refugees, particularly in relation to transnational care relationships. These relationships are often complicated by the precarious living conditions of family members and are also liable to disruptions through recurring instability as well as through limitations to mobility and connectivity. The chapter highlights the notion of answerability and considers how refugees navigate their sense of transnational answerability in face of impediments to transnational care and how they respond to new crises in their countries of origin or in places where their family are displaced. It also considers how these concerns impact on their lives and on activities designed to promote settlement, arguing that family separation can often be a significant barrier to successful settlement. Chapter 9 has been published as an article in the *Journal of Refugee Studies* (Svensson, 2024e).

Chapter 10 provides a conclusion to the thesis where I summarise the implications of my findings and suggest future directions for research.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in the study, including ethical considerations, research design and data analysis. While each chapter, as a standalone article, contains a brief description of methodology as relevant to the findings presented therein, this chapter provides a fuller description of the process and the considerations behind the choices made. The methodology was informed by the dialogical framework outlined in the previous chapter and by considerations pertaining to research with refugee-background participants.

2.1. Ethical considerations

Any research involving the collection and analysis of personal experiences and opinions requires careful consideration of ethical aspects and this is particularly the case when working with vulnerable groups or carrying out research on sensitive topics (Pittaway et al., 2010). In this project, interviews were carried out with three different groups in each national context (Sweden and New Zealand): language teachers, settlement support workers, and former refugees. While the latter group was most clearly identifiable as 'vulnerable' (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Block et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2020; Happ, 2022; Pittaway et al., 2010) and will be discussed in the most depth in this section, there were ethical considerations for the other two groups as well. 'Settlement support workers' were an ethnically diverse group and included several individuals of refugee background who, at times, referred to their personal experiences in their interviews. Further, settlement support workers together with language teachers at times also introduced sensitive or emotional topics. Thus, the commitment to ethically responsible research included all participants but involved particular considerations in relation to any participants with a refugee background. In conformity with ethics requirements, this meant ensuring participants were informed of counselling and support services available if required after the interviews, and also further considerations, as discussed below.

Refugees are generally considered one of the vulnerable groups for whom particular care is required in the research process (Happ, 2022) to ensure that participants are not objectified and viewed solely as 'sources of data' rather than as fully participating subjects (Pittaway et al., 2010, p. 231), and that they do not suffer harm at any point during the process. While, on the surface, researchers may be committed to ethical research, practically, a lack of understanding of the context has the potential to cause considerable harm (Pittaway et al., 2010) through re-traumatisation (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Happ, 2022), compromised anonymity (Pittaway et al.,

2010), false expectations (Block et al., 2013; Happ, 2022; Pittaway et al., 2010) or reinforcement of reductive representations (Happ, 2022; Slade, 2019). At the same time, labelling all refugees as part of a particularly vulnerable group may in itself be reductive (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Happ, 2022) and may also mean that refugees are excluded from research (Happ, 2022; Van den Hoonaard, 2018). The complexities outlined above require researcher reflexivity and flexibility throughout the entire research process (Block et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2020; Happ, 2022) and careful consideration of what constitutes an ethical approach.

The approach taken in this study, in addition to regular requirements for ethics approval, is an approach to ethics based on Bakhtinian dialogism, the conceptual framework adopted in this dissertation (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3). This is a relational ethics (Juzwik, 2004), which is based primarily on the notion of *answerability*, the moral responsibility to the Other we encounter in the '"eventness" of everyday life' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, pp. 11-12). Dialogical answerability acknowledges the uniqueness of each subject and also the unique position we are placed in to respond and act when addressed (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). Answerability thus entails a 'sense of orientation to the needs of another' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 98) in the present but also looking ahead to the future (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). As researchers inviting others to 'share the situation of existence with us' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, pp. 11-12), we have a moral responsibility to preserve their uniqueness, to allow space for their responses, and to act ethically when we are addressed (Holquist, 1990). Acknowledging individual uniqueness in this study meant ensuring that potentially vulnerable participants were not excluded (Happ, 2022), and a commitment to answerability meant prioritising the wellbeing of participants as far as possible. As an example, the fall of Kabul during the Taliban offensive in 2021 occurred part way through the interviews with Afghan participants in New Zealand. While interviews at this time would have generated rich data, I elected to put interviews on hold as I felt that participants were particularly vulnerable and that they may participate in the interviews with the (false) hope of gaining assistance for their family members in Afghanistan.

A dialogical ethics also acknowledges individuals' capacity for agency and that this is both 'subjectively experienced' and 'collectively emergent' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 38) while being negotiated in the dialogical interaction between the individual and their social context (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). Therefore, rather than imposing a categorisation of vulnerability on refugee-background participants (Happ, 2022; Van den Hoonaard, 2018), I took steps to acknowledge the agency of individual participants (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Pittaway et al., 2010) and to recognise that they entered the interview process with their own purpose and their own matters of importance. To recognise their agency, I made room - in the interviews - for

participants to redirect the conversation to topics of importance and away from topics they did not want to engage with, and also allowed room for dialogical contestation.

2.1.1. Consultation, reciprocity, and representation

Ethical considerations when researching refugee issues include how to consult with participants, how to present findings, and how to ensure relationships are reciprocal. These concerns have prompted researchers to adopt participatory approaches at various stages of the research process (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Pittaway et al., 2010) or, at the least, consult with the impacted communities (Happ, 2022). While these approaches have a range of benefits, they also raise additional ethical concerns in terms of power dimensions and unequal representation in researched populations when some participants act as gatekeepers (Happ, 2022). For my project, I did not have the resources to engage in participatory research, so decisions centred on consultation to better understand the unique challenges of the various groups, while also treating each participant as an individual, uniquely situated in a social context. In New Zealand, I consulted with the settlement agency as well as with the relevant ethnic communities and their leaders. I attended community events and explained my research in depth to leaders and members of communities and asked community leaders for their perspectives on some of the salient issues. Consultation in Sweden involved discussions with local staff at the schools as well as pilot interviews carried out approximately three months prior to fieldwork, involving three refugee-background participants with a settlement period of more than 5 years.

Reciprocity was guided by the concept of answerability. To begin with, refugee-background participants were reimbursed for their time through grocery vouchers. In the interviews, they were given the choice to engage in the host language or a combination of their first language and the host language to provide opportunities for language learning and practice for those who wanted (see Chapter 3). Further, the concept of answerability also meant responding to concerns addressed in the interviews through actions, if possible, but otherwise through advice, or through stating my own limitations clearly. Actions taken as a result of concerns raised in interviews involved communicating specific needs to the settlement organisation (with the participant's permission), assisting participants to contact language schools, providing some practical support to a newly established ethnic community, and engaging in some minor advocacy work. Cases where I had to state my own limitations were primarily in relation to family reunification matters (see Chapter 9), where I instead directed participants to agencies that were involved in these matters if appropriate.

Answerability also informed decisions on how to disseminate findings and how to represent participants in the dissemination process. Vitanova (2010, p. 36) argues that researchers who employ a Bakhtinian framework should be 'morally responsible, to become advocates and agents'

and seek to provide participants with 'a voice, to allow a certain group or population to claim a position on the map of social discourses'. For me, this meant choosing the *Thesis with publication* format, to publish through Open Access, and to consult with participants in the interviews which aspects of their narratives they felt were most in need of telling. Their suggestions have guided my choices as I have prepared articles for publication (see for example Chapter 9). The dialogical framework also meant taking care with representation, something particularly important when representing refugee-background participants in published works (Marlowe, 2018; Slade, 2019) but also when representing anyone from a culture other than one's own (Kostogriz, 2005). While this is discussed further in section 2.2.4., an ethics of answerability entails presenting subjects as unique and engaging dialogically with their voices in the presentation of findings.

2.1.2. Consent and anonymity

Questions of consent and anonymity are of particular concern when working with refugee-background participants (Birger & Shoham, 2024; Block et al., 2013; Fox et al., 2020; Happ, 2022; Pittaway et al., 2010) and are also pertinent from the perspective of a dialogical ethics where answerability is not only concerned with the participant's wellbeing in the present, but also in a future chronotope (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). Difficulties with informed consent for refugee-background participants arise when there are language barriers, when written information sheets and consent forms are handed out to participants with emergent literacy (Block et al., 2013), where participants are in a position of dependency (Happ, 2022) and where only individual consent is sought for the dissemination of information that affects an entire community (Birger & Shoham, 2024). Closely tied to the issue of consent is that of anonymity and the researcher's commitment to protecting participant anonymity in the present as well as the future which is particularly problematic when involving populations who may have specific reasons for protecting their identities (Happ, 2022) even outside the local context (Pittaway et al., 2010).

The consent process for the interviews followed standard procedures stipulated by Ethics Review Boards, with information sheets and consent forms. These were printed in English and Swedish respectively (See Appendices 1-4). There were no consent forms or information sheets printed in translation. This was a deliberate choice, as prospective participants had varied levels of literacy in their first language and providing a translated information sheet may thus have led to false assumptions about the level of informed consent. Instead, for refugee-background participants, information sheets were given to recruiters who were asked to relay the information to the prospective participants. Information sheets were also read and explained at the beginning of each interview, with the help of an interpreter where needed, before consent forms were signed. Several steps were taken to preserve anonymity. Firstly, any names that have been used to refer to participants, or to individuals mentioned in the interviews, are pseudonyms chosen by the

researcher. Secondly, the findings do not adopt a case-study approach where the entire life narrative of a participant is presented. Instead, chapters look at different aspects of the lived experiences of refugees, and report on the information relevant to this aspect. Pseudonyms are not consistent between chapters so that different aspects of a participant's story cannot necessarily be linked throughout the work. Duplication of a particular pseudonym in different chapters does not mean that the passage relates to the same individual.

2.1.3. Ethics application

Ethics approval was sought and obtained for this project from three committees or groups. Full ethics applications were submitted to the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (MUHEC) for the pilot study (SOB 20/22) and for the full project (SOB 20/51). For New Zealand fieldwork, ethics approval was also sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at the New Zealand Red Cross. This was required in order to gain assistance from the settlement organisation to recruit participants and was also useful in terms of ensuring the project met the particular ethics requirements for working with refugees. For Swedish fieldwork, a mandatory ethics application was submitted to the Swedish Ethical Review Authority and subsequently approved (dnr 2021-03635). There were some differences in requirements between MUHEC and the Swedish Ethical Review Authority but these were resolved in a meeting with the MUHEC chair.

2.2. Researcher positionality

As a reflexive researcher working within a dialogical paradigm, it is important to acknowledge one's own positionality and how this may impact on the interaction with participants, the collection of data, and the data analysis. This includes my overall position as a Swedish migrant in New Zealand, a woman and a mother, and someone with a privileged background who has worked in language education for refugee-background adults for over a decade. It also includes my position in each dialogical interaction carried out as part of this research project, how I positioned myself as well as how I was positioned by participants and how this differed between contexts.

2.2.1. New Zealand: The insider who was an outsider

I am a migrant to New Zealand but have lived in the country most of my adult life, can confidently navigate society, and have an established career as a practitioner in English language education for adults. I still have a migrant identity – I will never be a born and bred 'Kiwi' (New Zealander) – and can position myself as someone who once encountered New Zealand as a foreign and strange society and who still has strong ties elsewhere. However, within the context of my research, I was also very much an insider and was not, by any means, coming to my research with a blank slate. Language teachers expressed a sense of collegiality and settlement support workers

expected me to have a good grasp of the context. While none of the refugee-background participants were my own students, many were aware of my role in education and treated me with respect and as someone well versed in New Zealand norms and practices. Reflecting on my role as researcher as well as practitioner in New Zealand, my primary concern was how the knowledge I acquired outside the official interview context might impact on my interpretation of data. This was particularly the case when participants contacted me outside the research context for help or support, thus, unintentionally, providing additional background to or elaboration of information shared in the interviews. In those cases, I felt that the ethical action was to allow the new information to increase my understanding but not to treat it as data to be included in my findings. Another aspect related to my own frustrations with aspects of the settlement process, gained from several years of assisting students or acting as their advocate with various bureaucrats and public servants, and the concern that this may colour my interpretation of data. This was particularly the case when writing Chapter 6 and required additional reflection and constant return to the data to ensure that I represented the outcomes of a thorough analysis, rather than my own views.

2.2.2. Sweden: The insider who became an outsider

Despite being born and spending my first twenty years in Sweden, as a researcher who had not lived in the country for over twenty years, I was – to a significant extent – an outsider. This meant undertaking extensive preparation during the year leading up to my fieldwork. Aside from academic literature, I followed the news closely, followed a range of social media accounts, watched current affairs, political events, and political satire, and read current affairs articles and books. I discussed new information with family and friends in Sweden to gauge how various concepts were understood outside of academia. Once in Sweden, I spent time at the fieldwork site; I volunteered to do presentations during English lessons in a primary school and stayed for lunch breaks to understand the micro-culture better. When I interviewed adult students at the local language school, I made sure I was also there for break times and spent these in the staff room, listening to teacher talk and engaging on a collegial level. I found that my lack of familiarity with systems and processes, despite my preparation and research, meant that I needed to probe more extensively to gain contextual understanding in the interviews. This was highly advantageous in interviews with language teachers and settlement support workers who, by explaining the context, also explained their positions and provided additional information. In interviews with refugee-background participants, my lack of familiarity sometimes impacted on the negotiation of meaning, as at times the participant presumed knowledge that I did not have, primarily relating to the intricacies of settlement processes and colloquial ways of referring to some of these. However, there too, explaining their experiences to an outsider added to their

narratives. My position as an outsider was perhaps most advantageous in relation to my analysis both of political discourse and of political commentary in the interviews, as it enabled me to approach critically terminology and assumptions that had become naturalised (Gonçalves, 2024) in the Swedish context.

2.2.3. Positioning in interviews

There are significant concerns regarding researcher positionality and power (Tanggaard, 2009), especially when working with potentially vulnerable groups like refugees (Pittaway et al., 2010), as uneven power relationships may result from a range of dichotomous relationships, including researcher vs participant, proficient speaker vs learner, and citizen vs refugee. However, coming from a dialogical perspective, I also acknowledge that these dynamics are created in interactions, as each individual authors themselves and others, and responds to (and contests) others' authoring (Vitanova, 2010). In relation to refugee background participants, my aim was to position myself as a learner and for my limited understanding of refugee experiences to be evident. This was also how many of the participants positioned me and it led to extended descriptions of their experiences. This positioning was particularly salient in an early interview with a male participant. He was relaying to me his experiences of war and displacement and after particularly poignant moments in his narrative, he would address me with the question 'Can you imagine?' thus questioning whether the war experience could possibly be accurately conveyed to an outsider. While I cannot presume to fully grasp the context, from a dialogical perspective, my 'outsidedness' enriched the interview as a dialogical event (Bakhtin, 1981a; Kostogriz, 2005) as participants revealed themselves more fully (Bakhtin, 1981a; Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Marchenkova, 2005) and authored an insider identity.

2.2.4. Positioning and representation

While power relationships can be ameliorated in the dialogical event of the interview through accepting a position as outsider and learner, the process of analysis and distribution of findings is one in which the researcher holds significant power, particularly in terms of how participants are positioned or represented (Slade, 2019). In terms of refugee-background participants, this is particularly problematic, due to the prevalence of negative and reductive representations, especially in media and political discourse (Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019). A concern for human rights and social justice requires an endorsement of the claim to protection and of the humanitarian responsibility to receive refugees, as well as an examination of disadvantages and inequalities in the country of settlement. However, to achieve this, there is a danger of positioning refugees as victims without acknowledging their agency, resilience, or strengths (Marlowe, 2018). On the other hand, a strengths-based focus that presents refugees primarily as a resilient group may ignore very real challenges and also facilitate reductive

constructions of refugees as 'epic heroes' expected to overcome any barriers no matter how unjust those barriers are (see Sullivan, 2012 and Chapter 4). Following a dialogical approach, I have attempted to solve this dilemma by presenting participants as agentive individuals situated in particular contexts with varying opportunities for agency (Dufva & Aro, 2015), and by allowing room for participants to themselves contest reductive representations and imposed identities (Vitanova, 2010). Further, to avoid my own potential blind spots, I have also engaged dialogically with a range of individuals throughout the writing process, including research participants, interpreters, cultural and religious advisors, and anonymous reviewers for academic journals.

2.3. Research Design

Given the dialogical framework that is central to this study, the research was designed with a primary focus on qualitative interviews. A qualitative framework was chosen as the main purpose was to elicit the understanding of language teachers and settlement support workers and the lived experiences of refugees in relation to settlement, belonging, language and social cohesion. To incorporate the voices and concerns of refugees from the beginning of the study, and inform methodology as well as direction, a pilot study was undertaken in 2020, prior to the field work period. This allowed me to trial the interview format and question guide as well as my data analysis. Data from this study have been incorporated into the dataset of the main study.

2.3.1. Locations

Having established that research would be carried out in New Zealand and Sweden, for the reasons outlined in the introduction, appropriate sites in these two national contexts needed to be selected. In the selection process, suitability for investigation was considered as was the ease of access. The latter was particularly important as fieldwork started in 2021, when the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were still significant. Thus, Swedish data could not, as initially planned, be gathered over several fieldwork periods but was instead carried out during one intense period of data-gathering in 2022 once borders were fully open. This impacted on the scope for relationship building and networking in the country, meaning I had to rely on earlier networks for support in accessing participants. The pandemic also impacted on mobility within New Zealand and on the timing of fieldwork, as a national lockdown occurred during the 2021 fieldwork period. Within these constraints, locations were chosen for each national context as outlined below.

2.3.1.1. Sweden: 'Nyfält'

In the Swedish context, when discussing resettled refugees, political and media discourses are often concerned with the urban context, and particularly with suburbs with high crime rates coupled with low socioeconomic status and a high percentage of individuals with foreign

background (Aylott & Bolin, 2023; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Polisen, n.d.). While these are interesting sites for investigation, they do not necessarily reflect the everyday lives of refugees who are seeking to create a home for themselves in Sweden, navigating the day-to-day of the settlement process. To gain a greater understanding of these aspects, I chose a smaller municipality as the location for my fieldwork. As I was also interested in the tensions between the general move towards nationalism in politics and the lived experiences of refugees (see Chapter 7), I also chose an area where there was strong support for the nationalist party, as well as a significant settlement of refugees. 'Nyfält' (pseudonym) met these requirements, having received significant numbers of refugees during 2015 and the years following and having a level of support for the nationalist party that far exceeded the national average.

Nyfält is a post-industrial/rural municipality that in the early 2010's was struggling with depopulation, which meant that during the large refugee intakes around the middle of that decade, significant numbers of newcomers were settled in the area. The area thus became highly multicultural, with many ethnic businesses primarily run by Syrians who, along with Eritreans, were one of the larger ethnic minority groups in the area. The municipality was somewhat transient for Swedes as well as for newcomers, with many moving to larger centres when their socioeconomic status allowed for it. It had also had comparatively low educational performance for many years (including prior to the arrival of second language speakers), and generally low socioeconomic outcomes.

Fieldwork was carried out in Nyfält in September and October 2022, in the four weeks following the 2022 national elections. Prior to this, in March-May, a total of six interviews had been carried out through video calls: three with refugee-background participants, and three with language teachers. This was done to gain a better understanding of the context prior to the intense fieldwork period.

2.3.1.2. New Zealand: 'Novatown'

With few asylum seekers and a restricted refugee quota, New Zealand has a highly controlled system of refugee settlement, with a number of designated settlement locations receiving resettled refugees (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b). As I was interested in investigating service provision in relation to settlement (see Chapter 6), I chose a site that had served as a settlement location for some time. 'Novatown' (pseudonym) has resettled quota refugees for a number of years, has several English language providers, and an established settlement support organisation. The area provided opportunities for further education and professional employment as well as opportunities for entry-level employment. There was a significant degree of ethnic diversity in Novatown through a combination of resettled refugees, other migrants, international students, and temporary workers.

Fieldwork was carried out in Novatown during 2021, with one additional interview in 2023, undertaken as member-checking to confirm some of the conclusion drawn from the data. Fieldwork needed to take into consideration local, national, and international events. New Zealand had ongoing restrictions during this period, with the most significant disruption caused by a national lockdown beginning in August 2021. Data collection also coincided with the February 2021 coup in Myanmar, which impacted on the Rohingya participants, and the 2021 Taliban offensive in Afghanistan which affected Afghan participants. This required particular sensitivity to navigate.

2.3.2. Recruitment

Refugee-background participants were recruited with the help of a third party (settlement organisation, ethnic community, or educational institution) and through snowballing. In New Zealand, Rohingya and Afghan participants were recruited through the Rohingya and Afghan communities and through the settlement organisation. Palestinian participants were recruited through community members. In Sweden, participants were recruited through two educational institutions: an adult language school for immigrants and a primary school with several staff members and parents of refugee background. There was also some snowballing, where participants put me in contact with other potential participants.

Language teachers and settlement support workers were recruited through their institution or organisation through a third party (school or organisation manager) but also opportunistically, where I invited an individual I had been networking with to also become a participant. For example, this happened with teachers in Sweden who had facilitated recruitment of refugee-background participants, and then agreed to be interviewed, and also with settlement support workers in New Zealand who I networked with during the project.

For all participants, the project was explained at the time of recruitment and an information sheet provided. Where required (e.g. where participants were unable to read the letter), the recruiter explained the content of the letter to participants. Participants were also advised that they could withdraw at any point prior to, or during the interview, and up to two weeks after. This information was later repeated in the interviews.

2.3.3. Participants

A total of 85 participants were recruited and these are described below in three groupings: language teachers and tutors, settlement support workers, and refugee-background participants. Due to the commitment to anonymity, there is no tabulation of demographic detail, but some disaggregated demographic details have been provided.

2.3.3.1. Language teachers and tutors

A total of 14 language teachers and tutors were interviewed in New Zealand and Sweden. The eight New Zealand participants were drawn from two institutions and included classroom teachers (n = 4) as well as volunteer home tutors (n = 4). Home tutors had undertaken a short course to enable them to teach individuals one-on-one in the students' own homes on a weekly basis, and undertook this as a voluntary role (Barkhuizen, 2017). Classroom teachers had varying backgrounds, including local or international certificate-level qualifications in teaching English as an additional language. The six Swedish participants were mostly trained teachers who had additionally undertaken courses in teaching Swedish as a second language. Across the two sites, four participants were male and ten were female. All of them were working with adult refugee-background language learners at the time of the interviews. Their students ranged from absolute beginners to intermediate (from pre-A1 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference).

2.3.3.2. Settlement support workers

'Settlement support workers' (n = 15) included a range of professionals and volunteers working in areas supporting refugees, whether in community organisations, the health sector, a settlement support organisation or employed by the municipality. In many cases, particularly in the New Zealand context, these participants were also of refugee background. However, they have been included in this category as they were interviewed about their work, rather than about their personal experiences. Exact roles have not been defined, for reasons of anonymity.

2.3.3.3. Refugee-background participants

In New Zealand, refugee-background participants were Afghan, Rohingya, and generationally displaced Palestinians. The former two groups consisted primarily (but not exclusively) of female participants. At the time of the interviews, most Afghans who had been settled in the area had gained settlement under the 'Women at risk' category, referring to divorced, widowed or fatherless women in vulnerable contexts. Thus, participants were mainly single mothers or daughters of single mothers. For the Rohingya, women were prioritised as they were often less in contact with organisations and education due to child rearing responsibilities; therefore, little was known about them, and they had limited representation. Most of the New Zealand-based participants had arrived in New Zealand through the UNHCR quota system (n = 26), but one had also arrived through family reunification. All were permanent residents or citizens at the time of the interviews.

In Sweden, refugee-background participants were primarily Syrian or Eritrean but also included other Arab or African individuals. Some of these others had political reasons for asylum that were closely tied to their personal activities, and countries are therefore not specified. Most of the non-

Syrian Arabs were generationally displaced Palestinians. Participants in Sweden included quota refugees (*n* = 3), earlier asylum seekers (*n* = 13) and family reunification cases, primarily spouses (*n* = 13). All were Swedish residents (temporary or permanent) or citizens at the time of the interviews. Neither gender was prioritised in these interviews but there was a significantly larger number of females than males.

Across the two datasets, a total of nine refugee-background participants were men and 47 were women. Ages ranged from early twenties to sixties, with the largest portion (70%) aged 25-45. Levels of previous education varied and ranged from no formal education (25%) or primary school only (28%) to high school (27%) and university or technical college (20%). Earlier employment also varied significantly, and areas included labouring roles as well as professional and academic roles. At the time of the interviews, 39 of the participants were engaged in formal language instruction and an additional six were learning informally while taking care of their children. Of the remaining 11, one had recently become unemployed, while the remainder were engaged in the workforce. Employment included management positions, as well as a range of roles in education, manufacturing, food industry, social services, and cleaning. Participants had been in New Zealand or Sweden for varying periods of time, ranging from one year to nine years, with over half (52%) falling in the 5–9-year bracket. Participants' reported proficiency at the time of the interviews ranged from pre-A1 to C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in English or Swedish respectively, with the majority (73%) at beginner levels (CEFR A2 or lower). This was a natural outcome of recruiting most participants through educational institutions and settlement organisations.

2.3.4. Interviews

The main data collection method was qualitative, open-ended interviews. This method was chosen as it most closely aligns with dialogical perspectives on construction of meaning and creation of identity (Tanggaard, 2009; Vitanova, 2013). A dialogical interview allows for self-authoring (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2013) and the dialogical perspective also acknowledges that interviews are situated in the wider sociocultural context and that therefore interactions in the interviews inevitably incorporate meanings from a range of utterances and discourses from outside the interview context. Thus, while there is an immediate dialogue taking place as interviewer and interviewee(s) address and respond to each other, interlocutors also respond to a range of sociocultural discourses (Vitanova, 2010, 2013). On a practical level, a dialogical perspective meant paying attention to the relationship between interviewer and interviewee during the interview process, in order to facilitate the co-construction of meaning, as well as allowing room for differing opinions and contestations of statements made both within the interview context and in broader society (Vitanova, 2010).

With regards to interview questions, these were developed as guides to facilitate the interviews and deviations from these were expected due to the dialogical nature of the interviews. Three different guides were developed: one for language teachers, one for settlement support workers, and one for refugee-background participants. Each guide was organised into topics, with suggested questions and follow-up questions. It was expected that all topics would be covered in each interview, but that questions would vary depending on the interview, the participant, and their responses. Guides were developed after an extensive literature review had identified the areas which would be the focus of the study. For language teachers, topics and questions covered classroom practice and working with refugee background learners, as well as the teachers' perspectives on their learners' language use and engagement in the community (see Appendix 7). Guides were trialled with volunteers who were not part of the study and also further refined after initial data gathering using narrative frames (see section 2.3.6). For the Swedish context, additional questions were added regarding the elections and the political climate. These questions were formulated during the interviews primarily in the form of follow-up questions when language teachers spoke more generally on engagement in society. For settlement support workers, questions were organised under the topics of *social cohesion*, *belonging*, and *language* (see Appendix 8). However, interviews often focused heavily on the role of the settlement support worker, and the guide primarily functioned as a support to ensure all areas of importance were covered.

For refugee-background participants, who were the largest and most diverse group of participants, interview guides required particular care. Topics of investigation included the settlement journey, belonging, family ties, language learning and use, and education and employment. An additional section, labelled 'Advice', was also included to allow participants to highlight what areas of research and investigation they felt were of most importance (see Appendix 9). The interview guide was trialled in a pilot study in 2020 and did not require any significant modifications, though it was evident that questions would need to be adjusted to varying extents depending on participants' language levels and backgrounds. Thus, in the interviews, questions were often reformulated or simplified. Further, where participants demonstrated a reluctance to speak on a topic, this topic was abandoned, and in cases where participants introduced a new topic, this was pursued.

2.3.4.1. Interviewing language teachers and settlement support workers

In interviews with language teachers the relationship between interviewer and interviewee was centred on collegiality and a sense of common understanding, though with the added dimension of being an outsider or insider as outlined in section 2.2. With settlement support workers in New Zealand, it was similar, although as this was a very diverse group, there were some variations.

Settlement support workers in Sweden were positioned more as experts, due to my outsider status. In all these interviews, participants were given the opportunity to redirect the conversation to focus on what they felt were the most important aspects. The loosely structured interviews also allowed me as a researcher to follow up on areas of particular interest. Interviews were carried out in a location chosen by the participant and could include a café, their place of work, or an online space. For any interviews taking place in a café, refreshments were paid for by the researcher. The length of interviews varied, but they were usually around 1 hour in length.

2.3.4.2. Interviewing refugee-background participants

Interviews with refugee-background participants were approached with additional care, as the questions included potentially sensitive topics. The semi-structured interview format and the open-ended questions along with sensitivity in the interview allowed participants to determine how much they wanted to share (Van den Hoonaard, 2018). However, at other times, closed questions were used so that participants could choose to respond with a yes/no answer rather than be required to articulate a painful statement. This can be seen in the following statement where I chose to follow up with 'did he die or…?' rather than an open-ended question ('what happened to your husband?').

R: So you left Afghanistan? You lived in Afghanistan alone? No husband?

P: Yeah [pause]

R: Did he die or…?

P: Yeah [pause]

Sensitivity also meant being prepared to change the topic when a participant shied away from it, as in the above example. It would have been unethical to pursue the topic of the husband's death further, after the participant indicated through her monosyllabic answers that this was an area she was not comfortable to discuss.

The comfort of participants in interviews was also taken into consideration when determining whether interviews should be carried out as individual interviews or as group interviews. Initial consultations had suggested that some Rohingya participants may feel uncomfortable with individual interviews and prefer to be interviewed in groups or pairs. The option of group interviews was therefore introduced, in order to make participants comfortable (Vromans et al., 2018) and reduce power imbalances (Galloway, 2020; Krueger & Casey, 2015). Three of the interviews were carried out as group interviews, with two groups of four participants and one group of two. The group interviews had several advantages: the participants were able to express their views and experiences without broaching these topics themselves simply by agreeing or disagreeing with the previous speaker. There was also plenty of opportunity for co-construction

of meaning and support when topics were sensitive. However, the group format was only possible where there was a high level of comfort between participants and no concerns about information being distributed to the wider community.

Despite sensitivity and allowing participants to guide what information they shared, many of the interviews inevitably became emotional. However, while I was aware of the potential for re-traumatisation, I was also aware that selective sharing by participants, even if painful, can have beneficial effects (Birger & Shoham, 2024). This was also the sentiment expressed by many of the participants at the conclusions of the interviews:

> Thank you so much for coming and talking to us like this. I feel light. Quite better.
>
> We are grateful that you are asking about our stories and our history here today. We have been keeping it to ourselves for a long time. We couldn't share emotions until today. There was no one to ask about this and today you are asking about this, and I am grateful for that.

Interviews were also structured so that they would finish with topics on language learning and future possibilities to enable participants to move on from any emotionally charged experiences before the end of the interview.

Interviews with refugee-background participants were carried out at a location chosen by the participant. In many cases, this could mean a private space at their language school or at the settlement organisation but also at a café or a professional space organised by me. A number of participants also chose to be interviewed in their homes, for practical reasons such as childcare or transport, or because they felt more comfortable in that setting. Three interviews were also carried out online. Interviews could therefore vary significantly, from quiet settings in interview rooms, to the everyday settings of a parent with several pre-schoolers, to a busy café, or a meal at a participant's home. For interviews in cafés, I paid for refreshments, but I was also humbled by the many instances of hospitality I received in participant homes. Interviews were usually between 30 and 60 minutes, but some were longer.

All interviews were carried out in English (New Zealand) or Swedish (Sweden), both of which I am proficient in. To provide the opportunity to engage in the host language if desired but also ensure that the study included the perspectives of those unable to engage in these languages (Holmes et al., 2022; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022) participants were offered the option of being interviewed in English or Swedish, bringing a language support person of their own choosing, or have an interpreter provided for them. Interpreters in New Zealand were selected based on recommendations from the settlement support agency, and in Sweden by contacting

interpreters through an open database until a suitable interpreter was found. Criteria for selection included availability for face-to-face interviews, experience, and ability to deal with a range of dialects (specifically the Arabic interpreter). All interpreters signed confidentiality agreements (see Appendices 5-6) prior to undertaking any interviews. The implications of language choices and interpreted interviews are discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

2.3.5. Transcription

Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were carried out manually as soon as possible after the interview by the researcher in Swedish or English or, in some cases, a combination of both. Where necessary for clarity, multimodal aspects (e.g. gestures) were included. Transcriptions captured the full interview, including questions and clarifications as well as responses in order to facilitate dialogical analysis. Transcription was on the lexical and syntactic level only and did not include detailed features such as prosody or hesitations. The large dataset would have made detailed transcription extremely time consuming and was not considered of sufficient relevance for the purpose of this analysis. Further, detailed analysis of prosodic features and hesitations could be misleading when working with a second language speaker, who may pause to think of the correct word, word form or word order, rather than pause due to reluctance to talk about a difficult topic. Analysis of prosodic features would also not be relevant when using translated speech. For interpreted interviews (including those with language support persons), to ensure that important passages were captured correctly, interpreters were engaged to transcribe excerpts of the recorded interviews as literally as possible, either in the original language and a translation, or directly translated (see Chapter 3 for further discussion).

2.3.6. Narrative frames

Data collection for language teachers and tutors was initially intended to be carried out through a combination of written and spoken data. Teachers were to be sent 'narrative frames' to complete and from these, a selection of participants would be invited for interviews. Narrative frames, introduced by Barkhuizen and Wette (2008) employ sentence starters to assist participants in creating a narrative within certain parameters set by the researcher, creating a coherent narrative that focuses on the participant's experience in a particular time-space (Barkhuizen, 2014). Narrative frames have proven to be a useful tool for investigating the experiences of language teachers (Barkhuizen & Wette, 2008; Brookie, 2016, 2018; Brookie & White, 2018; White, 2018) and can be particularly useful when dealing with potentially sensitive or contentious topics as they allow the participant time to formulate their narrative (Brookie, 2016; Brookie & White, 2018; White, 2018). Language teachers in New Zealand who had agreed to participate were sent narrative frames, and seven participants completed these. An additional teacher did not see the relevance of the exercise but indicated that they were happy to participate

in an interview. Due to the low number of narrative frames collected, all participants who had responded, as well as the teacher who had asked for an interview only, were selected for the interview phase. When I approached teachers in Sweden, they felt that they did not have the time for the written exercise but were happy to participate in interviews. Narrative frames were therefore abandoned for this part of the fieldwork and data analysis for all language teachers focused on interview data only. In all cases where narrative frames had been used, the same information was elaborated in the interviews. Thus, while narrative frames have proven useful in research similar contexts in the past (Barkhuizen, 2017; Brookie, 2018) my experience during the data collection for the current study suggests that their usefulness may be limited and seen as duplication in cases where teachers already feel overwhelmed by administrative and reporting requirements.

2.3.7. Election discourse

In addition to the interviews, a separate dataset was collated to analyse political discourses surrounding the 2022 national election in Sweden in order to investigate the construction of the 'foreign' *other* (see Chapter 7). Samples of political discourse were selected from two sources: party leaders' speeches at *Almedalsveckan 2022* and a party leaders' debate in May 2022. *Almedalsveckan* is a yearly, highly mediatised political event where political parties and political organisations are provided with a platform to present their core values and policies. For parliamentary parties, the event provides an opportunity to highlight the main direction of the party, garner support and construct their public image. *Almedalsveckan* is therefore a fruitful site for analysis (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Norocel, 2017). The May debate was chosen for close analysis because of its content as well as its timeliness. In April 2022, repeated burnings of the Qur'an accompanied by Islamophobic taunts lead to the so-called 'Easter riots' (*Dozens arrested at Sweden riots sparked by planned Quran burnings*, 2022) and the May debate therefore included a 30-minute segment on immigration and integration (Agenda, 2022). Data were transcribed according to the same principles as those used for interviews.

2.4. Data analysis

The data collection and transcription process outlined above yielded a total of seven datasets to be analysed separately and in combination with other datasets. The table below summarises the datasets in terms of number of participants and shows how they contributed to the different chapters in the thesis (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participants and datasets

New Zealand datasets and participants 2021			Swedish datasets and participants 2022			
Novatown			***Nyfält***			
Refugee-background participants	Language teachers	Settlement support	Refugee-background participants	Language teachers	Settlement support	Political discourse
n = 27	*n* = 8	*n* = 13	*n* = 29	*n* = 6	*n* = 2	-
Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 8 Chapter 9	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 9	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 6 Chapter 9	Chapter 3 Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 7 Chapter 8 Chapter 9	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 9	Chapter 4 Chapter 5 Chapter 9	Chapter 7

Data were analysed from a dialogical perspective, both semantically and structurally. With a total of 85 participants and nearly seventy hours of transcribed data, narrative analysis would have only reflected the experiences of a small selection of passages and/or individuals and would likely have privileged the voices of the most eloquent, whose narratives most easily lent themselves to analysis. On the other hand, a purely semantic analysis would have missed many of the dialogical aspects embedded in the narratives, such as contestations, polyphony, and parody. Analysis thus combined a semantic method, designed to uncover dialogical processes, developments, and relationships in the broader social context and in participants' lives with a narrative analysis, designed to gain further insights through analysing dialogical features within participant narratives and within the interview itself.

2.4.1. Semantic analysis

The semantic analysis was informed by the Grounded Theory Method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006) as a coding methodology but did not follow the principles of Grounded Theory Method (GTM) in terms of theory generation, as dialogism was adopted as a guiding framework for analysis. As a coding methodology and tool for initial data analysis, GTM presented a more suitable process than a standard thematic analysis for several reasons. Firstly, unlike thematic analysis, GTM focuses on actions and processes rather than themes (Charmaz, 2006), which appeared particularly useful in a study of resettlement processes that sought to highlight the agency of individuals (and its limitations). Secondly, GTM requires continuous interaction with data through inductive analysis and constant comparison between datasets and emergent findings (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007), requiring the researcher to remain in constant dialogical

engagement with their data. Further, the focus on emergence in GTM (Johnson & Walsh, 2019) ensures that findings are strongly anchored in data.

Following the principles of GTM, I transcribed interviews as soon as possible after each occasion and, where possible, allowed time between interviews for coding, memo-writing, and reflection. This was particularly important in the early stages, while I was developing and enriching my understanding of refugee experiences and the settlement process, as it allowed me to analyse deeply the aspects raised in interviews. Coding was done using the NVivo software and began as open coding of the earliest interviews in each dataset. Following GTM practices, codes were written as either gerunds or as *in-vivo* codes, using participants' words or phrases to label the codes. As far as possible, gerund codes employed words that reflected agency, either on the part of the participant or another subject, and passive constructions were avoided as far as possible. As an example, 'Being denied education' was replaced with 'Denying education' to reflect the fact that this was actively done by a powerful actor (e.g. the government in Myanmar). Similarly, gerunds like 'lacking' or 'needing' were avoided in favour of words denoting potential or real agency, e.g. 'Desiring English' instead of 'Needing English'. These choices reflect my critical stance on human rights issues as well as refugee representation. After initial coding, codes were organised into more encompassing codes, reducing redundancy, and creating more focused coding. Coding of subsequent interviews employed the focused codes but also allowed for open coding of areas not covered in the earlier interviews. This was particularly important due to the diversity of participants in each dataset. Through constant comparison, nodes were then arranged into larger categories and concepts, to form a picture of the most salient aspects in the interviews.

In my analysis, I adopted the view proposed by Vitanova (2010, p. 253) who suggests that 'in its larger connotation, dialogue epitomizes any process or development, born within a multitude of subject positions and values'. Thus, as categories and codes were compared and analysed, the cross-comparison and analysis also incorporated consideration of dialogical relationships, processes, and developments. This included dialogical relationships between concepts, such as the dialogical relationship between the identity of motherhood and the investment in language learning, but also the dialogical relationships between the actions of the individual and the affordances available to them. Importantly, there were also cross comparisons within and between the different groups of participants, such as language learners and language teachers, and the tensions between their utterances.

2.4.2. Dialogical narrative analysis

As in most approaches to narrative analysis (Barkhuizen, 2020; Connelly & Clandinin, 2006; Riessman, 1993), dialogical narrative analysis acknowledges the importance of narratives for

sense-making and identity construction (Frank, 2012; Vitanova, 2010; White, 2018). Dialogism also situates this sense-making and identity construction within a broader sociocultural context, as narratives or utterances can only be 'understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 281) and narratives are thus 'uniquely positioned to capture the interplay between humans' individual and autobiographic experiences on the one hand, and larger, socio-cultural discourses on the other' (Vitanova, 2013, p. 242). While there are a range of approaches to defining what constitutes a 'narrative' in dialogical narrative analysis (Hong et al., 2017; Sullivan, 2012; Vitanova, 2013), in my analysis, I have chosen to focus on the 'utterance' which is also Bakhtin's main focus (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). Focusing on the utterance as the unit of analysis, whether this utterance is presented as a clearly defined 'story' or not, was particularly important when dealing with datasets with participants with varied levels of proficiency, and varied levels of eloquence. A focus on clearly defined narratives risked privileging those with greater language proficiency and greater familiarity with a recognisable story genre.

From a dialogical perspective, identity is created within dialogical interactions through acts of authoring and 'we *must*, we *all* must, create ourselves, for the self is not given… to any one of us' (Holquist, 1990, pp. 28-29). Interviews thus become sites of self-authoring (Vitanova, 2005) where participants author themselves in relation to those around them, as well as in relation to how identities are portrayed in public and private discourse (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2010). Subjects also author others, and are in turn authored by others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004), meaning that identity constructions are always open to refinement and contestation. Analysis paid particular attention to how participants authored themselves, authored others, and resisted others' authoring of them. The aspect of other-authoring was also incorporated into analysis of political discourse (See Chapter 7) as well as other public discourses where refugees may be authored as lesser subjects, 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004).

Further, a dialogical analysis recognises that utterances are never produced in isolation but are always addressed to an Other and are always in response to earlier utterances and discourses, and in anticipation of future responses (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Steinby & Klapuri, 2013). The Other, in an interview, is most obviously the interviewer (and, where applicable, the interpreter) but can also be an individual or group outside the interview context, or even a more abstract concept like 'society' (Vitanova, 2010). Analysis therefore paid attention to *addressivity* to determine to whom a particular utterance was addressed. This included how and to what extent the researcher was addressed (see Chapter 3), but also how participants addressed individuals, groups, or ideologies outside the interview. Analysis also paid attention to the ways and the extent to which

individuals were answerable to those who addressed them (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010), both in terms of moral responsibility when addressed (see Section 1.3.2) and in terms of how they responded to the voices and value positions of others (Pavlenko, 2007; Vitanova, 2005). Answerability could encompass those present in the interviews, but also other individuals of significance and society as a whole (Brookie, 2018; Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). The latter enabled me to distinguish not only prevalent societal discourses, but also how individuals and groups authored themselves in response to these.

Responding to the utterances of others often involves contestation through appropriating and subverting others' words and through employing polyphony and parody. Through polyphony, speakers include the voices of others and engage with them. Polyphony is, in this framework, not merely the inclusion of different, and equal, voices, but also 'a genuine encounter among the various subjective points of view' (Steinby & Klapuri, 2013, p. 40), where the speaker can agree with the reproduced words or impose on them their own meaning (Frank, 2012; Pavlenko, 2007). The analysis of polyphony enables the researcher to discover speaker agency and resistance to a dominant voice expressed through participants discursively repositioning themselves in the narrative (Vitanova, 2013) and through parodic discourse where the author appropriates the words of the Other and ridicules them 'by changing the intention and intonation of another's discourse to suit its own ends' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 50). The use of polyphony and parody also becomes a way of enacting agency and 'rearranging power positions' (Vitanova, 2013, p. 254) and thus reveals power positions in the broader sociocultural context that impact on the life of the participant.

The chronotope (see Chapter 1, Section 1.3.6) provided an additional tool for narrative analysis. Viewing chronotopes as frames of reference for an individual's particular social context assists in understanding what opportunities for actions are available (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990; Karimzad, 2021). A chronotopical analysis, which combines time and space, is particularly fruitful in studies of forced migration where the combination of time and space are a significant part of the analysis (Baynham, 2015), and where individuals have to draw on their experiences in past chronotopes for their present and future actions (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). Chronotopes can also be analysed in terms of their contestability as there are multiple chronotopes representing different world views and contexts (Blommaert, 2015; Steinby, 2013; Vitanova, 2010), as seen in Chapter 8.

2.4.3. Illustrating the process of data analysis: understanding transnational experiences

To illustrate how data analysis was carried out from the start of the interview process until the stage of writing up the findings, combining semantic and narrative analysis, I will use the example of transnational belonging (Chapter 9). This serves as a good example, as it was one of the areas identified after the very first interview of the main study and also one of the last articles to be written.

The first interview of the main study took place in early 2021 and was a group interview with four Rohingya women, facilitated by an interpreter. In the interview, we had discussed how long they had been in New Zealand, how, when, and why they left their country, how they came to be resettled in New Zealand, and what life was like in their country of refuge (Malaysia). I then asked them if they remembered their first day in New Zealand and how they felt. One of the participants responded briefly to my question and elaborated on how she enjoyed life in New Zealand, but then redirected the conversation to her 'only concern', which was the suffering and precarious living situations of her transnational family. I pursued the topic, and the concern was shared by the other participants. It became a very emotional interview but one that was very much participant-led, with my main contributions being expressions of sympathy and questions designed to ensure all participants were included (e.g. 'so that's the same for all of you?'). I redirected the interview only after participants appeared to have expressed what they wished to express, but even so, they returned to the topic later in the interview.

During the interview, the participants, who were unaware of my migrant background, positioned me as a New Zealander and thus assumed that I had my own family nearby:

> for people like you who have your parents around, you are happy and might not feel the pain that we feel when we can't see our parents

I was aware of this positioning, and that it conflicted with my lived experience, which included missing my father's final days as I was living across the world from him. I also reflected that this did not mean that I could claim to understand the depth of their suffering and that a contestation of their positioning of me would not have any benefit in the context of the interview. However, I did contest their positioning of me later in the interview when they positioned me as a powerful agent with influence over family reunification processes, by explaining that my power was limited to presenting my findings, which would include their perspectives on the issue.

After the interview, I took extensive notes, particularly about the emotionally intense atmosphere, and also debriefed with the interpreter. As some of the participant utterances were very lengthy and there was concern that the interpreter may not have captured the full extent of

what was said, I engaged the interpreter to transcribe sections of the interview in translation. I then began the process of open coding and identified a significant node which I labelled using the in-vivo code 'the only concern' and other related nodes, such as 'the way my mother cared for me' which reflected the disrupted care relationships between the participants and their mothers. Coding of other interviews with Rohingya participants revealed that the concern for transnational family was considerable and impacted significantly on daily life. Semantic dialogical analysis was applied to codes both in terms of their content, and in terms of how they related to each other. Thus, the node 'the way my mother cared for me' was analysed internally to understand the dialogical interaction between participants and their parents, and particularly their sense of unfulfilled answerability. It was also analysed in terms of its interaction with another node, 'for the sake of our children' which related to their motivation for resettlement and their conflicting responsibilities for creating a future for their children but also for finding ways to care for their parents. Below are excerpts from an early memo:

> For these mothers, the conflict between their role as mother and their role as daughters become part of the tension point experienced by resettled refugees existing between the past (there) and present/future (here).
>
> In their daily lives, these mothers are engaged in two primary emotional activities: caring and carrying. They care for their children, focusing their energy and time on ensuring these have a happy, safe, and fulfilling life. They also care for their parents, but their ability to care is severely limited in relation to the need. Instead, they carry an unfulfilled burden of care which impacts on their daily lives. This is a constant, "in every breath" and the burden is aggravated by their acts of caring for their children as it links to their mothers' care for them.

Transnational care and unfulfilled care responsibilities were significant themes throughout subsequent interviews, regardless of country of origin or country of settlement, leading to the development of an important category with a range of codes interacting with each other. For example, 'coping with ongoing crises', which dealt with permanent or emerging conflicts or oppression in the country of origin, interacted with codes on family responsibility. Further, codes were investigated to reveal the larger social processes (such as tightening of family reunification rules in Sweden) and the impact of these on individuals (family separation).

The semantic analysis outlined above was also supplement by dialogical narrative analysis, in this case particularly the concepts of answerability and addressivity, but also the concept of chronotopes. Chronotopes were useful as an analytical tool to understand the different time-space contexts of the participants, and their opportunities for action within these, which

ultimately explained their decisions to resettle, and the current constraints on their agency. Addressivity included how participants were addressed by their transnational families, for example in terms of pleas for help, and their responses – or lack of ability to respond – to these. It also included how participants addressed 'the system' that had placed them in this position, and how they addressed me, as someone who might help them, and by extension how they wanted to address the wider national or international community. The findings are discussed in detail in Chapter 9.

2.5. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodology and ethical considerations in detail to supplement the information included in each chapter and to explain the reasoning behind the choices made. It has also discussed the challenges of working with potentially vulnerable groups, such as refugees, but also the importance of including these groups in research. However, it has not discussed in any detail the challenges inherent in researching multilingually, that is, engaging in research where more than one language is present during the research process. This research was multilingual in many ways. Firstly, refugee-background participants spoke various languages as their first or dominant language, none of which I was able to communicate in. Secondly, research was carried out in two contexts with two different languages that refugee-background participants were learning: English and Swedish. As a researcher, I was engaging in both these languages throughout the research process as I reviewed literature, prepared for fieldwork, carried out interviews, and analysed data. The multilingual dimension adds an additional layer of complexity warranting in-depth exploration and will therefore be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: Language dynamics and agency in multilingual research interviews

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3.1. Introduction

As linguistic diversity increases globally, it becomes more important to carefully consider how we approach our research and the linguistically diverse context we are operating in. Increasingly, traditional conceptualisations of language as distinct and clearly bounded are being challenged by views that consider the interplay of languages, varieties, and repertoires both from an ideological perspective and from the perspective of individual speakers (Blackledge & Creese, 2014; Blommaert & Rampton, 2016). For the individual, languages and varieties exist not necessarily as clearly bounded systems, but as the sum total of their linguistic resources, reflecting their experience with language over their lifespan (Blommaert & Rampton, 2016; Busch, 2017; Wei, 2018). Ideologically, however, languages exist as socially constructed entities that can be mobilised for hegemonic purposes, with some named languages and language varieties imbued with higher status, and national languages operationalised in nation building and boundary drawing (Anderson, 1991). Individuals thus draw on their linguistic repertoire, constructed from their 'lived experience of language' (Busch, 2017, p. 340) to construct meaning and position themselves in interactions, aware that they will in turn be positioned by others, and by society, based on prevailing ideological discourses on linguistic variations (Busch, 2017).

Any research carried out in linguistically diverse contexts will thus need to take into consideration these factors and how languages, language use and linguistic affordances are conceptualised and operationalised in data collection and analysis (Holmes et al., 2013, 2016; Pavlenko, 2007). This is particularly the case for qualitative research carried out through interviews, where the choices made in relation to language can have significant impact on the quality of the data and the experience of the participants (Busch, 2017; Kosny et al., 2014; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Pavlenko, 2007; Rolland et al., 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). The qualitative interview, even in a monolingual context, is always about the co-construction of meaning (Pavlenko, 2007; Talmy, 2011), and this co-construction becomes even more salient in interviews where a range of linguistic resources are at play (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland,

2023). While this area has traditionally been under-researched (Holmes et al., 2013; Williamson et al., 2011), a recent and increasing body of literature on researching multilingually (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2022; Rolland et al., 2023) emphasises the need for researcher transparency (Backhaus, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022) as well as participant agency in terms of language use (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland et al., 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). The facilitation of participant agency, their 'socioculturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn, 2010, p. 28), may mitigate power imbalances in the research process, which is particularly important in research with vulnerable groups (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020).

This article is based on a larger study of refugee settlement in New Zealand and Sweden, which adopts a Bakhtinian dialogical approach to interviewing and data analysis (Tanggaard, 2009; Vitanova, 2013; see also next section). In the study, refugee-background participants at varied stages of proficiency in the host language were given the option of engaging solely in the host language, to bring their own language support person, or to request a professional interpreter. The interviews therefore offer interesting and varied sites for investigating how language is used in research interviews and how meaning is co-constructed between researcher and participant (and sometimes interpreter), drawing on a range of linguistic resources. The article will aim to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How does the use of interpreters impact on the interaction in the interview and on the quality of data?

RQ2: How do multilingual participants draw on a range of linguistic resources to construct meaning, author themselves, engage dialogically and contest discourses?

RQ3: How do multilingual participants make use of the interview context for their own ends, for example, as sites of language learning and practice?

3.2. Literature review

3.2.1. Research in linguistically diverse contexts

Qualitative research in multilingual contexts requires careful consideration of the affordances of the multilingual space, and how meaning is constructed in the interview context. The study that forms the basis for this article takes a Bakhtinian dialogical approach and envisages interviews as sites of social practice (Talmy, 2011) where meaning is co-constructed between all involved (Frank, 2005; Harvey, 2015; Tanggaard, 2009) as they actively struggle over meaning, contest discourses and express resistance and dissenting opinions (Holquist, 1990; Tanggaard, 2009;

Vitanova, 2005). The interactions in research interviews are dialogical in the sense that all utterances are *addressive*, requiring an addressee to whom utterances are directed in response to previous utterances as well as in anticipation of future responses (Bakhtin et al., 1986). This addressee is, most immediately, one of the interlocutors in the interview but can also be an individual outside the context brought in through the speaker's narrative or, more abstractly, a sociocultural norm or discourse (Vitanova, 2010). The interview context, like all dialogical interactions, also allows individuals to author themselves through language, thus constructing their identities and contesting any imposed identity constructions (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Polo-Pérez, 2023; Sullivan, 2012; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004; Vitanova, 2010). From a dialogical perspective, agency is thus very much tied to language and to the ability to choose how to address others, how to author an identity and how to contest other voices, stances and discourses (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010). Dialogism also has an ethical dimension through the concept of answerability: a moral duty to acknowledge and respond appropriately to the dialogical Other (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005) and acknowledging their uniqueness, including their unique cultural and linguistic resources (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007).

Given the importance of language in qualitative interviewing, researching multilingually – where more than one language is involved in the research process (Holmes et al., 2013, 2016) – requires particularly careful consideration in terms of how the researcher and participants engage with language. It is essential to engage in researcher reflexivity (Holmes et al., 2016; Holmes et al., 2022), a process of ongoing dialogical interaction between the researcher and research to heighten awareness of biases and reveal power structures, particular in relation to language use (Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023). The linguistic affordances provided by the interview context can significantly impact on the co-construction of meaning and the ability of the interviewee to narrate their experiences (Busch, 2016; Pavlenko, 2007; Rolland et al., 2023) and on quality and validity of data (Kosny et al., 2014; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Pavlenko, 2007; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). Further, language choices also take on ethical and political dimensions as the exclusive use of a dominant research language may disempower participants and also privilege some groups and exclude others based on their available linguistic resources (Holmes et al., 2022; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). At the same time, insisting on learners engaging exclusively in their first language may deny them opportunities to practice an additional language and present themselves as competent language users (Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023). The approach that best aligns with a dialogical perspective where individual uniqueness is acknowledged (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007), as well as with current advice on researching multilingually, is to allow for participant autonomy and agency in terms of language choice (Rolland et al., 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). This may mitigate power imbalances

(Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022) and allow participants greater freedom in constructing their linguistic identities (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020).

3.2.2. Working with interpreters

To prevent exclusions based on linguistic repertoires and to promote learner agency in terms of language choice, there is often a need to include multilingual research assistants or interpreters to facilitate interviews (Holmes et al., 2022; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022). Having a competent interpreter can also give the researcher added legitimacy, provide important knowledge and mediate the cultural and linguistic context (Backhaus, 2022; Tesseur, 2022). However, financial constraints may limit the use of interpreting (Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022) and research has suggested that interpreter-mediated interviews can present unique challenges. Interpreters may dominate and limit the participant's ability to use the host language if desired (Kosny et al., 2014) and can also impact negatively on the rapport between researcher and participant (Kosny et al., 2014; Murray & Wynne, 2001). The quality and validity of data can also be impacted if the interpreter excludes the researcher from the construction of meaning by providing summaries rather than full accounts (Kosny et al., 2014). Further, relations of power existing outside the interview context can impact on how much participants want to share (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Williamson et al., 2011) and interpreters may also act as gatekeepers and selectively relay information between researcher and participant (Kosny et al., 2014; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Williamson et al., 2011). To mitigate these challenges, scholars suggest strategies such as relationship building with interpreters (Backhaus, 2022; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011), viewing interpreters as co-researchers rather than instruments (Backhaus, 2022), and supplementing immediate interpreting with translated transcriptions in order to gain a deeper understanding of participants' narratives and the construction of meaning in the interview (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011). Overall, there is a need to make interpreters' roles more transparent and acknowledge their role in the co-construction of meaning (Andrews, 2013; Backhaus, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Kosny et al., 2014; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Tesseur, 2022).

3.2.3. Languaging, translanguaging and heteroglossia

In theorising the use of language in a world that is increasingly diverse, scholars are acknowledging speaker agency through concepts such as languaging, translanguaging and heteroglossia. Languaging, the act of dialogical engagement, sense-making, and co-construction of meaning, is seen as a higher order than language as a social and structured system (Thibault, 2011). Translanguaging expands the concept of languaging by recognising that multilinguals can draw on a range of languages in their engagement with others, blurring the boundaries of named

languages and making full use of their linguistic repertoire as well as other semiotic resources such as body language and multimodal resources (Gordon, 2022; Wei, 2018). In seeking to understand translanguaging, a number of scholars have chosen to draw on Bakhtin's concept of *heteroglossia* (Blackledge & Creese, 2014, 2019; Busch, 2017; Turner & Lin, 2020). While Bakhtin primarily used the term to refer to varieties within a named language (Bakhtin, 1981a; Turner & Lin, 2020), the concept is useful in translanguaging situations as it recognises that individuals make choices about language use in order to achieve particular purposes, such as appropriating or contesting other voices (Bakhtin, 1981) or to highlight dimensions of class, ideology or position in society (Blackledge & Creese, 2014, 2019). Translanguaging has gained significance as a pedagogical practice that challenges boundaries and hegemonies and empowers learners by acknowledging the use of a range of linguistic and multimodal resources in communication (Wei, 2018). Translanguaging also challenges the concept of language learning as assimilation into a new linguistic and social system and instead conceptualises it as a process of growing the linguistic repertoire in order to facilitate communication in a particular context (Turner & Lin, 2020).

A number of researchers have suggested that a translanguaging approach or methodology should be adopted in multilingual research contexts to allow participants to utilise a wider linguistic repertoire and to enact agency in the moment (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland et al., 2023). A translanguaging approach has the potential to challenge power structures, facilitate rapport, assist in meaning construction, and support the identity construction of participants and researchers as multilingual speakers (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023). It may also provide additional opportunities for contestation and negotiation of power through heteroglossic utterances where language is operationalised to contest positioning or discourses (Bakhtin, 1981a; Blackledge & Creese, 2019; Busch, 2017; Pavlenko, 2007). Studies carried out with a translanguaging methodology have focused on contexts where participant and researcher have had more than one shared language in their linguistic repertoires (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland, 2023). These have indicated that translanguaging shifts are employed for rapport building (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022) and interview management (Rolland, 2023), for accessing vocabulary and expressing concepts embedded in a particular language, and for relating emotional experiences difficult to express in an additional language (Rolland, 2023). It has also been suggested that translanguaging approaches can be used even where researcher and participants only share one language, as translanguaging is multisemiotic, thus involving body language (Ganassin & Holmes,

2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022), the use of electronic translators (Gordon, 2022) and communication strategies that facilitate understanding (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023).

3.3. The study

The study that forms the basis for this article is a larger project that looks at dimensions of language, belonging and social cohesion in refugee settlement in two countries: Sweden and New Zealand. Findings from this study have been reported elsewhere (Svensson, 2023a, 2023b, 2024b), and this article will focus specifically on how participants drew on their linguistic repertoires to achieve certain outcomes in the interviews, and what opportunities were available for them to do so. While the full project also included interviews with language teachers and settlement support persons, this article will focus exclusively on the interviews with refugee-background participants (n = 56). These participants were, at the time of the interviews, living in either Sweden or New Zealand, and came from a range of linguistic, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds, identifying as Rohingya, Afghan, Hazara, Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Palestinian, Egyptian, Eritrean, and other African (not specified here for reasons of anonymity). They were all adults (20–60+ years old) and first or dominant languages included Rohingya, Burmese, Malay, Hazaragi, Dari, Farsi, Arabic and Tigrinya. Participants were recruited through settlement organisations and educational institutions, and selection criteria included some form of refugee status (quota refugee, convention refugee, refugee family reunification category or spouse of a refugee). A full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (SOB 20/51). In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross in New Zealand and by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635).

3.3.1. Language considerations

Interviews were conducted in two contexts with different host languages: English (New Zealand) and Swedish (Sweden), both of which I, the researcher, am proficient in. To provide the opportunity to engage in the host language if desired but also ensure that the study included the perspectives of those unable to engage in these languages (Holmes et al., 2022; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022) participants were offered the option of being interviewed in English or Swedish, bringing a language support person of their own choosing, or have an interpreter provided for them. These options were generally negotiated with them through a third party (e.g., the teacher or settlement support worker who assisted with recruiting), and clearly stated on information sheets. The majority of the participants (n = 31) selected to be interviewed in the host language either because of their level of proficiency (n = 11) or because they wanted an opportunity to practice their speaking in the host language (n = 20). A significant group (n = 21) opted for interpreting and a small number (n = 4) chose to bring a language support person, as

they did not feel confident carrying out the full interview in the host language. The language proficiency of those opting not to have language support or interpreting varied significantly, from beginner user to advanced, as determined by their self-reported achievement in language courses.

3.3.2. Interpreted interviews

There are a number of considerations for researchers when deciding on using interpreters in research interviews and selecting appropriate interpreters. For interviews in the New Zealand context, I relied on advice from the settlement agency to select appropriate interpreters, taking into consideration qualifications, relationship to participants, and language variety. For the Myanmar Rohingya speakers, an interpreter was engaged who had a high level of proficiency in English, as well as Rohingya and Burmese. A different interpreter was engaged for a group of women who had married into the Rohingya community while living in Malaysia and who communicated comfortably in Malay. Only one Afghan participant requested interpretation, and as she was comfortable speaking in Farsi and requested a non-Afghan interpreter, an Iranian interpreter was engaged. In Sweden only one interpreter, Arabic, was engaged, and was sourced through *Kammarkollegiet*, a public database of trained interpreters. As participants spoke a variety of Arabic dialects (often not known beforehand), the interpreter needed to have experience with a range of dialects. All interpreters were experienced interpreters, but with little experience with research interviews. However, those with experience in interpreting for counselling sessions or for social workers appeared to possess transferrable skills that suited the research interview context well, as they were familiar with first-person interpretation, providing nearly verbatim interpretations, and making clear distinctions between the interpreted person's voice and their own explanation. In order for participants to feel that they could freely express themselves, interpreters were sourced from outside the local ethnic community (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Williamson et al., 2011). This could mean engaging interpreters from another geographic location in the country of settlement, or from another country of origin. Language support persons were friends or family members of participants and were in all cases known to the researcher prior to the interviews through prior relationship building in the community. As the interviews with language support persons were similar to those with professional interpreters, they were analysed the same. The researcher had training in interviewing vulnerable individuals and working with interpreters in cross-cultural settings. Interpreting was funded through the university and through scholarships.

As evident in the literature review, interpreter-mediated interviews require significant preparation (Backhaus, 2022; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011). All interpreters were given a written introduction to the research and

where possible, I also met with them beforehand. The open-ended question format and the conversational interaction aimed for in interviews were explained to interpreters, and they were also asked to interpret in the first person and as closely to the original meaning as possible. Further, interpreters were instructed to allow participants to respond in the host language if they chose to do so rather than insist on them engaging in the interpreted language, thus allowing space for translanguaging (Busch, 2016). As far as possible, seating was arranged triangularly to facilitate communication without favouring one particular communicative relationship and interpreters as well as researchers introduced themselves to participants. A further dynamic was also introduced as some of the women from the Rohingya community preferred group interviews, meaning that on three occasions I worked with a group of two to four women plus an interpreter.

3.3.3. Transcribing and analysing data

Verbatim transcriptions of the interviews were done manually by me, the researcher, in Swedish or English or, in some cases, a combination of both. Where necessary for clarity, multimodal aspects (e.g., gestures) were included. For interpreted interviews (including those with language support persons), in order to ensure that important passages were captured correctly, interpreters were engaged to transcribe excerpts of the recorded interviews as literally as possible, either in the original language and a translation, or directly translated. In some cases, the same interpreter did the interview and the transcription, but in other cases a new interpreter was brought in for the transcription work. This not only enabled me to analyse more accurately passages of importance, but also provided a validity check of the original interpretation (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011). Following Pavlenko (2007), analysis of Swedish transcripts was done in Swedish and not translated until the write-up stage. Due to the limitations of my own linguistic repertoire, I was not able to analyse data in the original language of the participants in interpreter-mediated interviews; however, meanings were discussed with interpreters and others proficient in these languages. For the study overall, data analysis consisted of a combination of inductive coding for semantic analysis along with a closer dialogical narrative analysis (see Svensson, 2023b), and the analysis early on called attention to how language was used by researcher, interpreters, and participants. I therefore coded passages containing examples of translanguaging, language learning, and interpreter agency, and analysed these in terms of actions, processes, and dialogical interaction.

3.4. Findings

Below I will outline the findings as they relate to the overarching research questions in terms of working with interpreters, using translanguaging practices and creating language learning opportunities.

In the excerpts below, 'P' denotes participant, 'I' denotes interpreter and 'R' researcher. Unless otherwise stated, utterances in Swedish or English are written in plain font, while utterances in the participant's first language (or language shared with interpreter) which have been translated after the interviews took place are in italics. All names within excerpts are pseudonyms.

3.4.1. Working with interpreters

From my perspective as a researcher, the interpreter had a very important role. Engaging interpreters meant that I was able to include participants who often experienced linguistic marginalisation in the settlement context (see Svensson, 2023a) and participants with a history of linguistic marginalisation, for example, speakers of Rohingya (Farzana, 2017). The interpreter was made visible and present at the outset of the interviews through their own personal introduction and also worked on building rapport with participants. During the interview, interpreters not only interpreted the meaning of participant utterances but also contributed to the interaction by adding information and mediating the cultural and linguistic context (Backhaus, 2022; Tesseur, 2022) as in the following excerpt:

> Participant [through interpreter]: They have to understand how our children are valuable. They have to understand how many children we have lost in the war.
>
> Researcher: Mm. Mm.
>
> P [Through interpreter]: So Syrian families who are worried about their children, they move to the ends of the earth. To northern Europe and to the whole world to save them.
>
> Interpreter: [Adds] I think she is referring to those who are taken into care [by the state].

At the time of the interview, there were significant concerns in Arab-speaking communities in Sweden about state interference in families, and the placement of immigrant children in foster care – contextual background that the participant relied on the interpreter to be familiar with. The explanation therefore assisted my understanding and guided my follow-up questions.

However, information added by interpreters was not always congruent with participants' views, especially when it implied a value judgement as in the following discussion on remittances:

> Researcher: Do you send money back to [family] at all?
>
> Participant: [Speaks in first language]
>
> Interpreter: Because she's not working she can't. [Adds:] Because the thing is I think for the Muslim women it's very hard to get I mean to use your husband's money and send for your own parents.

P [In English]: Husband's money finished

The participant, who understood English better than she spoke it, contested the interpreter's explanation to convey that it was not because of her husband's unwillingness, but because of lack of money.

Crucial aspects for ensuring quality of data were the transparency of the interpreter during and after interviews, and also after-interview transcriptions by interpreters (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011). Most interpreters were very careful to ensure that their influence on responses was clear to me:

Researcher: So the first two years did you live in a camp or did you live in a house?

Interpreter: She couldn't answer so I helped her with the words. I said is it an asylum seeker facility and she said yes but it was far away, a lot of snow.

However, in other cases, the way interpreters authored themselves or positioned themselves in relation to participants could impact on the quality of data. Interpreters generally authored themselves as culturally aligned with participants, finding common ground in religion, country of origin, ethnicity, or refugeehood; however, there were cases where an interpreter also authored themselves as an insider and expert vis-à-vis the participants, which could impact on the negotiation of meaning in the interviews:

Participant: [Malay] *Sometimes my youngest one, maybe because he lack… he just speak English usually*

Interpreter: [Malay] *Children they will lose their language. In order, to make sure that they don't lose their language, parents…*

P: *when he arrived here, he does not speak yet.*

I: *Parents still need to speak Malay. Even though, they may not speak the language, they might understand. Just don't lose your language*

P: *Mix, mix*

I: *Like my kids, they do not speak Malay, but I still speak Malay*

P: *Now all my 3 kids speaks English*

I: *Yes. Just don't lose it*

> I: The thing is because she said that the children is speaking English so I told her you I mean it's better for you to keep the mother tongue because the parents should keep speaking their mother tongue because the children already

The excerpt shows that the negotiation of meaning and subsequent summary is heavily influenced by the interpreter and also invisible to the researcher due to the simplified summary. The post-interview transcription, carried out by the same interpreter, revealed a much more complex negotiation of meaning than initially relayed. Post-interview transcripts were thus essential for clarifying meaning and highlighting meaning-making processes (Kosny et al., 2014).

3.4.2. The role of translanguaging

Throughout interviews, whether mediated by interpreters or not, participants drew on a range of linguistic and multimodal resources to construct meaning (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023), build rapport (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022), express affect (Rolland, 2023) and contest imposed identities (Bakhtin, 1981a; Blackledge & Creese, 2019; Busch, 2017; Pavlenko, 2007). Translanguaging opportunities were greater in the interpreter-mediated interviews, where participants were able to freely switch between their first (or dominant) language and the host language but were also present in unmediated interviews.

In unmediated interviews, participants occasionally drew on other lexical resources, including English in Swedish interviews (e.g., *nurse, time, cook, single mom*), French (e.g., *grippe* 'influenza') and commonly known Arabic words (e.g., *Alhamdulillah* 'praise be to God' and names of countries). However, more frequently used were multimodal resources, such as translator apps, which allowed participants to quickly access key vocabulary needed to express themselves (see Gordon, 2022) and Google Images to clarify meaning, for example, the United Nations logo to clarify that they were quota refugees approved by UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). Body language was an effective means of facilitating comprehension and participants also relied on pen and paper at times, particularly to write down numbers and dates. All these strategies required me to state audibly my interpretation of the multimodal meaning-making, as interviews were audio-recorded only.

Negotiation and co-construction of meaning in unmediated interviews also relied on the communicative strategies that participants had become familiar with through living in a new linguistic context, including clarification and circumlocution:

> Participant: He like kind of stayed in Afghanistan. The rich people, they catch it to ask about the money. We hadn't had like kind of that money that they wanted.
>
> Researcher: Oh, so he was kidnapped?

P: Kidnapped, yeah.

Translanguaging for meaning construction was also carried out in interpreter-mediated interviews where a participant with a reasonable spoken fluency in English or Swedish had elected to carry out the interview predominantly in the host language. In these situations, participants could use the interpreter as a linguistic resource and draw on a range of linguistic and multimodal resources, thus engaging their full semiotic repertoire to create meaning and maintain narrative flow. This can be seen in the following excerpt narrating an air raid in Iraq during the Gulf War:

> Participant: And the funny thing I had a film in the TV and turn off and go to sleep ok. When I put my head
>
> Researcher: On the pillow
>
> P: *On the pillow.*
>
> Interpreter: On the pillow yeah
>
> P: Yeah. I hear Grrrrrrrrrrr. What happened? I looked in the window. This night very cold looks like these days. I open, I hear maybe I thought 100 fighter bombers looks like this and start the bomb boom boom boom boom. I told Nasira [wife] come, hurry. In this time I have my son Osama, and my daughter Aisha. I put Aisha looks like *A coat just like this one* [points at a coat].
>
> I: Coat
>
> P: Coat, put Aisha in the coat and [imitates zipper sound]
>
> R: Did the zip up yeah

In addition to meaning-making, participants in interpreter-mediated interviews also appeared to use translanguaging for self-authoring, particularly when expressing their ambitions for language learning and work, as in the following excerpt delivered in Swedish:

> A lot I want now. I want to write and I want to read. I want to speak Swedish. I want to, I want to. Here in Sweden must, must read, must write. Then I want to work.

Using the host language added another layer to their self-authoring by exemplifying their motivation and commitment to the language (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023).

The translanguaging practice employed in interpreter-mediated interviews also enabled participants to manage the interview relationships to some extent, and to choose to address the researcher directly, even if only on very familiar topics and in simple terms. Thus, the topic of

family was often addressed in the host language as far as possible as a way of building rapport (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022). This was particularly the case when the participant was a woman and we had established in initial small talk or the early stage of the interview that we were both mothers. One participant thus showed me (but not the male interpreter) photos of her children and told me, in the host language (Swedish), which one had the gunshot wound, referring back to an earlier narrative. This relationship building was also suggested in translanguaging switches where additional information was given through the interpreter, but emotive evaluations were then added in the host language, as in the following example:

> Participant: [in Swedish] Mummy and daddy Syria. Mummy after Suede died.
>
> Researcher: Ahhh
>
> P: [speaks Arabic to interpreter]
>
> Interpreter: My mum died after I came to Sweden.
>
> P: [in Swedish, with emotion] No see anymore mummy
>
> R: Oh, not seeing her
>
> P: [in Swedish] Ten years

After lengthy interpreter-mediated narratives on difficult topics, participants would often re-orient to me directly with an emotive evaluation as well. In an interview with four Rohingya women they spoke of the difficulty of knowing their parents were still living in destitute conditions in refugee camps, crying as they spoke. At the end the most proficient speaker turned to me to say in English: 'We start crying. It is sad'.

However, while emotive addresses were made in the host language, the narration of emotional experiences was often performed in the first language, as also noted by Rolland (2023). Thus, a long emotional segment could be delivered in L1, with translanguaging shifts indicating emotive addresses to me. This is clear in the passage below, a narration of the crossing of the Mediterranean, where 'I remember…' (spoken in Swedish) provides an emotional appeal and bears witness to a traumatic event:

> *The sea was horrific. People were drowning and dying in front of my own eyes. They were only children.*
>
> *I was in the sea at 00:30.*
>
> I remember oh yes HEEEEEY! NOOOOO! NOOOOO!

> *We were on the boat. There were three different boats, but because the smugglers were driving very fast some people started to fall off the boats.*

Finally, translanguaging was used as a way of contesting imposed identities and discourses. One of the Swedish participants appeared to be equally proficient in English and Swedish, and used both languages in the interview. Within sections of English text, he would employ heteroglossic expressions to capture the full meaning of a lexical item, including connotative meanings that the Swedish word (underlined) possessed, but that may not be as clearly associated with its English equivalent. In the excerpt below he thus uses the Swedish word *invandrare* ('immigrant', primarily used for humanitarian migrants and non-European migrants, and carrying a range of negative connotations):

> always they are talking, just keep talking about <u>invandrare</u>. And I know, there's too many fears from the <u>invandrare</u>. I really know that. But nobody comes from the Swedish people and go inside the problems of those people.

The use of the Swedish *invandrare* also gives a multivoiced quality to the utterance and introduces a distinctively Swedish voice which is then laid open to contestation as the participant goes on to contest the Swedish stereotypical representations of immigrants and refugees later in the narrative.

3.4.3. Learning through interaction

Lastly, providing participants with the choice of participating in the host language and enabling them to choose the extent to which they used the host language even in facilitated interviews gave them the opportunity to engage with a language learning context if they chose to do so (Polo-Pérez, 2023). This was particularly important as 39 of the participants were engaged in formal language instruction, and an additional 6 were learning informally while taking care of their children. The majority of those engaged in language learning stated that they had minimal opportunity for informal language practice and valued the opportunity to engage with a native speaker. As stated earlier, many opted for interviews in the host language, and others opted to use the host language as far as possible even with interpreters or language support persons present. During interviews, some participants also actively sought learning opportunities, particularly in terms of vocabulary and pronunciation.

In unmediated interviews, participants would at times struggle to retrieve a lexical item, which they could recognise when provided, but also repeated in order to cement it. Use of translator apps in the interviews could also serve as language learning opportunity as the participant encountered new lexical items:

R: Relaxed?

P: [uses translator app] Yes and cal-m, calm.

R: Calm. You feel relaxed and calm.

Participants in interpreter-mediated interviews also took opportunities to learn new words or correct their pronunciation. In the following excerpt the participant identified *sanctions* as a useful lexical item and purposefully engaged in acquiring it:

I: All countries stopped any economical transactions with Iraq

R: Yes, sanctions

P: The section?

R: Sanction

I: sanction

P: sanc-tion, sanction

In the following excerpt an Arabic-speaking woman works on her pronunciation as she negotiates the Swedish minimal pair *änka* /ɛŋka/ 'widow' and *anka* /aŋka/ 'duck'

Participant: Jag anka ('I duck')

Interpreter: Änka ('widow')

P: Änka. Änka ('widow, widow')

Researcher: Änka ('widow')

I: *Anka means duck.*

R: Änka ('widow')

P: Anka ('duck')

I: Nej, änka, än, änka ('No, widow [emphasises sound], widow')

P: Ännnka ('widow')

I: *The A that has two dots on top. The dash.*

P: Änka ('widow')

R: Änka ('widow')

Providing participants with the opportunity to engage with the host language from a language learning perspective was seen as an ethical choice (Polo-Pérez, 2023). The language was not imposed on them as a host language, but they were given the opportunity to practice, to construct meaning and to deliberately work on their language, thus making the interview setting meaningful for their goals.

3.5. Discussion and conclusion

Drawing on Bakhtinian dialogism as well as literature on researching multilingually, this article has investigated the role of language and agency in multilingual research interviews, particularly in terms of the role of the interpreter, how translanguaging practices are used in the interviews and how participants make use of the interview context as a language learning opportunity.

The engagement of interpreters was crucial for the study, as it facilitated the inclusion of marginalised participants whose voices would otherwise have been excluded (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2022; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022) and also enabled participants to engage a wider range of linguistic resources (Tesseur, 2022). In addition to translating utterances, interpreters assisted with rapport building, and with additional knowledge and cultural interpretation (Backhaus, 2022; Tesseur, 2022). Although some of the complications suggested by earlier research (Kosny et al., 2014; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Williamson et al., 2011) were evident in the study, these were generally mitigated. Thus, while there were instances where the interpreter's mediation distanced the researcher from the negotiation of meaning, this was mitigated by the practice of transcribing interview sections after the interview (Murray & Wynne, 2001; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011). The careful selection and preparation of interpreters also proved very important (Backhaus, 2022; Murray & Wynne, 2001; Temple & Edwards, 2002; Tesseur, 2022; Williamson et al., 2011) as did the choice to allow participants the freedom to translanguage in interpreter-mediated interviews.

The translanguaging approach (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland et al., 2023) adopted in this article extends our understanding of how meaning is co-constructed across linguistic resources. It shows that participants utilise their linguistic and multimodal repertoires to construct meaning, to engage in dialogical relationship building, to orient towards their addressee, to author themselves and to contest imposed identities. In line with previous authors (Blackledge & Creese, 2019; Blommaert & Rampton, 2016; Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Pavlenko, 2007; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland et al., 2023; Wei, 2018), the article confirms that a range of resources are utilised in meaning construction and that individuals select the resources that are

most efficient in achieving their communicative and other goals. In unmediated interviews, this particularly included multimodal resources, such as media and translator apps (Gordon, 2022), but also shared vocabulary in a range of languages as well as other communication strategies. In interpreter-mediated interviews more proficient speakers utilised interpretation to narrate emotionally difficult experiences (Rolland, 2023) and relied on the interpreter to deal with difficult lexical items or statements so as not to interrupt the flow of the narrative. From a dialogical perspective (Bakhtin et al., 1986), participants oriented to the researcher as their addressee in interpreter-mediated interviews through utilising the host language to talk about familiar matters and giving emotive evaluations of narratives, thus building rapport (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022). This led to translanguaging shifts from first-language narrations of emotionally difficult events to host-language emotive evaluations addressed directly to the researcher. Translanguaging also provided additional resources for authoring as the host language was employed by participants to author themselves as competent and motivated language learners (Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023). Further, in contesting others' authoring and discourses (Tanggaard, 2009; Vitanova, 2005), the participants had access to additional means of contestation through translanguaging and heteroglossia.

Additionally, by giving participants control of the multilingual space of the research interview in terms of what linguistic affordances were available to them and how these were utilised moment-by-moment in the interviews, participants were able to utilise the interview setting as sites for language learning (Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023). Some thus chose to engage more exclusively with the host language to potentially extend their repertoire in the longer term (Turner & Lin, 2020) while others made use of the interpreter to assist their language acquisition. Providing this opportunity was seen as an ethical choice and a way of giving back to participants who had few opportunities to practice the host language (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023), but it also provided an opportunity to observe language learning strategies and language learning motivation, particularly in informal, interactional contexts. These insights, combined with data obtained from narrated experiences of language learning, have the potential to provide rich, triangulated data (see also Rolland, 2023).

As suggested in the literature (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2022; Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland, 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022), decisions about language in multilingual research are not simply practical decisions, but also carry ethical and political dimensions. For equitable representation in research, appropriate involvement of interpreters should be facilitated by researchers, institutions and funders to ensure that linguistically marginalised groups can be included (Holmes et al., 2022; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022). Further, research participants should as far as possible be given agency

and autonomy in terms of language choice (Rolland et al., 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022) not only when determining the preferred language of the interview, but also, as far as possible, in the moment, to allow for translanguaging and for language learning opportunities.

This chapter has outlined the methodological considerations of researching multilingually, and analysed and reflected on how this methodology was carried out throughout the research process. As well as providing insights into multilingual research and its benefits and challenges, it also provides insights into the agency of refugee-background participants. The findings demonstrate how these participants engage purposely in interactions, authoring themselves, choosing what to contest and who to address, while also making the most of language learning opportunities.

The next chapter, which officially introduces the Findings section of the thesis, provides something of a contrast by demonstrating how refugees are authored in terms of their settlement journeys. Drawing on data from refugees as well as language teachers and settlement support workers in both Sweden and New Zealand, it investigates the reductive 'integration' narrative, and its impacts on settlement. The chapter provides an introduction to the settlement experience and to the differences and similarities in the two settlement contexts, together with an introduction to reductive representations of the 'refugee identity'.

Chapter 4: 'We kiss everyone's hands to get a permanent job, but where is it?': The failure of the social inclusion narrative for refugees

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4.1. Introduction

The process of receiving or resettling humanitarian migrants is subject to contradictory expectations of verifiable deservingness. On the one hand, to prove their need for asylum or third-country resettlement, individuals are expected to demonstrate considerable vulnerability and are authored as victims and as powerless; on the other hand, once granted residence, they rapidly become subject to an integration narrative where self-sufficiency is the primary aim and where failure becomes a marker of unworthiness (Darrow, 2018). Social inclusion for humanitarian migrants is all too often framed in terms of a duty to integrate rather than as a right to access markets, services, and spaces (World Bank Group, 2014). This is particularly salient in terms of access to the labour market and to language education, where the duty to learn the language and gain employment is often emphasised above the human right to work and to education (UN General Assembly, 1948, Arts. 23 and 26 respectively). Social exclusion is thus seen as a deficiency on the part of the individual that needs to be remedied through a range of incentives and disincentives (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021).

This article is based on research in two contexts: a post-industrial/rural municipality in Sweden (Nyfält) and a designated resettlement area for quota refugees in New Zealand (Novatown). Sweden and New Zealand were selected as they are both refugee-receiving first-world countries with clear integration programmes but with significantly different histories of migration and refugee reception. Sweden is historically a country of emigration, conceived of as culturally homogeneous, and with a traditionally generous asylum policy that has become increasingly restrictive since 2015 (Stern, 2019). New Zealand, on the other hand, is a settler country, officially bicultural, and with a historically very restrictive refugee reception, which has only recently

started increasing (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a). While the contexts have significant differences, there is also a range of similarities in terms of how refugees are perceived, the barriers they face to social inclusion, and how the journey to self-sufficiency is conceptualised. Both contexts have certain narratives of what 'integration' looks like and presume a straightforward process for newcomers who possess sufficient motivation and desire to be included in their new social context. Both contexts also have a range of barriers that complicate this process and an apparently limited understanding of these among policymakers.

4.2. Literature review

4.2.1. Refugee reception in New Zealand and Sweden

While New Zealand has significant numbers of immigrant arrivals, both permanent and temporary, refugees constitute a very small part that is nevertheless significant in terms of settlement needs (Mortensen, 2011). New Zealand receives primarily UNHCR-approved quota refugees, with a yearly quota of 1,500 (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a) and an additional 600 under the family support category (Immigration New Zealand, 2023e). A small number of asylum seekers—generally fewer than 150—are also accepted yearly (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d). New Zealand's quota is small partly to be able to incorporate categories of refugees who may require additional support during settlement, such as women at risk, medical and disabled cases, and cases requiring special protection or additional support (Beaglehole, 2013; Marlowe, 2018). The controlled nature of refugee resettlement in New Zealand means that individuals and families are allocated to one of thirteen resettlement locations (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b) and are often settled with members of the same linguistic and ethnic background in order to facilitate support.

In contrast to New Zealand, Sweden has traditionally been a country with very generous asylum policies, but significant changes have taken place in the years since 2015 and policies are becoming increasingly restrictive. Generous asylum policies and conditions for settlement meant that large numbers entered Sweden over the years (Hagelund, 2020), culminating in 2015 with a total of about 160,000 asylum seekers (SCB, 2023). The large numbers led to revised migration laws (Stern, 2019) and in 2022 the numbers had decreased to about 9,000 quota refugees and asylum seekers with just under 3,000 family reunification cases (Migrationsverket, 2024a). The current government (elected in 2022) is reducing numbers further, with the quota decreasing from 5,000 to 900 and further restrictions on asylum seekers to be implemented (*Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige*, 2022).

Both Sweden and New Zealand place a significant emphasis on labour market participation for refugees (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Marlowe et al., 2014) although Sweden views education as

a necessary precursor to employment (Hernes et al., 2022). A high threshold to employment in Sweden means that labour market entry can be delayed (Hernes et al., 2022), but outcomes improve steadily the longer an individual resides in the country. While employment rates are only at 45% for refugees who have been in the country for 0–9 years, these increase to 65% after 10–19 years and to 80% after 20 years or more (SCB, 2021). Outcomes are impacted by a range of factors, including gender, age, area of origin, and earlier access to education (SCB, 2021). In the New Zealand context, an expectation of rapid labour market integration is reflected in the frequent monitoring of results, which occur one year, two years, three years, and five years after settlement. However, time is still an important factor and only 10–18% of working-age refugees are in paid employment after one year in the country, while after three years the figures increase to 30–40% and 40–50% at the five-year mark (MBIE, 2021). Outcomes are impacted by gender—with women being less likely to be engaged in the labour market—and country of origin, with refugees from Iraq, Myanmar, Syria, and Afghanistan finding it most difficult to gain employment (MBIE, 2021).

4.2.2. Understanding social inclusion, language, and employment in refugee settlement

Social inclusion for refugees, in the form of access to the labour market and language education, has received increasing academic attention in recent years but remains comparatively under-researched, and under-theorised (Garnier et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Morrice et al., 2021). While learning the host language has been demonstrated to be essential for self-sufficiency, well-being, and integration (Blake et al., 2017; Morrice et al., 2021; Tip et al., 2019), there is a need for a greater understanding of language learning for adult refugees and how various countries' policies may impact learning opportunities (Morrice et al., 2021). Similarly, while a range of studies has been undertaken on refugees and workforce integration (see Lee et al., 2020), significant gaps remain. Lee et al. (2020) suggest that there is a need for further investigations that take into consideration multiple levels, cross-country contexts, and a range of stakeholder perspectives. Further, while there is significant evidence of refugees being subject to barriers to employment and advancement, many studies focus exclusively on individual agency and the improvement of human capital rather than providing any theorisation on structural barriers (Lee et al., 2020).

Investigating the structural barriers and the underlying ideologies that motivate them involves a critique of the idealised integration narrative which presupposes that individual motivation is the only requirement for success and that lack of success is best addressed through incentivisation. In the context of refugee language learning, incentivisation has been investigated by Kosyakova et al. (2022). The results of the quantitative study demonstrate that in the refugee context incentives have very little impact on language learning in comparison to other factors such as

exposure, although the authors found that language learning was considerably improved for those being granted residence. The guarantee of continuous residence then appears to have increased the learners' investment in the language, and perhaps also their ability to invest when no longer in a state of precarity. Incentivisation in relation to labour market entry has been investigated in a quantitative study by Hernes et al. (2022) providing comparisons between Sweden, Norway, and Denmark. The authors suggest that the incentivisation model, which at the time their data was captured was only used in Denmark, leads to comparatively high employment outcomes in the short term, but decreases in outcomes over time. On the other hand, the focus on education prior to employment in Norway and Sweden delayed access to employment but appeared to lead to more stable long-term outcomes. While these studies are significant, they are quantitative studies, and the findings would benefit from being supplemented by a qualitative perspective, as also suggested by Hernes et al. (2022). Further, recent changes in Swedish policies have meant that an incentivisation model has recently been adopted in Sweden (Emilsson, 2020), and the impacts of this on individuals is an important area for exploration.

To address some of the research gaps outlined above, I have chosen to investigate social inclusion, language learning and employment in refugee settlement from multiple stakeholder perspectives, engaging with two significantly different contexts, and exploring ideological, institutional, and individual dimensions. To do this, a dialogical perspective will be adopted as it provides a framework to investigate relational as well as ideological dimensions of social inclusion.

4.2.3. A dialogical perspective

From a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective, identity is intersubjective, that is, constructed in the multiple interactions between Self and Other so that our sense of who we are is dependent on how others perceive and understand our identities (Holquist, 1990; Sullivan, 2012). In our interactions we not only author our identities or 'create ourselves' as we address and respond to Others (Holquist, 1990, pp. 28-29); we also author others and, in turn, are authored by others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). In the act of being authored, subjects may be authored as valued individuals, enriched and unique, or as 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 298).

I will argue that in the context of refugee reception or resettlement, there is a tendency to author refugees as a type designed to fit into a monological, epic narrative of integration. In a monological narrative, the subject 'acts, experiences, thinks, and is conscious…within the limits of his image' as defined by the author (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 52) and is not seen as an individual with their own uniqueness. The subject is not entitled to their own truth but is subjected to the singular 'truth' imposed by the author and is also subject to 'a reification' to fit into a market-oriented understanding of reality (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 62). In the epic narrative, the objectified subject also

becomes the hero of a predetermined plot. Their character will be tested through challenges where success is always guaranteed if they have the character of a hero and 'pass a test of virtue' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 46). Therefore, an epic discourse does not contain any space for debate as to the validity of the quest or the fairness of the obstacles (Sullivan, 2012).

4.2.4. The epic language learner

An epic construction of the 'language-learning *other*' provides a narrative that precludes any recognition of structural constraints or economic inequalities and, instead, attributes success or failure solely to the effort and motivation of the self-actualising individual. This reductive view of the language learner fails to recognise how formal language learning is impacted by unique individual circumstances including age and gender (Morrice et al., 2021), physical or emotional health (Field & Kearney, 2021), and earlier educational disadvantage (Field & Kearney, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021). It also fails to take into consideration the sociocultural aspects of language learning (Rydell, 2018) and the less-than-favourable conditions for informal language learning that refugees encounter in society and the workplace (Piller, 2016). Viewing language learning as a personal responsibility and attributing slow progress to individual motivational factors, leads to the implementation of solutions that do not address affordances for language learning, but individual responsibility and motivation. Campaigns aimed at newcomers assume that they do not understand the value of acquiring the dominant language (Piller, 2016), and measures to promote language learning often include financial incentives or punishments even though research suggests that refugees rate language learning as a high priority (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021).

4.2.5. The epic job seeker

While entry into the labour market is a high priority for refugees (O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014), it also tends to be used as the exclusive measure of social inclusion by policymakers and politicians (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014). The epic job seeker narrative is evident in both contexts of the study through a policy-level focus on rapid labour market integration as well as practices designed to incentivise entry into work, even at the expense of language learning (Cooke, 2006; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021).

In New Zealand, which has a long history of immigration to meet labour market demands (Peace & Spoonley, 2019), the initial resettlement of refugees was explicitly designed to cater to labour market needs (Beaglehole, 2013). While humanitarian criteria are currently predominant in the selection process, the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy focuses strongly on rapid entry into (any) employment and on refugees rapidly decreasing their needs for government support (Marlowe et al., 2014). In addition, refugees are also subject to welfare initiatives that

favour a work-focused approach, with high expectations of work readiness and sanctions for welfare beneficiaries not meeting the requirements placed on job seekers (O'Donovan & Sheikh, 2014).

In the Swedish context, integration has increasingly come to be measured in terms of employment rates (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017) and engaging in employment is framed as a duty for the reluctant job seeker to realise. Thus, Swedish for Immigrants (Sfi) courses have increasingly become 'labour market tools' (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017, p. 124), and participants have been required to divide their time between language learning and work experience placements. Unremunerated engagement in the workplace is expected to yield significant benefits for the individual, though empirical studies in the Swedish (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017) and Danish (Arendt & Bolvig, 2020) contexts have demonstrated that students have extremely limited interactional opportunities in these settings. In addition to these measures, permanent residence, as well as family reunification, is now contingent on sustainable financial self-sufficiency, meaning that there is considerable pressure to gain long-term employment in order to secure long-term residence and to bring one's spouse and children (Emilsson, 2020).

4.3. Methodology

The data that forms the basis for this article was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews in New Zealand (2021) and Sweden (2022). Interviews were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee, embedded in the broader sociocultural context (Tanggaard, 2009), and included open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to follow up on matters of interest, but also allowed participants to redirect the conversation to topics of interest to them. Because of the potentially emotional nature of the interviews, the interviewer and interpreters prioritised the well-being of participants by retreating from topics they were reluctant to speak about (e.g., the refugee journey), and redirected the conversation when required. Interviews were conducted in either Swedish or English, with interpreters as required or requested by participants. Interpreters in New Zealand were selected based on recommendations from the settlement support agency, and in Sweden by contacting interpreters through an open database until a suitable interpreter was found. Criteria for selection included availability for face-to-face interviews, experience, and ability to deal with a range of dialects (specifically the Arabic interpreter). Aside from interpreting, the interpreters also assisted with cultural brokering before, during and after the interviews, and additional cultural advice has been sought from members of ethnic and religious communities as required. Data was transcribed by the researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features. Analysis was done in English and Swedish, and quotes included in this article from the Swedish dataset are translated by the researcher. A full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by

the Massey University Human Ethics committee. In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross in New Zealand and by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority.

Data are based on interviews with a total of 85 participants who were approached through educational institutions, ethnic organisations, and agencies. Participants included former refugees (*n* = 56), language teachers and tutors (*n* = 14), and individuals working in roles supporting refugee settlement (*n* = 15). Refugee background participants in New Zealand included Afghan, Rohingya, and Palestinian refugees who were either quota refugees or had arrived under the family reunification category. In Sweden, they were primarily Syrian and Eritrean refugees but also refugees of other Arabic-speaking and African backgrounds and included quota refugees, family reunification cases, and asylum seekers who had been granted asylum and now were Swedish residents or citizens. Educational backgrounds ranged from no formal education to university degrees, and participants' reported proficiency at the time of the interviews ranged from pre-A1 to C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) in English or Swedish respectively. There were no exclusion criteria, but as the main vehicles for recruiting participants were language schools and settlement organisations, many were in their early stages of language learning and/or settlement. No participant had been settled for more than 10 years. All names of participants and places are pseudonyms and ethnic and gender identifiers have been used only where relevant to understanding the data.

4.3.1. Dialogical data analysis

To understand data, I draw on a dialogical analysis that is both semantic and structural. Semantically, I have chosen to adopt a method that looks for the dialogical processes expressed in interview data, as well as the generalised or larger-scale dialogical interactions taking place outside the interview context. Using the NVivo software, semantic analysis was undertaken through a coding methodology that is based on the grounded theory method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) but deviates from this in that it adopts a developed theoretical perspective as a guiding framework for analysis. Like GTM, coding was done inductively, looking for processes and actions and connecting these together into larger processes and concepts (Charmaz, 2006). Once higher-level categories were created, these processes were then analysed dialogically. The semantic analysis was supplemented by dialogical narrative inquiry, paying attention to the way utterances are always in response to the positions and utterances of others, both present (e.g., the interviewer) and absent (Holquist, 1990) thereby discovering the discourses that have influenced the responses of the participants.

4.4. Findings

Findings from the interviews indicated that refugee background participants were familiar with dominant epic narratives, and resented these, instead describing themselves as highly motivated both as language learners and as job seekers but facing a range of obstacles and difficult choices. The epic construction of integration was not only viewed as a misrepresentation, but it also became clear that incentivisation measures did not foster rapid social inclusion but often had the opposite effect. Although many of the themes and processes were common to both the Swedish and New Zealand contexts, interviews in the Swedish context offered particular insights into a pathway to sustainable employment that was lengthy, inflexible, and disrupted, while the New Zealand interviews provided insights into rapid labour market entry and its consequences.

4.4.1. Desire and motivation

In both contexts, refugee background participants were aware that they were authored as reluctant language learners and job seekers and contested these representations. Language was described as 'key' and language learning as common sense:

> Since we came to this country, learning the language of this country is important. (NZ)

> Do you think there is any person who doesn't want to speak the language? (SW)

Language was seen as a means of social inclusion and as a requirement for a viable dialogical identity in the new context. Even when language support was available from professional interpreters or the first language community, individuals desired the independence arising from competence:

> I have to speak from my own tongue. It's better, it's reliable, it's convenient. (NZ)

> I want to, without interpreters, speak myself. (SW)

However, the desire to speak did not necessarily lead to proficiency. Participants quoted a range of barriers, including age, family responsibilities, trauma, transnational responsibilities, health, and lack of prior education and/or literacy.

The desire for social inclusion and a viable dialogical identity extended to a desire for employment. At the most basic level, engaging in employment was a way of authoring a contributing identity, as opposed to the assigned identity as deficient:

> We're refugees but we're just the same humans as you guys, like, you helped us, we can help you guys. (NZ)

> I want to become someone. I don't want to be a problem. I want to show that we, we came here to be like ordinary people, to help, to integrate in society. (SW)

Individuals who valued their identity as a hard worker, struggled particularly with not being able to realise this identity in a new context:

> I like working. When [I] have work, I am happy. When not have work I not happy… I understand working.

The desire to work was clearly also conditioned by financial need, as financial resources were seen as indispensable for social inclusion, and particularly crucial in assisting their children's inclusion:

> They play sport and they like to be, they're trying to be like [New Zealanders], like others. And they need more label clothes. Of course it's optional, but they don't think it's optional. (NZ)

Importantly, establishing employment as a desire, refugee-background participants often framed work not as a duty but rather as a right that they were denied:

> And they say that refugees do not want to work, but this is not correct. They come here to work and provide for their families… They come to find security. To find a good life. But they don't find security, not a good life. They couldn't find a job. And it's – all humans have the right to work. (SW)

4.4.2. New Zealand: Doing the jobs that nobody wants

Data from the New Zealand interviews clearly exemplified the ideology of rapid entry to the workplace and that refugees should assist in addressing the labour shortages in New Zealand rather than seek careers leading to social mobility. This ideology was so embedded that it was used to promote a positive narrative of refugee reception by language teachers and support workers:

> Yeah, I'd say they are happy to do any menial task that we think is beyond ourselves and won't do them.

> [People say] they are taking Kiwis' [New Zealanders'] jobs and that's when I can at least say, well, that's absolutely rubbish. Because Kiwis aren't taking their own [entry-level] jobs

It was also clear to refugees, who contested it:

> So what I am seeing, about the refugee people didn't have perfect education. [Some organisations] like to use these people to work on, like, part time jobs, season jobs, and [entry-level] jobs.

For those intending to enter skilled or semi-skilled work, there was a range of barriers, even for those with qualifications and professional experience. In Novatown existing networks were a strong factor in obtaining employment, and participants also reported that aspects that made you appear culturally different in your application and interview were likely to impact your success, including your name, your overseas work experience (depending on the country), cultural differences in interactions, and whether you were wearing a hijab. Improving career prospects through undertaking further study was primarily complicated by the financial aspect, and choosing between the obligation to provide for family members (on location or abroad) and personal ambitions:

> That's the moral conflict that I went through… Do I go for my labour job, like being a waitress forever for the rest of my life? Do I go for a social work degree where I have to compromise many days of the week just sitting in school and I wouldn't be able to work?

This was aggravated by a rigid student allowance system, limited to 120–200 weeks, depending on age (Ministry of Social Development, 2023). If some of this allowance was required for language study, this could limit the time available for mainstream tertiary study:

> [In my final year of university] they told me your Studylink [student allowance] has finished. My Studylink, I use, like, 192 weeks. Just eight weeks I could study.

For language learners, the student allowance could only be utilised for courses that led to nationally recognised qualifications and therefore had higher requirements on literacy levels and academic ability. For other English courses, students remained on the Jobseeker Allowance, subject to obligations designed to promote rapid financial self-sufficiency. This, combined with a poor understanding of how long language acquisition for adults may take, meant that language lessons could be curtailed by social welfare employees:

> And they say, oh, you already two years, you already three years, you no need to learn anymore. You have to work. If you [do] not work we'll stop your benefit.

With labour shortages and employers willing to take on workers with very low English proficiency (CEFR pre-A1), Jobseeker beneficiaries with limited literacy and language could be offered employment, which they were then obligated to accept. Once in entry-level employment beginner users of English found it difficult to improve their work situation as there were few

pathways available and incentivisation measures prevented workers from re-engaging with language learning. A work broker explained:

> We get people and they're pushing us to get them into work, so we get them into you know that entry-level work, be it horticultural or other sectors, labouring type [of] roles. But there's no avenue later down the track when they come off the benefit to be re-engaging in stair-casing these people into other roles.

Progression within a workplace was complicated by the fact that there were few in-work opportunities for literacy and language development and most other in-work training opportunities relied on written materials in English.

To discourage workers from abandoning or losing their employment, the social welfare agency had a 13-week stand-down period before the Jobseeker benefit could be recommenced (Work and Income, 2022). There was therefore little possibility for leaving employment to re-enter English study unless you were able to undertake the more demanding courses leading to national qualifications. With limited understanding of systems and processes, and limited access to information, not all individuals understood their work obligations, and particularly the 13-week stand-down period. This excessive penalty then affected them and their families:

> If you stop their benefit thirteen weeks, how the family want to eat and survive? If you say two weeks, three weeks, we can understand, oh, this is my wrong, my fault… If you stop the family thirteen weeks, better you give the family poison.

For those who entered the workforce with lower levels of language and limited literacy, there was also little opportunity for informal language learning in the workplace. To manage the language challenges employers would hire groups of people from the same linguistic background and appoint the most proficient speaker as the communicator for the group, limiting workplace exposure to English:

> They are constantly using their own language at work and at home and they're not getting any opportunity to develop their language or understanding in a social—you know, work and social environments.
>
> *Work broker*

With a limited command of English, they also struggled to access their rights as employees:

> One said, oh, my arm's a bit sore. Just, you know, that sort of thing… But for them to actually say, look, this is RSI, you know, understanding what their rights are, I don't know.
>
> *Language teacher*

For this group, engagement in the labour market facilitated financial inclusion, in that workers were better able to provide for themselves and their families and become taxpayers, but not social inclusion in the broader sense. Rapid entry to the workforce instead contributed to assigning to them a particular social location with limited scope for social mobility.

4.4.3. Sweden: The long road to employment

Despite the policy goals of rapid labour market entry, many of the Swedish participants found that there was a long road to employment, where compliance was expected but did not necessarily lead to the desired outcomes.

Those with higher levels of education and professional backgrounds, while able to gain employment, were often barred from working in their original field. Qualifications gained abroad were not accredited as equivalent to Swedish (or EU) qualifications, and work experience abroad was not ranked very highly:

> I was a computer engineer and I have earlier… really strong experience. With many international firms, companies, like Dell, HP, eh Cisco, yes, I have strong experience, I have a very strong CV… [But] if you have nothing, education from Sweden, you are zero.

There appeared to be a general expectation that professionals should be willing to re-evaluate their options. Examples included teachers becoming teacher aides, university lecturers becoming childcare workers, journalists becoming bilingual tutors, and IT experts working in administration. Even then, retraining to fit into the labour market could be time-consuming due to the rigorous education pathways, as was the case for this university-educated computer scientist:

> And she studies from the beginning. She studies supplementary high school courses, studies childcare, so she loses three years through studying. And now finally she's working as a child carer.

Those who had arrived in Sweden with little or no previous education, and often no or limited literacy, had to deal with even greater obstacles. They faced a labour market that was tightly regulated and highly technical, with a lack of 'simple jobs' and high expectations on language and education even for entry-level work:

> We have incredibly high levels of education in Sweden. And then if you are illiterate, as many are, which we don't have in Sweden, the politicians don't get how long it takes to learn this language in order to take a course, in order to get a job… If you are going to be a cleaner, you still need to understand pretty good Swedish because you then need a course.

Language teacher

Policymakers and bureaucrats lacked an understanding of the needs of this group, as exemplified in the centralisation and digitalisation of the state employment agency:

> They have transferred to make it digital services. And that you apply for work digitally. But a person who is illiterate from Somalia doesn't handle digital services, so right there, integration has failed.
>
> *Integration facilitator*

Individuals who genuinely wanted assistance in obtaining work were frustrated with only receiving directives and no actual support:

> Not working. Employment agency: You must work. Which work?… I must myself [find] work… I don't know work.
>
> *Refugee*

For these individuals, a significant period of language learning could also be necessary before they were work ready, which was difficult for policymakers to appreciate. In addition to the difficulties associated with age and lack of earlier education, many also lived segregated from fluent Swedish speakers:

> Actually, do our students study Swedish as a second language, or are they that segregated from the Swedish that they rather study Swedish as a foreign language?
>
> *Language teacher*

Even for those with Swedish neighbours, interactions were difficult, as the neighbours generally politely declined opportunities for interaction:

> When I invite my neighbour, please, drink coffee, yes, again, again, please, I want to. 'No, no, thank you very much'
>
> *Refugee*

4.4.3.1. Incentivisation

While maintaining the high threshold to labour market entry, recent policies have sought to promote rapid entry into sustainable employment through the implementation of a number of incentivisation measures and projects. However, findings suggest that rather than facilitate labour market inclusion, these measures served to discourage individuals and often prolonged the road to sustainable employment.

Permanent residence and family reunification were both contingent on individuals becoming sustainably self-sufficient – in practical terms, gaining permanent employment. Seasonal work, subsidised employment, and fixed-term contracts did not count in this context, which meant individuals could be reluctant to take these positions. Additionally, the precarity experienced by those on temporary residence permits impacted their language learning motivation and focus:

> Often [motivation] is connected to a goal or a belief in the future… and if then you only have one or two years why on earth would you learn this complicated little language that is only useful for you in this tiny spot of the earth?
>
> *Language teacher*

The impact was perhaps the greatest for those who were still trying to qualify for family reunification, and whose spouses and children therefore lived in a state of long-term precarity elsewhere:

> We have participants who haven't seen their family for seven [to] eight years. Wife and children, only kind of Facetimed sometimes. And some have financial support yes send money to the family and are about to starve to death themselves. Of course it is a challenge to study and move forward.
>
> *Work broker*
>
> Much thinking, what shall I do, every day call to me children. 'Daddy, daddy,' they say. So you think about it. So you can't sleep. What shall I do? You think a lot.
>
> *Father with wife and children in displacement in Sudan*

The focus on rapid self-sufficiency also meant that a range of initiatives was carried out to create exposure to the labour market through work experience, seasonal work, various work schemes, and subsidised employment, in which the individuals often had limited choice. While there were examples in the data where these had been successful and lead to permanent employment, they were more often seen as disruptions to the language learning journey:

> Then they place them in some work experience or some job or something and then they come back… and then they have lost a lot and so we start over again. So yes, it's a bit of a never-ending story with them.
>
> *Language teacher*

Many who worked in workplaces with others who spoke the same first language struggled to retain what they had already learnt, and even when working in a Swedish-speaking environment, linguistic development was often limited:

> They've maybe learnt some of those phrases that make them understood, because you pick that up… 'I can communicate what is needed to cope with the work here.' Yes, but maybe you can't cope outside of your workplace.
>
> *Language teacher*

Unpaid work experience, which again individuals were obliged to accept, was particularly contentious, and interpreted as exploitation:

> There are many who are exploited. They go to work experience and are promised to get a job… and when time is up, out they throw them, and say, no, we cannot afford it, we cannot hire. So you are exploited.
>
> *Refugee*

As the temporary financial support is contingent on compliance with prescribed activities, compliance is high. However, compliance did not guarantee sustainable employment:

> And now I'm on activity support from early in the morning until the time I arrived [4 PM] every day and it's work without pay… We kiss everyone's hands to get a permanent job, but where is it?

4.4.4. Acknowledging the uniqueness of the individual

While the intended solutions in the shape of incentives and interventions did not produce the desired results, findings suggested that results may be obtained through a different approach—one that acknowledged the uniqueness of the individual and focused on interpersonal contact.

Nyfält municipality, after becoming discouraged with the state employment agency, set up their own employment unit, where they work with refugees, employers, and trainers to ensure each individual finds a pathway that is achievable:

> The biggest difference is that we work very close to the individual

In Novatown, the Pathways to Employment organisation filled the same function, brokering between refugees, employers, and training providers. However, they also felt that further work was needed for individuals to continue to develop:

> It would be nice to know that we could at some stage… take them out and use some funding to train them into better long-term employment

The need to understand and work with the individual was also echoed by refugees and language teachers who spoke of the need for tailored approaches to enable professionals to remain in their fields or to find realistic pathways for those with lower levels of education and literacy.

4.5. Discussion and conclusion

The current study suggests that refugees are subject to epic, monological narratives that portray the journey towards social inclusion as straightforward and contingent on the compliance and virtuosity of the individual, but that these narratives, and the ensuing processes, are contestable and, indeed, contested. The refugee background participants authored themselves as motivated language learners who desired to access the labour market and develop an identity as fully participating subjects. However, their efforts were thwarted by a range of barriers, as well as by the policies brought in to incentivise and fast-track their entry into the labour market. In the New Zealand context, the expectation and incentivisation leading to rapid labour market entry could confine refugees to a particular social location with limited possibility of social mobility and limited access to language learning opportunities. In the Swedish context, the failure to understand diverse needs could lead to a lengthy pathway to sustainable employment, which was often disrupted by projects and schemes that did not ultimately benefit the individual. Additionally, incentivisation relating to residence and family reunification caused considerable distress for individuals and impacted negatively on their progress.

The findings support earlier studies that have indicated that language learning provision has increasingly become a tool for labour market integration (Cooke, 2006; Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021) and that rapid entry to employment may negatively impact language acquisition and social inclusion (Piller, 2016). They also further exemplify the high levels of motivation among refugees (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021) as well as the lack of understanding among policymakers of the diverse needs of language learners (Field & Kearney, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021). Further, they confirm that incentives that increase precarity lead to a decrease, rather than an increase, in motivation and focus (Kosyakova et al., 2022; Scarpa & Schierup, 2018). Finally, they extend O'Donovan and Sheikh's (2014) argument that the solutions appear to lie in one-on-one support and interaction with individuals, rather than in high-level measures of incentivisation.

The dialogical perspective adopted in this article serves to further illuminate the ideology that underlies social inclusion policies for refugees but also hints at possible solutions. Social inclusion is unlikely to be successful as long as one group is treated as distant, 'otherised' subjects, without individual form and uniqueness and without voice in their own destiny. In the words of Bakhtin (1984, p. 58):

> A living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.

Thus, engaging dialogically with unique individuals, working one-on-one and creating viable pathways, is likely to produce greater social inclusion and employment outcomes than financial and social incentives and disincentives. This would also require an acknowledgement of language learning and employment as human rights rather than as duties that the individual is obliged to comply with.

The chapter has demonstrated how reductive representations of refugees lead to policies that ignore individual needs and instead focus on 'incentivisation' or punitive measures. It also argues that understanding individual uniqueness could be the key to more successful social inclusion outcomes, as the significant individual variations among refugees call for markedly different approaches and needs for support. In the next chapter, I will investigate the needs of one particular group of refugees: women with emergent print literacy. I will focus on fourteen of the refugee-background participants (all female) who were denied formal education in their past and did not have the opportunity to acquire print literacy. I will look at the challenges this poses as they are required to acquire print literacy and a new language simultaneously, while also navigating their gendered identities in a new context. I will highlight learner agency and argue that while these women have some things in common, there are also significant individual differences in terms of identity and investment, and that understanding these differences is crucial for providing effective language learning opportunities.

Chapter 5: Language learning, gender and education: Understanding the agency and affordances of refugee-background women with emergent literacy

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5.1. Introduction

Globally, educational inequalities mean that significant portions of the world's population grow up without access to formal education and often also without the opportunity to obtain print literacy. Educational disadvantages are in many cases related to gender, with women having fewer opportunities and therefore being more likely to have limited functional literacy (UNESCO, 2023). While scholars are increasingly recognising that 'literacy' should not be confined to the encoding and decoding of print but should be broadened to incorporate an understanding of 'multiliteracies' (Cazden et al., 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2023; New London Group, 2000), print literacy remains important in many contexts. Adults who have grown up in societies that value a range of literacies and where print literacy is not necessarily a prerequisite for successful social and labour market participation may through forced migration come into contact with highly technological and print dependent societies. There, they are expected to rapidly learn the language and become self-sufficient (Suni & Tammelin-Laine, 2020). In these new contexts, understanding the 'spatial array of graphemes' (Cope & Kalantzis, 2023, p. 27), while not the only kind of literacy, is integral to acquiring multiliteracies and successfully navigating society. This carries with it a range of challenges, especially as many Western countries lack the knowledge and expertise to cater to adult learners with emergent print literacy (Gonzalves, 2020). The experiences of these individuals can therefore differ significantly from those of other refugee-background learners, who may have a range of literacy skills and academic skills to draw on to assist language learning and settlement.

Research and literature in second language learning have tended to prioritise contexts where language is acquired either by children or by adults with good levels of education who are able to transfer a range of skills to the language learning situation (Tarone, 2010). However, in recent years, there has been an increasing interest in learners engaging in 'Literacy Education and Second Language Learning for Adults', or LESLLA (Minuz et al., 2022). The emerging research on LESLLA learners suggests that these learners face unique challenges, not only because they are acquiring print literacy for the first time in a language they have not yet mastered, but also because differences in phonological perception and metalinguistic awareness impact on their ability to acquire the new language (Gonzalves, 2020). Additionally, they often struggle to access quality literacy and language education after settlement, as there is limited expertise in this area among language teachers (Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011). Due to its focus on LESLLA learners, in this article the term 'literacy' will refer to the ability to encode and decode and to comprehend and produce written text.

Literacy and language acquisition can be significantly impacted by gender both in the country of origin and in the country of settlement as women experience ongoing barriers to education due to their gender and life roles (Beiser & Hou, 2000; Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Sharifian et al., 2021). In this article, gender will be used primarily to refer to the social construct of gender, that is, the roles and responsibilities assigned in various contexts to those identified as women. As the focal participants of this article are all biological mothers, the article will also take into consideration social constructions of motherhood as well as the biological aspects of pregnancy and childbirth. As gender and motherhood are negotiated differently and have different connotations in different contexts, the article will pay attention to how these concepts are expressed in the time-spaces, or chronotopes, of these women – in their pre-migration past as well as in their present and their imagined futures.

The article seeks to add to the growing body of literature on LESLLA learners by investigating the lived experiences of fourteen refugee-background women, settled in New Zealand and Sweden, who did not acquire print literacy in their early years. The analysis of their experiences takes into consideration their affordances, past and present, but also their agency and identity as they make use of these affordances. To understand the interaction between the individual and the new environment and what possibilities are open to them, the article adopts a Bakhtinian dialogical framework on agency and identity. In particular, the article will seek to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: What are the unique language learning affordances for refugee-background women who are also LESLLA learners?

RQ2: How do these learners negotiate agency and (gendered) identity in their past and present chronotopes, or time-spaces, and how does their future imagined identity impact on this negotiation?

5.1.1. The contexts of the study

The article is based on a larger study undertaken of refugee settlement in New Zealand and Sweden in order to investigate aspects of language learning and use, along with belonging and social cohesion (see also Svensson, 2023a, 2023b, 2024b, 2024c). These two contexts were chosen due to significant differences in their history of refugee settlement (Svensson, 2023b), as well as their similarities as Western countries. In both countries, print literacy is assumed and required for access to employment, social spaces, and services. Refugees arriving in New Zealand are expected to acquire English, an orthographically opaque language, but one they may have had at least some previous exposure to. Those coming to Sweden are required to learn a language that has little global visibility, but that has a more transparent orthography. There are also differences in gendered expectations in the two countries, particularly in relation to labour market participation.

New Zealand receives primarily UNHCR-approved quota refugees, with a yearly quota of 1500 (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b) and an additional 600 places set aside for family reunification (Immigration New Zealand, 2023e). New Zealand's quota is small, partly to be able to incorporate categories of refugees who may require additional support during settlement, such as women at risk and medical and disabled cases (Beaglehole, 2013; Marlowe, 2018). After settlement, refugees are entitled to English language provision through either the New Zealand Certificate in English Language, a formal qualification in several levels ranging from A1 to B2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020), or through the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy (ESOL) fund (henceforth ILN), a more flexible programme that caters more specifically to learners with limited prior education opportunities (TEC, 2017). The ILN fund can be used for a maximum of five years, after which the learner can enrol in the formal qualification or engage with community classes. New Zealand also has a home tutor scheme where volunteer tutors visit learners in their homes for private lessons one hour per week. While there are strong expectations of rapid labour market entry for refugees (Svensson, 2023a, 2023b), compared to the Swedish context there is less expectation – and support – for mothers to participate in the work force. The New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy current at the time of data collection articulated financial self-sufficiency as family-based rather than based on the individual, with the aim that 'all working-age refugees are in paid work or are supported by a family member in paid work' (Marlowe et al., 2014, p. 62). This has practically meant that the primary focus has been to get one family member (usually the male) work ready. Additionally,

while there have been significant changes in New Zealand in recent years, in the population as a whole there is still a trend for significant numbers of mothers with young children to remain at home or work part-time hours (Flynn & Harris, 2015).

Sweden has traditionally been a country with very generous asylum policies and a generous quota for UNHCR-approved refugees, but significant changes have taken place in recent years. Since 2015 when 160,000 individuals sought asylum in Sweden, policies have become increasingly restrictive (Dahlstedt & Neergaard, 2019; Stern, 2019). In terms of language learning, any adult immigrant who is granted residency in Sweden is entitled to free education through Swedish for Immigrants (Sfi). Learners are placed according to level as well as educational background, meaning that LESLLA learners are, when possible, placed in classes that cater more specifically to their needs and allow for a longer time to achieve each level (Skolverket, 2022). Language provision in Sweden is predominantly designed to encourage and facilitate labour market engagement (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017) and immigration laws are designed to incentivise refugees to seek employment. Permanent residence as well as family reunification are contingent on sustainable financial self-sufficiency, meaning that there is considerable pressure to gain long-term employment in order to secure long-term residence and to bring one's spouse and children (Emilsson, 2020; Svensson, 2023b). The expectation of labour market entry applies to any gender, as gender equality is highly valued in Sweden and an essential part of Swedish collective identity construction (Carlson, 2015; Hudson et al., 2023). Mothers are thus expected to participate in the labour market and the welfare system is designed to support this through subsidised childcare and afterschool care.

5.2. Literature review

5.2.1. Second language acquisition for refugee-background women

For refugee-background learners, second language acquisition is impacted by a range of factors, including cognitive and affective factors as well as social factors both in the country of origin and the country of settlement. While it is generally assumed that living in a target language environment will improve language gains through immersion and frequent interactions, in reality the linguistic affordances for resettled refugees can be limited. Engagement in transactional situations in society are often 'in unequal encounters with bureaucrats' (Cooke, 2006, p. 61) which generally leave little room for language practice (Piller, 2016). Thus, learning is often restricted to the classroom context. For women, there are additional challenges. Large-scale quantitative studies in Australia (Blake et al., 2017), the UK (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017) and Canada (Beiser & Hou, 2000) have demonstrated that women are more likely than men to have lower language proficiency on arrival, due to educational disadvantages in their country of origin,

and that their language acquisition progress is slower. While the slower progress can in part be attributed to starting at a lower level, Beiser and Hou (2000) found that the differences persisted even after ten years, suggesting that there are ongoing gender-based disadvantages in the country of settlement impacting on acquisition. Gendered expectations mean women are more likely to be caring for children or older relatives (Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017) and may also lead to a lack of confidence to attend classes (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017). Further, there may be course-related barriers to progress, particularly for women with barriers to education in the past, due to mismatches in pedagogy (Sharifian et al., 2021) and a strong focus on easily assessable literacy outcomes (Warriner, 2007) with courses not sufficiently supporting the overall goals of independent navigation of society (Sharifian et al., 2021) or labour market entry (Warriner, 2004).

5.2.2. The education dimension

Earlier education has been shown to have a significant impact on language learning, with clear correlations established between levels of first language education and second language acquisition efficiency (Field & Kearney, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021). Additionally, for those with emergent print literacy, the task of acquiring a new language is a considerable challenge requiring a significant time investment, something that may not be fully understood by educators and policy makers (Minuz et al., 2022). While there is limited consensus on how long second language acquisition takes for adult learners overall (Piller, 2016), studies have demonstrated that even for school-aged children and teenagers, the process can take five to seven years (Collier, 1989; Hakuta et al., 2000). For adult learners acquiring literacy and a second language concurrently, a significant period of time may be required, as learning tends to be slower and the learning load higher (Minuz et al., 2022; Sosinski, 2020; Young-Scholten & Peyton, 2020). Studies in the Finnish context (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015) found that ten months of intensive literacy instruction was insufficient for achieving functional reading skills even in an orthographically transparent language. Kurvers (2015), in a study of learners of Dutch, found significant variation in early language acquisition for LESLLA learners – with some learners achieving CEFR A1 literacy after only 300 hours of instruction, and others still working on Pre-A1 level after 1000–2000 hours of instruction. On average, it took LESLLA learners more than two years to be able to read a very short, simple text (Kurvers et al., 2015). The length of time can perhaps be better understood when considering that acquisition of a first language and functional literacy takes approximately twelve years for children under ideal circumstances (Collier, 1989; Piller, 2016).

5.2.2.1. Understanding the LESLLA challenge

To understand the magnitude of the task for LESLLA learners it is important to understand the complex interplay of literacy development and language acquisition. Recent literature on LESLLA

learners builds on insights from studies on the reading acquisition of children and adults with emergent literacy in their own languages, but also on empirical research on learners acquiring literacy and a new language simultaneously, including learners of Dutch (Kurvers, 2015), Finnish (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015) and English (Pettitt & Tarone, 2015; Young-Scholten & Naeb, 2010). These studies suggest that LESLLA learners acquiring a new language without previous access to literacy face a range of challenges. Most obviously, the acquisition of words and phrases is likely to be slower as learners are initially only able to rely on aural input and are not able to rely on reading and writing as strategies for memorisation and revision (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015). However, language acquisition is also impacted by literacy development in that literacy assists the development of metalinguistic awareness and phonological processing (Kurvers, 2015; Minuz et al., 2022) including the segmentation of language into words and phonological units (Tarone, 2010). Thus, individuals exposed to print literacy are more likely to segment an utterance into words and words into sounds, while those with limited exposure to print literacy are more likely to segment utterances into larger semantic units, such as phrases or expressions (Kurvers, 2015; Minuz et al., 2022; Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015). This can complicate the language acquisition process as learners may struggle to separate streams of speech into word units to be stored as separate vocabulary items (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015). Further, in the classroom context, teaching strategies that work for learners from literate backgrounds may not be effective for LESLLA learners. For example, teacher recasts that subtly provide a correction of form but do not change the meaning of the original message may not be perceived by these learners who are more semantically than phonologically orientated (Bigelow & Vinogradov, 2011; Minuz et al., 2022; Tarone, 2010). The difference in phonological processing also impacts on the ability to correctly repeat or memorise new lexical items in a second or additional language (Minuz et al., 2022; Tarone, 2010).

At the same time, the development of literacy in a second or additional language is impacted by the lack of oral proficiency in that language as phonological decoding relies on a secure knowledge of spoken words and their pronunciation (Kurvers, 2007; Minuz et al., 2022; Suni & Tammelin-Laine, 2020). Studies of LESLLA learners' reading acquisition have suggested that these learners go through similar stages to children learning to read (Kurvers, 2007, 2015), beginning with recognising high-frequency words as whole units, developing letter-sound correspondence and blending skills, then decoding through grouping of letters and finally mastering direct word recognition where the word is read fluently (Kurvers, 2007). However, children embarking on the literacy acquisition process have typically had five to seven years of oral language learning and consequently have comparatively large vocabularies as well as a secure understanding of common sounds and permissible sound combinations, while LESLLA

learners do not have this background (Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015). Independent decoding is therefore difficult as the decoding process requires feedback from the learner's lexicon to verify the plausibility of the decoded unit (Kurvers, 2007, 2015). Until decoding is automated, the extraction of meaning and comprehension is impeded as the working memory becomes overburdened (Kurvers, 2007, 2015; Minuz et al., 2022; Sosinski, 2020; Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015).

5.3. Theoretical framework

Refugee-background women who are also LESLLA learners thus face significant challenges on resettlement; however, while it is important to recognise these challenges and the magnitude of the task, it is also important to recognise these leaners as individuals with their own agency. To understand agency in the context of language learning, this article will employ a Bakhtinian dialogical framework, as this allows for a conceptualisation of agency that acknowledges the unique, lived experience of the individual (Bakhtin, 1993), as well as their interaction with the particular context in which they are situated (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Vitanova, 2010). Unlike cognitivist perspectives which situate agency within the individual learner, thus attributing success or failure solely to their motivation and drive (Miller, 2014; Piller, 2016), a dialogical perspective acknowledges the impact of social and economic settings and affordances in the learner's past as well as in their present and potential future (Dufva & Aro, 2015). Further, the dialogical framework differs from sociocultural paradigms that emphasise structural constraints and barriers in that it also explores 'the affective and emotional aspects of the agentive experience, that is, the viewpoint of the individual agent' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 39). Thus, a Bakhtinian framework conceptualises agency 'both as subjectively experienced and as collectively emergent' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 38) and negotiated in the dialogical interaction between the individual and their social context (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). It situates agency within 'the messiness of lived experience' (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 304) as a creative 'response to a specific problem in a specific life situation' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 149) by 'real persons engaged in real interactions' (Dufva & Aro, 2015, p. 38). The creative act is thus situated within a particular chronotope, a particular point in time and space (Bakhtin, 1981b) in 'which time, space, and patterns of agency coincide' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 110) providing different conditions for identity creation (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Tode, 2023) and agency (Blommaert, 2015; Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Holquist, 1990; Steinby, 2013). Situated within the present chronotope, the individual also interacts with past and future chronotopes – with their history as well as with their potential (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004).

Agency, in Bakhtinian terms, can be further understood through the concepts of answerability and authorship. Answerability entails, on the one hand, the individual's agentive opportunity to

give their response to the voices and value positions of others and, on the other hand, their moral duty to acknowledge and respond to the dialogical Other (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005). As 'unique, unrepeatable selves' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 80) with unique positions, their responsibility is also unique and cannot be avoided as they become the sole addressee – and therefore sole respondent – within the space they occupy (Holquist, 1990). In their responses to Others, subjects author themselves, sometimes in alignment with how they have been authored by those around them, and sometimes in resistance to this authoring (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005, 2010). Authoring thus often involves contestations of meanings, as individuals seek to 'transcend their subject positions' (Vitanova, 2005) by struggling over meaning (Holquist, 1990), contesting discourses and expressing resistance (Vitanova, 2005). As subjects are never finalised but are constantly authored and created in dialogical interactions with individuals and society, identity transformation never ceases to be a possibility (Vitanova, 2005, 2010).

For refugee-background language learners who find themselves in completely new settings, agency thus involves creatively responding to specific, lived circumstances as they invest in their imagined future identities. Drawing on the work of Bonny Norton (Darvin & Norton, 2015, 2023; Norton, 2000), the notion of investment acknowledges the power relations and the structural barriers that impact on language learning in a migration context but also the purposeful agency of learners who choose to invest their time and other resources in ways that promote their imagined future identities. Thus, investment in language learning can be understood as a way of negotiating identities and gaining symbolic resources, and also as an expression of the individual's desire to become part of an imagined community or develop an imagined identity (Darvin & Norton, 2015). However, as Karam (2021) has suggested, the negotiation of a new identity does not occur in a vacuum but also involves reference to identity constructions in the past. Thus, as refugee-background women negotiate literacy practices and language learning in their new context, these negotiations are inextricably tied to their multiple linguistic and cultural identities, as demonstrated by Cun (2022), and progress is to a significant extent dependent on how well the classroom context aligns with learner identities and investment, as suggested by Skilton-Sylvester (2002). Dialogically, learners are 'looking in two directions; back to their responsibility for their actions and forward towards the potential of the future' (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 296). For LESLLA learners, a literate, educated identity may not have previously been considered a possibility (Suni & Tammelin-Laine, 2020) and the types of identities available in the new setting will require negotiation in order for these learners to develop 'envisioned identities' and to have these 'imagined literate second language selves' addressed in their learning journey (Minuz et al., 2022, p. 35).

5.4. Methodology

5.4.1. Data collection

The data that forms the basis for this article was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews in New Zealand (2021 and 2023) and Sweden (2022). Interviews were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee, embedded in the broader sociocultural context (Tanggaard, 2009) and included open-ended questions that allowed the interviewer to follow up matters of interest, but also allowed participants to redirect the conversation to topics of interest to them. Participants were interviewed once (with one exception as outlined below) and interviews averaged 30–60 min in length. They were conducted in either Swedish or English, with interpreters as required or requested by participants. Data was transcribed by the researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features. Analysis was done in English and Swedish, and quotes included in this article from the Swedish dataset are translated by the researcher. A full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (SOB 20/51). In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross in New Zealand and by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635).

5.4.2. Participants

This article is based on a larger study of refugee settlement in New Zealand and Sweden, which included a total of 85 participants who were approached through educational institutions, ethnic organisations, and agencies. Participants included former refugees (n = 56), language teachers and tutors (n = 14) and individuals working in roles supporting refugee settlement (n = 15). There were significant differences in pre-and post-migration education and employment for the refugee-background participants with some having emergent literacy while others had degrees and were working in professional fields. While relevant data from all interviews were consulted in the writing of this article, additional analysis was undertaken of the interviews with refugee-background participants who were LESLLA learners, all of whom were women (n = 14). These were Rohingya (n = 6) and Afghan (n = 4) women settled in New Zealand under the quota system, and Syrian (n = 3) and Arabic speaking African (n = 1) women settled in Sweden through asylum or family reunification processes. Literacy backgrounds were established in the interviews through self-reporting. Women were considered to be LESLLA learners if they were monolingual in a language with no official script (e.g. Rohingya) or reported that they did not learn to read in their first or other early language (beyond memorising the writing of their own name). At the time of the interview, these women had achieved varying levels of literacy in Swedish or English respectively. Some were still at the emerging stages while others had progressed further with the

most proficient participant having achieved B2 level on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) in English (Table 1).

Participants had the option of being interviewed individually or in a group setting. Five of the Rohingya women opted to be interviewed in groups, with Zainab the only one interviewed individually. Data for the Rohingya women were thus dialogically co-constructed, and this is reflected in the analysis below where experiences and viewpoints may be attributed to 'the Rohingya women' as opposed to individually attributed. A follow-up interview was carried out with one of the fourteen participants, due to a change of circumstances. This interview was also used as a form of member checking and included explicit discussion on emerging findings on language learning for LESLLA learners.

Table 2: Participants and pseudonyms

Pseudonym	**Ethnicity/nationality**	**Country of settlement**	**Years in country of settlement**
Aisha	Rohingya	New Zealand	3
Khadijah	Rohingya	New Zealand	3
Hafisah	Rohingya	New Zealand	2
Katiza	Rohingya	New Zealand	3
Sahina	Rohingya	New Zealand	4
Zainab	Rohingya	New Zealand	4
Samar	Hazara/Afghan	New Zealand	5.5
Fatima	Hazara/Afghan	New Zealand	7
Zaafirah	Hazara/Afghan	New Zealand	8
Mahdia	Hazara/Afghan	New Zealand	6
Habiba	Syrian	Sweden	2-3
Leila	Syrian	Sweden	3.5
Zahra	Syrian	Sweden	3.5
Nadia	African*	Sweden	7

**Country is unspecified in order to protect anonymity*

Findings from the interviews with language teachers and tutors in Sweden (n = 6) and New Zealand (n = 8) were also consulted in order to better understand the learning contexts of these women and the perceptions of language teachers.

5.4.3. Data analysis

To understand data, I draw on a dialogical analysis that is both semantic and structural. Using the NVivo software, semantic analysis was undertaken through a coding methodology based on the

grounded theory method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Interview data was coded inductively, focusing on actions and processes, such as 'addressing educational disadvantages' or 'adjusting to the classroom context' to identify salient aspects. Through constant comparison, nodes were arranged into larger categories which encompassed several nodes so that, in the example above, 'adjusting to the classroom context' became one of the nodes under the broader category of 'addressing educational disadvantages'. Cross-comparisons also created links between different categories and nodes; for example, in the case of Rohingya mothers, one prominent node was the *in-vivo* code 'For the sake of the children' which related to the importance of motherhood and the actions taken as a result of this. Unlike grounded theory method, data analysis was not designed to generate new theory (Charmaz, 2006) but rather to provide greater understanding of a particular context and process through the lens of Bakhtinian dialogism, an already developed theoretical perspective. Thus, cross-comparisons looked at dialogical relationships, for example the dialogical relationship between the identity of motherhood and the investment in language learning, but also the dialogical relationships between the actions of the individual and the affordances available to them. Importantly, there were also cross-comparisons between the perspectives of different participants, such as language learners and language teachers, and the tensions between their utterances. The semantic analysis was supplemented by dialogical narrative inquiry, paying attention to self-authoring, or identity construction, and to how utterances responded to the positions and utterances of Others, both present (e.g. the interviewer) and absent (Holquist, 1990) thereby discovering the discourses that have influenced the responses of the participants. This closer analysis was particularly undertaken on the data from the fourteen focal participants.

5.5. Findings

For the fourteen focal participants educational and literacy backgrounds were conditioned by gender in intersection with other factors such as displacement, family difficulties, poverty, and oppression. Within the new context, there was an opportunity, and a necessity, for the women to reimagine their identities and their potential selves and dialogically author themselves. However, as LESLLA learners, this journey was complicated by a challenging and lengthy language acquisition process. Below, I will first consider language learning opportunities and challenges the learners encountered (RQ1), before considering their dialogical negotiation of agency and identity in the past as well as the present (RQ2).

5.5.1. The magnitude of the task

Language teachers and learners agreed that language acquisition was a significant challenge for LESLLA learners and that Western countries had a limited understanding of the needs of this group. There were extreme mismatches between what government agencies expected and what

was possible for these learners whose 'journey is incredibly long' (Swedish language teacher). Learners also found the length of time daunting and frustrating:

> Initially it was very, very difficult for me, but after six or seven months I started to know that I'm a bit learning and getting some things.
>
> *Samar*
>
> [I've studied] maybe two-three years. But first when I came I couldn't understand anything. Now the last year I started to
>
> *Habiba*

Acquiring language and literacy to a level sufficient to achieve their settlement goals required a significant time investment and learners were often time-poor. This meant that they valued lessons that aided progress and experienced frustration when their progress was not taken seriously:

> the teacher was so relaxed – didn't work hard on us… Just relax and I was sometimes so frustrated. She's not pushing us to work hard or to work differently. So relaxed, we lose a lot of time here.
>
> *Zaafirah*

Learners were aware of the challenges resulting from barriers to education and literacy early in life, and reported that in comparison with other learners, they struggled with general knowledge, as well as metalinguistic awareness. Zaafirah also explained that her gendered experience as an Afghan village girl in a very limited sphere impacted on her first language development:

> I have no Dari [first language]. Seriously. Because it's not only I didn't go to school as a child, I wasn't involved with speaking with the people who could speak Dari clearly, good Dari… as a child I didn't go to somewhere a lot because I was a girl and my mother used to keep me in safe, in the safe place, because of the situation and cultural thing… I have no idea about [academic or specialised vocabulary]… if I explain English in Dari to someone I can't do it because I know limited Dari and I don't know a lot of vocabulary and I don't know how to explain in Dari. I know the words in English but I don't know in Dari what we say. In academic way.
>
> *Zaafirah*

In line with other studies (Kurvers, 2015; Tammelin-Laine & Martin, 2015; Young-Scholten & Naeb, 2010) participants also reported difficulty acquiring phonemic awareness and applying

this as a strategy when reading and writing. Zahra, with a Swedish level of CEFR A2 in speaking, was still struggling with sound-letter correspondence, stating that she could sound out letters 'but not all'. Nadia, with a spoken competence in the B-levels of the CEFR, spoke about her difficulties with 'spelling out':

> Difficult is spelling out. If I understand spelling out, I can read some. Sometimes children also if I have that my teacher gives me paper, you have that dictation and that, next week, I go home before the day half an hour, son, I say, I have this I want to read, they say ok, mummy, come, we will help. They say that word you must divide, three times. They say. They help me and I remember. If I say letters, I can write. But I can't by myself say whole spelling.

Zaafirah, an Afghan woman who had achieved a qualification at CEFR B2 level in all skills, explained that she was still not able to sound out new words:

> I can read but [sounding out] some words still hard for me. I can't…

Zaafirah was aware of the strategy of sounding out words, and aware that it was a strategy that would benefit her, but still found it very difficult to put into practice. However, given these personal constraints, she exercised creative agency and discovered alternative strategies. She memorised the spelling for each new vocabulary item and, as she became familiar with the words, her word recognition became more rapid. Studying to a B2-level, she had gained a good understanding of morphology and was thus able to break words down into meaningful units as another reading strategy.

There were differences in the perceptions of agency between the accounts of teachers and the accounts of learners. According to teacher reports, expertise in teaching LESLLA learners varied considerably, with some having specialised training and others finding it very difficult to assist this learner group. However, overall, teachers expressed a sense of frustration when teaching LESLLA learners, as they felt that learners lacked in agency, learner autonomy and motivation and did not understand the value and purpose of homework and revision. While acknowledging that the learners faced unique challenges, there was also a tendency to attribute the lack of progress to a lack of learner investment in learning.

However, learners dialogically resisted the authoring of themselves as unmotivated, instead authoring themselves as motivated and committed to learning. They reported that they understood the value of revision and put aside time for this. However, they too were frustrated by their lack of progress and their lack of ability to revise effectively, something that they

attributed to difficulties with knowledge retention. Even if revision was done diligently soon after the lesson it could be difficult for learners to retain the knowledge for the next day:

> I come home, write, write, write. I want, I want. Sometimes not eat. And I not understand. I come here school, teacher asks me what write, what use? I don't understand. I forget sometimes, sometimes forget.
>
> *Zahra*

The learners authored themselves as agentive and attributed their struggles to limited affordances such as older age, lack of previous education, previous unfamiliarity with alphabetic decoding, family commitments, concerns about daily living, and time constraints. Mismatches in learning strategies between teachers and learners could aggravate the difficulties. Written vocabulary lists, reading exercises and spelling tests were all challenging if learners were unable to remember the aural representations of the words or letters.

5.5.2. Imagined identities and investments

Having discussed the general constraints and acts of agency in face of these, this section will look at how the women negotiated new identities dialogically in the context of ideologies – new and old – and their various dialogical answerabilities. Gender was a significant factor in these negotiations, but the gender concept was also dialogically negotiated and varied based on the experience of each individual and their past and present chronotopes. For the sake of conciseness, I will outline the experiences of the women in three groupings – the Rohingya mothers in New Zealand, the Afghan single parents in New Zealand, and then the women settled in Sweden. While there are significant individual variations, there are also commonalities within each group, particularly in terms of past and/or present national contexts.

5.5.2.1. Rohingya mothers

The Rohingya have a history of oppression and have been stateless since 1982 with ongoing, often violent, oppression and denial of human rights such as education (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021). The language, Rohingya, has long been marginalised and does not have an official script, thus hampering informal development of print literacy. For the women who grew up in Rakhine State, the traditional province of the Rohingya, general barriers to education in the dominant language (Burmese) were magnified by cultural factors as well as safety concerns. With a significant military presence, sending young girls to school exposed them to considerable risks of sexual violence from soldiers. Within this context, imagined future identities centred on safety, marriage, and motherhood, which was particularly salient as arranged marriages were often the means of escaping Myanmar:

> my mum sent me off to Malaysia [to marry] after 2010 when my father passed away. The mother of my husband talked to my mother and then both my mother and my husband's mother arranged together and sent me off to the boat.
>
> *Aisha*

The experience of travelling – usually with the aid of smugglers – to Malaysia to join displaced Rohingya men was shared by the other Rohingya women as well. The agency of these women thus involved an often dangerous journey, managing in displacement in Malaysia and gaining third country resettlement. While they framed themselves as passive participants in some of their experiences, like Aisha who was 'sent… off' and Khadijah who talked of women being 'put on the boats', in other parts of their narratives they highlighted their agency. Khadijah explained how she 'managed' the journey, and Aisha explained how she successfully negotiated settlement with the UNHCR office on behalf of herself and her family.

After resettlement the Rohingya women still imagined themselves primarily as wives and mothers, while also negotiating what motherhood entailed in a New Zealand context. Their children had been their primary motivator for settlement in New Zealand, and their children's futures remained paramount:

> I have four kids and we now have a good life, a beautiful life but I don't know about the future. But we hope our children will grow up, they will have a good life.
>
> *Sahina*

They were also aware that the identity of mother was dialogically influenced by context, and in New Zealand included being an educator, a chauffeur, and a facilitator in many situations:

> So we need English because we can use it when we go to see doctor, go to hospital, and not have to depend on interpreters. If our kids get sick we can just go by ourselves.
>
> *Aisha*
>
> The most important thing for me is having the driving licence and knowing how to drive. Then I can bring my kids to the school, mosque, and I can bring them out to play, because they can't find their daddy all the time. Their father goes to work.
>
> *Sahina*
>
> sometime the school gives them some papers. So that the parents have to support them so that they have gone this far and the parents are supposed to teach them a little bit further. And asking them to check on this and this and this. And we are illiterate. We

> cannot give them that support and also if I don't know any mathematics how can I teach them mathematics.
>
> *Aisha*

None of these women expressed any desire for a labour market identity, seeing themselves instead as supporting their husbands' labour market participation by taking on increasingly larger shares of the parenting responsibility:

> We have children and we can't work.
>
> *Katiza*

Their decisions not to engage in paid work appeared to be made in dialogical interaction with their past, present and future chronotopes. Some women tied their decision to the cultural and religious interpretations of their place of origin, stating that 'in our religion, women do not work', others tied it to the acceptable imagined identities negotiated in dialogical interactions with their husbands. However, their perspective also aligned with their present settlement context and gendered cultural norms in New Zealand, as well as with the New Zealand government's settlement priorities (see Section 5.1.1).

While their roles as mothers were the primary drivers for investment in language learning, this role also impacted on access to language instruction:

> I have children here. I have to look after them. And this one I delivered recently. Maybe I will study again when my kids grow up a bit.
>
> *Zainab*

However, their identities as mothers also lead some of the women to agentively seek out opportunities that extended their roles as mothers, such as driver licence theory courses, which Katiza and Sahina attended. These were delivered in simple English and without interpreting, allowing them an opportunity to improve their language at the same time:

> If we have interpreter, we will only learn what the interpreter says and if we don't have interpreter, we will also learn how things are said in English, and I will have that opportunity. And now they speak very slowly. It's not very hard to understand.
>
> *Katiza*

5.5.2.2. Single parenthood in New Zealand

The four Afghan participants arrived in New Zealand under the 'Women at Risk' category (Beaglehole, 2013), and prior to settlement were living as single mothers in displacement in

Pakistan. For them, the social and cultural construction of gender was seen as the main barrier to earlier education, complicated also by safety concerns:

> Actually that time there were schools far away. Maybe one hour walk. Only the boys could go. Because it's most of the time it comes to culture, cultural thing. That time the parents could think it's not worth to send our daughters to school because they will get married and we don't care about it and do household chores instead of going to school. Who's going to do our household chores if we send our daughters? And another thing if they send their daughters, on the way going to school and coming home, the boys could bother them. And do something to them, that was the other reason.
>
> *Zaafirah*

Growing up in a context where girls simply did not go to school also impacted on the imagined identities available to them. Zaafirah explained that an educated, literate identity was not something she imagined for herself, as she saw no examples of this in her rural village. However, she had a developed identity as an enterprising woman. Learning to sew from her mother as a young girl, she refined her ability and was able to earn a good income. Displacement in Pakistan also required creative agency for the single mothers. Zaafirah was able to provide for her children as a tailor, and the other women also engaged in various tailoring jobs.

In New Zealand, motherhood was an important dimension for the Afghan women, but they were also single parents and thus faced the challenge of learning English, gaining literacy, and taking full responsibility for parenting. While they had similar experiences on arrival, each learning journey was unique.

Samar spoke about her initial struggles with learning English as a LESLLA learner, and how overwhelming she found the task:

> It was difficult for me and it was almost boring so I used to sleep on the table. It was making me tired. And the head is not good. I used to get headaches and feel under pressure to concentrate

After more than five years in New Zealand, she was still a beginner but had gained the confidence required to carry out everyday tasks in English, such as shopping and basic form filling. For more complicated tasks she relied on her teenage son or her well-educated brother who had joined her in New Zealand.

Fatima had also struggled initially, especially the first time she entered a classroom and experienced the dissonance between the classroom expectations and her own identity and educational past:

> At first… they have some class for us and at first when I went there and I was putting my scarf a bit lower and I was kind of shamed or shy – shy actually. I couldn't do anything.

After seven years in New Zealand, Fatima had a very basic command of English, and was working part-time as a cleaner. She had left the language school as she had reached her five-year limit of study on the ILN programme and was not capable of undertaking the more rigorous study required for the national qualification (see Section 5.1.1). Her agentive response to her particular situated circumstances – difficulties with language acquisition and lack of ongoing provision – was to build and mobilise a strong social network to draw on for tasks that required a higher level of English or literacy.

Mahdia, a younger woman, had achieved a higher level of competence – A2 on the CEFR – before leaving the language school. For Mahdia, learning English meant engaging in a necessary, self-evident task:

> I'm happy to learn English, understanding English is better to me because I live in New Zealand.

However, she had struggled to devote the necessary time to learning because of her sole parenting responsibilities:

> For single mum in New Zealand, any Afghan or refugee family – for single mum too hard life because look after children and go to work or study and for single mum it's too hard… Now I am support to my children for learning, for any food, for dress, for everything we look after him.

Having achieved a good conversational level of English and basic functional literacy, she was working in a factory during her children's school hours. Her imagined future included plans for her children, but also a hope of marrying again and no longer carrying the responsibility alone.

Zaafirah was the participant who had made the most remarkable progress, and her case provides an interesting example of the dialogical negotiation of identity which takes place between the individual and their context. Zaafirah's investment in English began as soon as she applied for third country resettlement through UNHCR, and she realised that her future identity would be dependent on her ability to read, write and communicate in English. Engaging a tutor, she learnt the English alphabet and to read a few very simple words. After arrival in New Zealand, she quickly discovered that there was insufficient support for single mothers in their settlement. As a woman from rural Afghanistan with no experience of formal education, her Dari dialect was different from that of the official interpreters available for health appointments (see Chapter 6):

> And I got very frustrated, I need to learn English, I can't do this.

Her sense of dialogical answerability towards her children and her identity as a self-reliant provider and parent led her to invest in English learning to a higher level of proficiency:

> I had a lot of motivation. I need to learn English… This is different world. You have to learn more English to do something more… I have to do everything by myself, to solve, to ask for help or whatever. Do myself. There is no one to help me. I have to learn English.

Living in this 'different world' also appeared to present different available identities, and Zaafirah not only worked on developing her dialogical identity as a capable, articulate, and legitimate speaker, but also started investing in a student identity:

> I was so hungry for learning. So hungry. From the beginning. I was so hungry. I need to learn and I need to know how it works. I put a lot of time on English… in the morning I went to English class. When I finished I come home quickly prepared something for lunch for my kids and then I went to work, I worked part time, and after that when I came home I prepared something for their dinner and I went in my bedroom. And instead of doing something I was on my English… And my son sometimes call mum you work so hard. Why are you working so hard on English? Because I need it.

After seven years of study, she had achieved a national certificate at CEFR B2, which included a course in introductory academic English. However, while Zaafirah was able to invest in a student identity, she also had to wrestle with the limitations imposed by time and circumstances:

> I'm really wanting to study, to be someone, to have a career. But everything seems very difficult. Just kind of is accepting that I cannot study further because it's not easy, it's difficult, because the lack of previous knowledge.

Ultimately, her drive for independence and her answerability to her family as their provider led her to take employment in a supermarket.

5.5.2.3. Sweden: becoming employable

The Arabic speaking women settled in Sweden had come from various places in Syria (Habiba, Leila and Zahra) and an African country (Nadia). Gender had had a significant impact on their education and literacy, and they quoted family norms as the main reason. Their premigration identities varied. Nadia had never worked outside the home but had seen herself as a wife and mother. Habiba had primarily been a mother, but also earned money through cutting hair. Zahra, a widow, had inherited a clothing shop from her deceased husband and managed this successfully for fifteen years with the support of a literate brother-in-law. Leila, a trained seamstress, had successfully run training courses for young seamstresses, and took pride in her abilities as seamstress and educator:

> I was actually a teacher, I had like girls who got to learn to sew clothes with me. I was like a teacher.
>
> *Leila*

For the Syrian women, displacement had been caused by war and often involved a country of temporary shelter, such as Turkey or Lebanon. Leila had remained in Turkey, providing for herself and her son, while her husband travelled to Sweden and obtained asylum and family reunification rights. Habiba and Zahra had travelled across the Mediterranean – Habiba with her adult son and Zahra with a group of friends. Nadia, the African woman, fled her country of origin shortly after her husband as she became a target of government forces. She fled alone with two toddlers, travelling across the Mediterranean and then on to Sweden.

Of the four women settled in Sweden, Habiba, an older woman with significant health issues, was the only one not looking for employment. Her progress in Swedish was slow, which she attributed to her lack of earlier education. For Zahra, Leila and Nadia, investment in Swedish was multidimensional and connected to their roles as mothers (Leila and Nadia), as single, independent women (Zahra and Nadia), and as actual or imagined workers. Investment was also related to belonging, both on a legal level and an emotional level. The requirements for self-sufficiency (see Section 5.1.1) entailed a need for language proficiency sufficient for the workplace, and for any required training. Zahra was subject to the precarity of temporary residence permits which required regular renewals:

> Even I feel that this is better than the homeland. And I hope that I will stay in the country. Even though I have temporary residency. Not permanent.

Leila, the married mother, also felt the pressure to gain permanent employment as soon as possible, as her husband had been unable to secure employment after seven years in the country, possibly due to a range of health problems as well as difficulty acquiring the language. She was awaiting the result of their application for extension of residence at the time of the interview. Zahra and Leila both experienced the constraints by their new context in their development of a work identity. While developing dialogical identities as shop owner and tailor/educator had been possible in Syria, these identities were not available to them in Sweden; there is limited clothing manufacturing in Sweden, and retail roles in Sweden would require print literacy and language beyond what Zahra possessed. Nadia, with no employment history prior to arriving in Sweden also desired work as this contributed to her overall sense of wellbeing.

At the time of the interviews, Zahra was in a volunteer role at a second-hand shop, Nadia was about to finish a work experience role and start a part time job as a cleaner and Leila was not

engaged in any work. Although Leila was the one who had progressed the furthest in her literacy development, moving from pre-A1 to A1 after three and a half years of formal language instruction, her oral skills were also at this level, meaning she felt a long way from the labour market. An earlier work experience placement had been unsuccessful due to her language skills.

Nadia's formal language learning had been delayed and disrupted, first from awaiting asylum decisions, and then from maternity leave. Thus, although she had spent seven years living in Sweden, she had only had a total of 2 years of instruction, with a one-year gap after the birth of her fifth and last child. However, Nadia had from the start been determined to acquire the language and had actively sought opportunities to develop her oral skills, even prior to being granted residence, seeking out opportunities for interaction and community language classes. Her role as a mother was for her an affordance for language learning:

> My children they were little, they watch [children's show] a lot. And I watch and listen with them. And sometimes they speak Arabic – I speak with them Arabic, they answer me in Swedish. I say you know this thing, explain to me in Arabic, I understand. They help me. I not learn in school, I learn with my children.

This also extended to interactions with other mothers and a gradual improvement of oral skills and communicative competence:

> The children are friends with my children. We sit outside, she [their mother] comes. We sit together, the children play together, we sit together. I think that is very good. We speak. We learn. A lot of Swedish.

However, motherhood, which facilitated her oral acquisition, also complicated her literacy acquisition. Recently divorced, she was time-poor and required a lot of repetition and revision:

> I remember at school. If I go home, I remember nothing. I work, I have children, I pick up and drop off and things. I have no time I will sit and read. The weekend I'm also not home. The weekend I drop off the kids. The kids go swimming. And Sunday I drop my little son football. I have activity with my children. Sometimes at night I listen to they give me laptops. I listen, spell out. But I have no time.

Zahra had been in Sweden for six years, and in formal language learning for three and a half years. Her oral language and communicative ability were much more developed than her literacy, and she was able to conduct large parts of the interview in Swedish. However, she was still working at the phonemic stage in her literacy development:

> Yes read but not all [letters]. Only little, little. For example /k/ /a/ /a/ /k/. Yes.

She struggled with retention of literacy knowledge, despite being highly motivated and diligent:

> I want, I want, I want, I like. I speak and listen. I just want to write and read. But not. I go everyday, everyday. I come five o'clock after work after school go… second hand shop. Work experience… Five o'clock maybe finish. I come home, write, write, write, write. I want, I want.

Despite the value she placed on language and literacy development, her primary investment was in gaining employment.

5.6. Discussion

The findings add to our insight into the unique language learning affordances available to refugee-background women who are also LESLLA learners (RQ1) and suggest that these learners face a lengthy and complex journey as they navigate language and literacy acquisition as well as their life roles. While there were significant individual variations in terms of language learning ability, the efficiency of acquisition was clearly impacted by earlier barriers to formal education and literacy, as suggested by earlier studies (Kurvers, 2015; Minuz et al., 2022; Morrice et al., 2021) but also gendered experiences which provided a limited sphere of social and linguistic interaction, as in Zaafirah's narrative. The impact on phonological processing demonstrated in studies by Kurvers (2015), Tammelin-Laine and Martin (2015) and Young-Scholten and Naeb (2010) was evident in this study as well and appeared to impact even those learners who had acquired a reasonable oral command of the target language, like Zahra and Nadia, but still were unable to decode texts. Importantly, the participants demonstrated a high awareness of their constraints as LESLLA learners, were able to discuss the impact of earlier educational disadvantage on their language acquisition, and actively sought strategies to improve their learning and facilitate their settlement. As an example, Zaafirah, who despite her high proficiency level struggled with decoding, was aware of this constraint and had adopted alternative strategies such as memorising whole words and learning how to deal with morphological functions such as stems, prefixes, and suffixes.

The dialogical perspective also highlights an incongruence between how teachers author LESLLA learners and the self-authoring of these learners. Teachers, despite recognising a range of constraints, were more likely to attribute lack of progress to lack of motivation, agency, and autonomy, while the learners attributed lack of progress to limited affordances and authored themselves as motivated and diligent learners, making the most of their given circumstances. Practically, as far as possible, the participants revised diligently, but had difficulties with the feedback processes required to confirm accurate decoding (Kurvers, 2007, 2015), and also difficulties with storing the information. While teachers could be frustrated with the lack of

progress, the frustration experienced by the learners in formal language classes was even greater. Perceiving the enormity of the task and the required time investment (Field & Kearney, 2021; Kurvers, 2015) meant that learners could feel daunted initially and experience a strong sense of frustration with their rate of progress and their difficulties with language retention, with some also expressing dissatisfaction with classes that did not promote rapid enough progress.

Further, the article makes an important contribution to the literature on LESLLA learners by investigating how these learners negotiate their identities in their past and present chronotopes and invest in new identities (RQ2). As dialogical subjects, the participants author themselves in their new context as they are 'looking in two directions; back to their responsibility for their actions and forward towards the potential of the future' (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 296). While the participants had similarities in their chronotopes of the past in relation to education, literacy and gendered expectations, there were also significant differences, with some of the women having invested in successful labour market identities, as tailors, shop owners or educators. Looking to the future, there were even greater differences, conditioned both by past experiences and the ideologies, opportunities, and expectations of the current chronotope. Thus, the Rohingya mothers, dialogically interacting with their past as well as the present, envisaged a future where their investment in motherhood would yield success for their children and their commitment to language and literacy was influenced by their answerability to their families. The women settled in Sweden, on the other hand, were settled in a context where a gendered identity as a woman included expected labour market participation, and thus primarily authored themselves as future workers and invested in their learning in order to gain (permanent) employment. The Afghan women had to negotiate the imposed identity of single parent, requiring a complex navigation in order to meet the emotional and physical needs of their children in a new context. This required a more urgent commitment to language and literacy but also entailed greater constraints and imposed some limits to future identities, as in the case of Zaafirah, whose imagined future educated Self was not a possibility in light of the day-to-day requirements of being the family's provider.

5.7. Conclusion

Drawing on a theoretical framework based on Bakhtinian dialogism provides a strength-based focus where refugee-background women and LESLLA learners are seen as dialogical subjects who through their creative acts and self-authoring invest in future identities as successful participants in their new context. This investment is seen as a dialogical process, undertaken as a series of negotiations between past, present and future chronotopes, but also between the individual and the social context and its affordances. The findings suggest that to facilitate this process, greater understanding is required of refugee-background women who are also LESLLA learners, both in

terms of learner needs and in terms of understanding of individual agency and identity. As LESLLA learners, a considerable investment of time and effort is required in order to achieve a functional level of literacy and communication in a new language, but for women and mothers, there are often significant time constraints and responsibilities that limit access to education. Language provision therefore needs to be efficient and targeted to real needs and of sufficient duration, as well as congruent with the imagined identities of the learners. The findings of this article suggest that further research in this area would be very beneficial, in particular if it combined analyses of classroom pedagogy and external progress measures with learners' own perceptions of their needs and progress.

This chapter, like Chapter 4, has demonstrated that refugee-background language learners may face a range of barriers to language acquisition. These barriers can relate to individual factors but may also relate to factors in past or present chronotopes and to the provisions and opportunities available in these contexts. Thus, while language learning discourses tend to present language learning as an individual endeavour and attribute slow progress to the learner, learners themselves speak of their language learning agency and present themselves as motivated learners whose acquisition is impeded by a range of obstacles. Building on this understanding, the next chapter will investigate language use and the role of language in social cohesion. Focusing on the New Zealand context, where there has been a deliberate focus on strengthening social cohesion, it investigates social cohesion primarily in terms of how it is carried out in interactions between individuals and various institutions. In such interactions, individuals experience a range of linguistic inequalities as their linguistic needs are not met, while also experiencing exclusion and delegitimization. Contesting exclusions and legitimising one's subject position can be problematic for beginner users, as this often requires fairly sophisticated language.

Chapter 6: Language dimensions of social cohesion: the significance of linguistic inequalities in the context of refugee settlement

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6.1. Introduction

Migration generally, and refugee settlement particularly, often bring to the forefront questions of integration, social inclusion and social cohesion on public, political and policy levels (Boucher & Samad, 2013). Although language is often seen as the common-sense key to integration and social inclusion (Li & Sah, 2019; Rydell, 2018; Warriner, 2016), there is limited understanding of how various approaches to linguistic diversity impact on the settlement process and, more broadly, on social cohesion. While linguistic diversity is typically part of social cohesion discourses, it tends to be framed either as a celebrated marker of a multicultural and progressive nation, or as a deficit to be addressed (Piller, 2016). In this article, linguistic diversity will instead be explored from an inequality perspective, which means conceptualising instances where linguistic diversity impacts on inclusion and access as linguistic inequalities rather than as linguistic deficiencies. To do this, I will focus on the intersubjective nature of social cohesion and conceptualise settlement as a dialogical process between the newcomer and the nation of settlement and, more importantly, between the newcomer and a range of actors, individuals and agencies who represent the more abstract concepts of 'the government' and 'society'. I will argue that former refugees are often barred from dialogical interactions and processes through acts of delegitimisation and exclusion as well as through linguistic inequalities.

The empirical study that forms the basis for this article is a qualitative study carried out in a designated refugee settlement area in New Zealand. As a country with a comparatively small, and controlled, refugee settlement and a deliberate social cohesion target (Ministry of Social Development, 2022), New Zealand is an interesting context for an investigation into how linguistic inequalities may impact on social cohesion. The article will address the following research questions:

RQ1: How does language proficiency and use impact on social cohesion and social inclusion in the context of refugee settlement in New Zealand?

RQ2: How do processes of exclusion based on cultural and linguistic diversity impact on outcomes for refugees settled in New Zealand?

6.2. Literature review

6.2.1. Social cohesion and refugee settlement in New Zealand

New Zealand is generally regarded as an ethnically diverse but cohesive community (Peace et al., 2005; Spoonley et al., 2020) that is also relatively welcoming, caring and humanitarian (Slade, 2019). The perception of New Zealanders as a cohesive and inclusive team has formed the basis for responses to crises, like the COVID-19 pandemic (McGuire et al., 2020; Spoonley et al., 2020) and the 2019 terror attack on a mosque in Christchurch (Peace & Spoonley, 2019; Yogeeswaran et al., 2019). Attempts to measure cohesion and inclusion through surveys have largely confirmed the view of New Zealand as cohesive (Humpage & Greaves, 2017; Statistics New Zealand, 2011; Yogeeswaran et al., 2019), but also highlighted that there are 'significant pockets of more exclusive notions of national identity' (Humpage & Greaves, 2017, p. 259). In practice, there are also 'consistent and systematic disparities in health, education, justice and other wellbeing outcomes' as well as negative societal attitudes towards certain groups (Webb, 2020, p. 6).

The most recent social cohesion initiative in New Zealand was initiated in response to the Christchurch mosque attack on 15 March 2019, where a right-wing extremist opened fire on Muslim worshippers (Ministry of Social Development, 2022; Office of the Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2021; Royal Commission, 2020b; Webb, 2020). The policy framework that was developed was designed to acknowledge Te Tiriti o Waitangi (the Treaty between the Crown and the indigenous Māori) and New Zealand's bicultural foundations and also take a strengths-based approach to diversity (Royal Commission, 2020b; Webb, 2020). It is based on the social cohesion models of Jenson (1998) and earlier social cohesion initiatives in New Zealand (Peace et al., 2005), with a strong focus on social inclusion (Office of the Associate Minister for Social Development and Employment, 2021; Webb, 2020). While the inclusion element promotes a range of strategies to reduce inequalities, improve access and ensure all members of the community have a voice, it places very little focus on language. In fact, in Webb's (2020) official review, 'language' is only mentioned six times, and in three of these cases, it is used to exemplify New Zealand diversity.

New Zealand has significant numbers of immigrant arrivals, both permanent and temporary, but refugees constitute only a small part, albeit often with significant settlement needs (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999; Mortensen, 2011). Refugees usually arrive through the UNHCR quota system,

and the country aims to receive 1500 individuals yearly and also has a total of 600 family reunification places – numbers which have increased significantly in recent years (Immigration New Zealand, 2023a, 2023b, 2023e). New Zealand's quota has been kept small partly to be able to incorporate categories of refugees who may require additional support during settlement, such as women at risk, medical and disabled cases and cases requiring special protection or additional support (Beaglehole, 2013; Marlowe, 2018). At the same time, New Zealand has had a refugee resettlement strategy (MBIE, 2017) which has placed significant emphasis on refugees rapidly decreasing their need for government support (Marlowe et al., 2014). The strategy is composed of five 'integration outcomes' which are measured against markers for success (Immigration New Zealand, 2020). A closer analysis of how success has been measured suggests a one-sided and limited view of social cohesion, with an emphasis on rapid economic self-sufficiency and service uptake, rather than on structural support and access to services. Additionally, there has been little explicit focus on language. While the 'Education' outcome has stipulated that refugees should 'have English language skills that help them participate in education and daily life', so far the only language-related measure of outcomes has related to children and young people (Immigration New Zealand, 2020).

6.2.2. A Bakhtinian dialogical perspective

6.2.2.1. Intersubjective social cohesion

In contrast to one-sided views of integration, this article proposes a Bakhtinian dialogical approach to understanding social cohesion as intersubjective and enacted not only as large-scale processes but also in everyday relational encounters. From a dialogical perspective, intersubjective social cohesion will be conceptualised as a process (Jenson, 1998) which can be dialogically understood since dialogism 'epitomizes any process or development, born within a multitude of subject positions and values' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 253). Following a suggestion by Peace and Spoonley (2019, p. 116) to consider 'small mechanisms' and the relationships 'present in the everyday intercourse between groups and individuals', it will also propose an approach to understanding social cohesion that focuses on everyday interactions, 'the eventness of intersubjective encounters' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 14). It is often in these micro-interactions between Self and Other, and in their narrated reproductions, that contestations of belonging, recognition, legitimacy, inclusion, and participation are enacted.

6.2.2.2. Language, identity, intersubjectivity and authorship

From a dialogical perspective, identity is intersubjective, that is, constructed in the multiple interactions between Self and Other, as well as in the dialogical interactions within the Self (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Sullivan, 2012; Vitanova, 2010). Identities are constructed through language – more specifically through utterances – and are an act of creativity where the

subject authors their own storied Self in relation to others around them (Vitanova, 2010). The act of authoring not only means that we 'create ourselves' as we address and respond to others (Holquist, 1990, pp. 28-29), but also that we author others and, in turn, are authored *by* others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). In this way, all humans are authors and 'position themselves, but they also become positioned by the discourses of others' (Vitanova, 2013, p. 258). In the act of being authored, subjects may be authored as valued individuals, enriched and unique or as 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 298). The power of authoring Self and Other is often complicated by new linguistic environments, where the subject may struggle to author themselves in the dominant language (Vitanova, 2005).

6.2.2.3. Answerability and monologue: the dialogical Other and the excluded **other**

Dialogism has a strong ethical dimension through the concept of answerability. Dialogical answerability entails, on the one hand, our opportunity to give our response to the voices and value positions of others, and on the other hand, our moral duty to acknowledge and respond to the dialogical Other (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2005). Answerability is thus more than responding to an utterance – it is an ethical construct that entails responsibility towards those 'who share the situation of existence with us' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, pp. 11-12). A dialogical ethics of answerability also involves recognising the uniqueness of Others in 'intersubjective encounters where difference is not reduced to sameness' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 14). Avoiding answerability and failing to recognise the Other in their uniqueness conflicts with dialogical ethics (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Vitanova, 2010), yet through monological conventions and delegitimisation of subjects, answerability can be evaded or unrecognised. Actors will determine who is a legitimate Other and therefore included in dialogue (Vitanova, 2010), and can also choose to '[snuff] out the "I" of other subjects' (Holquist, 1990, p. 34) through monologue. This often occurs in the project of nation-building, where cultures are homogenised and monolingualism is valued (Kostogriz, 2005), leaving the culturally and linguistically *other* excluded and viewed as a lesser subject – one that is authored by the dominant subject, one-dimensional, stereotyped and without uniqueness (Kostogriz, 2005).

A monological act of authoring is often seen in the construction of the language-learning narrative, which is constructed in a way that precludes any recognition of structural constraints or economic inequalities and, instead, attributes success or failure solely to the effort and motivation of the self-actualising individual (Warriner, 2016). This reductive view of the language learner fails to recognise how formal language learning is impacted by unique individual circumstances including age (Morrice et al., 2021), physical or emotional health (Field & Kearney, 2021) gender (Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021; Sharifian et al.,

2021) and earlier educational disadvantage (Field & Kearney, 2021; Morrice et al., 2021; Sharifian et al., 2021). It also fails to take into consideration the less than favourable sociocultural conditions for informal language learning that refugees encounter. Engagement in transactional situations in society is often 'in unequal encounters with bureaucrats' (Cooke, 2006, p. 61) and do not generally benefit language learning (Piller, 2016).

The project of nation-building is not only monological, but is also dominated by a monolingual ideology, where national communities are imagined as monolingual homogeneous communities (Anderson, 1991; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Piller, 2016). In an increasingly diverse linguistic context, a monolingual bias increases the power of the dominant group to further 'constrain the subject positions available to be occupied by less powerful others' (Aveling & Gillespie, 2008, p. 203) and the othering of the linguistically diverse, in order to maintain the monolingual order (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). On the level of interactions, when speakers of the dominant language see monolingualism as normative, they may not take their 'discursive responsibility' to facilitate meaning (Vitanova, 2010, p. 97) and acknowledge their answerability as a 'sense of orientation to the needs of another' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 98), whereas beginner users of the language may feel it is their duty to the interlocutor to make sure they are understood.

6.2.2.4. Contestation

Even when situated within monological contexts, a dialogical subject is not made completely powerless but may be able to exercise agency and to engage in contestations of meanings and discourses and, in that way, 'transcend their subject positions' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 166). Their agency may be actualised through linguistic acts, such as expropriating language, 'forcing it to submit to one's own intentions' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 294), by struggling over meaning (Holquist, 1990), contesting discourses, expressing resistance (Vitanova, 2005) and creating space for one's own voice (Hall et al., 2005). This means subjects are not completely predetermined by power structures but are 'actively engaged in appropriating systems of governance' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 41). Agency is thus enacted, through language, in 'the messiness of lived experience' and through 'the possibilities inherent in concrete moments' (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004, p. 304). Rather than situating agency within the individual, as an innate quality, from a dialogical perspective 'agency is a border' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 136) and thus exists within dialogical interactions. The intersubjective nature of agency and contestation also make them language dependent. Level of proficiency in the dominant code often 'determines the subjects' positions in the second language society' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 61), creating unequal power relationships that non-native speakers need to contest (Vitanova, 2005). However, for linguistic reasons, they may also struggle to 'contest others' voices and … resist them in a voice of [their] own' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 153). The

non-native-speaking subject then has the double challenge of being positioned as powerless and, at the same time, being unable to challenge this unequal relationship.

6.2.3. Linguistic inequalities

With a dialogical and intersubjective understanding of language learning and use, language-related breakdowns and barriers to access can be conceptualised as linguistic inequalities, instead of as language deficiencies. In this view, as Blommaert et al. (2005, p. 197) argue, 'multilingualism is not what individuals have and don't have, but what the environment, as structured determinations and interactional emergence, enables and disables'. As in other forms of exclusion and inequality – such as those tied to gender and ethnicity – the privileged are usually oblivious to the disadvantages faced by those subordinated (Piller, 2016). However, unlike other inequalities, linguistic ones often remain unchallenged as they are ostensibly justified through the discourses of individual responsibility (Piller, 2020).

The perpetuation of linguistic inequalities through the settlement process of refugees has been investigated in various contexts. Studies in the UK and Australia suggest that linguistic inequalities impact on wellbeing and access to health services (Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Tip et al., 2019) as well as housing, employment and social contexts (Blake et al., 2017) and that English language provision disadvantages already vulnerable groups, with the expectation of rapid entry into employment further curtailing opportunities for learning (Cooke, 2006; Morrice et al., 2021). While there are fewer studies in the New Zealand context, studies have documented language-related disadvantages for refugees in the health care system (Mortensen, 2011; Shrestha-Ranjit et al., 2020).

6.3. Methodology

To investigate linguistic inequalities for refugees resettled in New Zealand, data was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews. Interviews were conducted in English, with the use of language support persons (chosen by the interviewee) or professional interpreters (provided by the researcher) as required or requested by participants. Data was transcribed by the researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features, and translated transcripts of important passages were also arranged with interpreters after the interview. Relevant ethnic communities were consulted in planning the focus of the research and a full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics committee (SOB 20/51). In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross, who are responsible for settlement support in New Zealand. All participants provided written and oral consent to their data being used.

Data are based on interviews with a total of 48 participants who were approached through educational institutions, ethnic communities and agencies and primarily recruited through information sessions or through a third party. Participants included former refugees ($n = 27$), language teachers and tutors ($n = 8$) and individuals working in roles supporting refugee settlement ($n = 13$). Those working in support roles (referred to as simply 'support workers' to preserve anonymity) worked in a range of areas, including education, health, settlement support agencies and community organisations. Refugee background participants were invited to participate if they were part of the Afghan, Rohingya and Palestinian refugee communities. Afghan and Rohingya were selected as two of the primary groups designated for settlement in the area, and Palestinians were included as they had been settled as part of a short-term response to the Syrian crisis and therefore would provide insight into a rather different experience. Educational backgrounds ranged from no formal education to degrees, with the majority having had limited schooling. Participants' reported proficiency at the time of the interviews ranged from pre-A1 to C2 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), with seventy percent beginner learners (CEFR A2 or lower). Participants' time in New Zealand ranged from one to seven years. Any names used are pseudonyms and ethnic and gender identifiers have been used only where relevant to understanding the data.

6.3.1. Dialogical data analysis

While there is a range of dialogical approaches to analysing data, in this article, I will draw on analysis that is both semantic and structural. Semantically, I take the view proposed by Vitanova (2010, p. 253) who suggests that 'in its larger connotation, dialogue epitomizes any process or development, born within a multitude of subject positions and values'. To capture this, I have chosen to adopt a method that looks for the dialogical processes and developments expressed in interview data, as well as the generalised or larger scale dialogical interactions taking place outside the interview context. Using the NVivo software, semantic analysis was undertaken through a coding methodology that is based on the Grounded Theory Method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006) but deviates from this in that it adopts a dialogical perspective as a guiding framework for analysis. The semantic analysis was supplemented by dialogical narrative inquiry which focused on how participants responded to the positions and utterances of others, both present (e.g. the interviewer) and absent (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Holquist, 1990; Steinby & Klapuri, 2013; Vitanova, 2013), and included a range of voices and perspectives through the use of polyphony. The analysis of polyphony enables the researcher to discover speaker agency and resistance to a dominant voice expressed through participants discursively repositioning themselves in the narrative (Vitanova, 2013) and through parodic discourse where the author

appropriates the words (or presumed words) of the Other and ridicules them 'by changing the intention and intonation of another's discourse to suit its own ends' (Sullivan, 2012, p. 50).

Interviews were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee(s), embedded in the broader sociocultural context (Tanggaard, 2009). As in all qualitative interview research, the analysis relies on data that is produced in the interview moment, co-constructed by the participant(s) and the researcher (and, in some cases, the interpreter), and therefore cannot be taken as unmediated accounts of real-life events, or the day-to-day 'intersubjective encounters' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 14) that participants engage in. However, the focus in the study was not to ascertain the word-by-word accuracy of reported events and conflicts, but the individual's lived experiences and the meaning they deduced from these experiences and reproduced in encounters with others (Tanggaard, 2009). In the act of authoring themselves and constructing meaning in an interview context, individuals carefully select and present recounts of interactions in order to contest their subject positions and illustrate broader social processes part of their lived experience (Frank, 2005; Tanggaard, 2009; Vitanova, 2013). By combining a thematic analysis that identified the struggles and processes that impact on resettled refugees with a structural analysis, focusing on aspects like polyphony and contestation as expressed in participant narratives, the study gained insight not only into the lived experiences of participants, but also into how participants engaged with these to construct and reproduce meaning and to contest social conditions and processes.

6.4. Findings

6.4.1. The dialogical Other and the excluded *other*

The narratives in the interviews indicated that practices of inclusion and recognition were often missing in interactions between former refugees and institutions, providers, and agencies, with former refugees reporting exclusion, devaluing, and othering. It appeared that the host population – including policy makers and agencies – made distinctions between the dialogical Other, towards whom they had answerability in the dialogical sense, and the excluded *other* who was not considered part of the everyday dialogical reality and was delegitimised as a speaking subject.

While New Zealand is officially recognised as bicultural and has acknowledged Māori and New Zealand Sign Language as official languages, the dominant group has long been comparatively homogeneous and monolingual (Spoonley & Peace, 2012), and data indicated that there may be a reluctance to include those who are culturally and linguistically different as dialogical Others:

> Kiwis [New Zealanders] hate to be in an uncomfortable situation. I think it's part of our personality, people just want to avoid interactions with people who they feel might make it an uncomfortable situation for them.
>
> *Language teacher*

The discomfort with the culturally different *other* was also evidenced in widely held stereotypes and assumptions, particularly about refugees and Muslims, as evidenced in some discourse from language teachers:

> And so we were looking at human rights in other countries and we were looking at the clothes that maybe Muslims might wear.
>
> *Language teacher*

The linking between 'human rights' and 'clothes that Muslims might wear' implies things about these garments in terms of presumed human rights abuses and serves to differentiate hijabis and others choosing to wear religiously marked clothing. Seeing 'integration' as a process of erasing otherness also clearly defines the boundaries between the collective self and the *other*, as in this example where a young Muslim woman was described as peeling off her otherness down to a point where she was just like a 'Kiwi [New Zealand] girl':

> We witnessed the whole change from wearing hijabs and skirts all the way down to taking it off, wearing yoga pants, everything that a Kiwi [New Zealand] girl would get up to. And just we saw that through the progression of her study while she was here so that was really interesting to watch that with her.
>
> *Language teacher*

Practically, being *other* could lead to a perceptible difference in treatment during interactions with businesses and government agencies. Examples included staff not using the client's name, not making eye contact, giving inadequate information, or acting as if the customer may be a threat.

The discomfort experienced by frontline staff, agencies and community organisations meant that they often appointed a proxy – a person who they felt comfortable communicating with and who they perceived to be a legitimate speaker. For example, landlords preferred to deal with the settlement agency rather than directly with the tenants, appointing the case worker as a kind of proxy to avoid what may be seen as the 'hard work' of talking to someone who is linguistically and culturally different. While this may have facilitated practical communication, it was also a way of denying refugee tenants a voice in interactions of significant importance to them.

At the same time, foreign-born support workers and leaders of communities and organisations were not necessarily seen as legitimate brokers. In one case, dealing with complex matters at a bank, two foreign-born Muslim New Zealanders, both proficient speakers of English, struggled to get the assistance required until they brought a Pākehā (white New Zealand) woman with them (referred to by the pseudonym 'Jane' below):

> [the bank manager] didn't even smile, she didn't look at us, she never called our names… That's what Jane realised. That she would be "OK, Jane" but to us she would be like "OK [curtly]". You know, she'd avoid eye contact with us, um she avoid lots of things around us. So when she talked, she directly talked to Jane because now she feels comfortable with Jane because they're like the same Pākehā [white New Zealanders]. It was just really interesting.
>
> *Support worker*

6.4.2. The unique other

Another way of devaluing those perceived as culturally and linguistically different was to 'diminish the Other's uniqueness' (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007, p. 14) by failing to recognise real, existing differences and failing to provide sufficient and appropriate services.

Data confirmed that there were often high needs in the areas of physical and mental health (see also Mortensen, 2011) and in the areas of financial support and accommodation. Participants in the study agreed that the time provided for practical and targeted settlement support (one year) was inadequate in most cases, and seriously inadequate for higher needs groups like single mothers. Mainstream services were fragmented and often did not meet the core needs of the client, due to their lack of holistic support and cultural and linguistic understanding.

There was also little understanding of the diversity existing within the group defined as 'refugees', which, in the settlement area in question, encompassed professionals and academics as well as those with limited schooling. The latter group often required additional support, which was seldom recognised:

> So the main hard thing is for the Rohingya community the main thing is education and system of New Zealand.
>
> When they really … struggle … they try to go [to the social welfare office] and ask help and that time they not get properly help. And some of [the social welfare] officers they don't understand the refugee. The [Rohingya] refugee is really low education so they need lot of support from people how to understand.
>
> *Community leader*

The monological authoring of the refugee *other* appeared to have produced a generic subject type, with little individual variation, leading to a failure to recognise the needs of specific individuals or groups.

6.4.3. The language dimension

Understanding the unique needs of the dialogical Other requires the provision of adequate language support for those not yet proficient in the dominant language. While significant work has been undertaken in New Zealand at policy level to ensure better language support (MBIE, 2016) the study found that, in practice, language support was often inadequate, tightly gatekept, and not always suitable for the client.

While government agencies and health providers had ready and immediate access to phone interpreters, those services were not always used when required. Frontline staff in government agencies and medical services balanced the needs of the client with other considerations, such as time constraints, convenience, and the cost of longer appointments, and also made judgements on a client's proficiency level, determining whether they required an interpreter or not:

> if you can't speak any English I think it's more easy to get the interpreter. But for the one that she's still learning she's got some words, she's got some expressions, but is just not very good on it, the GP [general medical practitioner] will say ah you speak English, then you can use English and we can talk in English, but actually she don't understand.
>
> *Support worker*

Clients could also be denied interpreting services if they were accompanied by an English-speaking support person, regardless of whether the support person was able to communicate in the client's language:

> sometimes we go with them and then they will say ah you can speak but I'm not her!… some of them also make the excuse oh it's only paperwork I can do it here and no need to explain it to the client and… sometimes they will just [whispers:] Get the job done.
>
> *Support worker*

'Getting the job done' without providing interpreting services deprives the client of their voice and their standing as a legitimate speaking subject in the interactions. In the following example, a single mother brought her young son to the emergency department, accompanied by a support person. The mother wanted to be fully informed about the procedures and the support worker advocated for this:

> [I said] um can we have an interpreter here? And he [doctor] is like can I just do my job? Because it's already midnight and the lab is going to close and yadiyada he really make it like it's really difficult. And it's like no she has to understand what you're saying. And he's like but you understand and I'm like yes but I'm not his mother… I don't speak her language.
>
> *Support worker*

In the interaction, the doctor attempts to appoint the support person as a kind of proxy mother, despite having the ability to access fully funded phone interpreting.

Further, a monolingual bias may not only mean that languages (other than the majority language) are considered to be of lower value but may also assume that other languages are neatly defined and internally homogeneous, without recognising non-standard varieties (Maryns, 2005b). In the context of the study, this could mean that those who were most in need of interpreters, through earlier educational disadvantage, were less likely to receive appropriate language support. For example, all Afghan participants spoke Dari, generally considered a dialect of Iranian Farsi, and viewed as mutually intelligible. However, this mutual intelligibility applies to the standard version of Dari, spoken by urban populations and those who are educated. Many of the participants spoke non-standard varieties, such as Hazaragi (the language of the Hazara people) and Pakistani Dari (a version mixed with Urdu). For them, Farsi interpreters often became unintelligible:

> they provide interpreter through the phone, which is not Dari speaker, Irani speaker. They say I can speak Dari but they cannot. It's – we cannot understand what they are talking about… and at first, a few times, I had interpreter over the phone, then after that I just continued with my bad English.
>
> *Afghan Hazara woman*

Unsuitable provision of interpreting services had real-life consequences for former refugees. In the following example, a Burmese-speaking Rohingya woman failed her licence theory test when she was matched with a speaker of a different dialect:

> A guy from the Karen ethnic group… came with me so that he can translate or help me understand. But he wasn't allowed to sit next to me… He had to sit with his back to my side… So also his Karen accent I couldn't understand much. So all I can see is English and his accent. So I couldn't. So I failed.

In health settings, clients who were not given language support employed strategies such as circumlocution, relying on shared understanding of the context and previously given information

(such as medical notes already on the system) as they attempted to communicate without external support:

> I try to communicate with the English that I have and they also have my record in their computer. They check it and give me the medicine based on their record.

However, in this kind of scenario, there is no certainty that the client understands how to take the medication, and there is no way for the health worker to know their day-to-day medication regime. This was highlighted by one of the home tutors with a pre-literate learner:

> one day she brought out this box with all these different tablets she was taking and started telling me what they were… But what also turned out was that she had some bottles that were small and some bottles that were large. But they were the same medication. And she hadn't realised that they were. So she was taking two or sometimes I think three times the dose she was meant to be taking because she had these different shaped bottles which the pharmacist had given her… and they're exactly the same medication.

6.4.4. Exclusions

In addition to the gatekeeping practices that exclude participation when language support is denied a client, gatekeeping was used to exclude the linguistically and culturally *other* from housing and financial support, leading to a sense of devaluation.

Access to the rental market could be limited by a process that required considerable language and digital literacy skills, as well as a result of prejudices on the part of landlords. In a tight rental market, forms needed to be completed online, quickly, which could be difficult for those with lower levels of language, literacy, or computer skills. With many applicants for each house, landlords could choose to exclude those considered culturally *other*:

> You know you go to the see houses you want to rent: three person to thirty person [on] the list [of applicants]. She [landlord] see we are black colour, we have the children so much.

While financial support is available to those settled under the UNHCR quota system, in practice, it could be difficult to access adequate support from the social welfare agency. This was partly due to the complexity of their application process, and partly due to their power and monological practice. If forms were not completed on time or completed incorrectly, or if information was missing, benefits could be suspended as a punitive measure. The time involved in restarting financial support could mean significant delays in payments.

The monological practices also meant that there was poor understanding of diverse needs. The measures used to determine eligibility, particularly for additional supports and grants, were also

perceived as dehumanising and devaluing, and had the effect of othering refugee background applicants. In the following example, a refugee background client required additional support for new glasses:

> and they say "Why you not work?" And I say I have my medical problem… And they say "What you do with your benefit?"… "why you not work part time?" and I say I am on operation, I am on medical problem, how I can work? And I like to work.

The interaction above demonstrates a monological interaction where only the social welfare agent has the power to address, and the power of the client to respond is limited to responses that fit within a monological framework. The intense questioning also led to clients feeling delegitimised:

> We not feel like we are New Zealander and we are properly citizen of New Zealand. Because they not treat us from [the social welfare agency] like we are New Zealander we can get help… from government and we can pay back to them. They treat us like beggar.

6.4.5. Contesting

While participants were able to outline a range of inequalities in access, often linguistically and culturally determined, there were also challenges in contesting these as the ability to contest is often language dependent. The importance of language was evident in cases where there were conflicting accounts between native and non-native speakers. In these cases, the narrative of the native speaker was generally deemed the more credible. Data contained several examples of traffic incidents where the non-native speaker was deemed at fault, even when the accident was caused by a traffic rule violation by the other party:

> And we make a police report. And in the end, on insurance, we try to repair the car, still the insurance people and police report say that guy wasn't wrong. *We* wrong… I can't understand and we are really hard to explain to them.

But data also contained incidents where decisions or rights violations were successfully contested. However, this required significant language skills, as seen in the following excerpt. Here, an Afghan single mother in social housing attempted to access sufficient heating for several years – unsuccessfully:

> When I came here, my room was very cold… And I asked my volunteer to ask [the social housing agency] for heat pump or anything. And they said, 'we cannot offer heat pump for two-bedroom house.'
>
> And the next winter I went to [the settlement agency] and I asked [social worker] 'Can you please call [the social housing agency] and ask for a heat pump or heat system?' and

she said 'No they cannot offer anything for two-bedroom house, that's all they can offer. I can't do anything.'

And later on, for the fourth winter, I got a bit English and the vocab to use and I called them. 'I need a heat pump, my house is very cold, I cannot continue like this.' And they said, 'we cannot offer heat pump for two-bedroom house'.

I said 'My room, the ceiling is very high. There is no any better heater. I cannot stay like this'. And she said, on the phone, the lady on the phone said 'Ok, I will let your case manager know' and later on the manager came to my house and I said: 'See what is the point here. I'm in freezing, like in a fridge, how can I live like this?' And she said OK, and she offered me a heat pump, maybe the year before last year or last year, just two years I have been a bit warm.

The excerpt illustrates how the woman goes from voiceless to a person with a voice. In her narration, she used a parodic inflection every time she quoted the verdict ('we/they cannot offer…') thus contesting the response narratively. The first two times this happened, she was rendered voiceless. She was outside the interaction, which had taken place by proxy, first through a settlement volunteer and then through a social worker. In both cases, she was denied the right of reply – she was addressed through a mediator but did not have the right of a speaking subject to respond. With her advocates failing to give her a voice in the interactions, it was not until she had established herself as a speaking subject in English that she was able to respond when addressed. The act of responding gave her the right to contest within the interaction itself and eventually led to the desired outcome.

6.5. Discussion and conclusion

The multiple accounts from the interview data indicate that for refugees living in New Zealand, social cohesion as well as settlement success are hampered by processes of exclusion and that these processes are inextricably connected with language. By not recognising the unique needs of resettled refugees and not providing appropriate language support, individuals are not given full access to services or informed choices. The lack of language support complicates access to health, financial support, and adequate housing and, in some cases, creates costly and dangerous situations for former refugees. Importantly, those who are most disadvantaged, through a lack of previous education or gender-based discrimination in the past, are those who are most affected by the lack of appropriate language support. Further, limited language support and limited proficiency impacts on the individual's ability to contest exclusion and discrimination, whether based on language, culture, ethnicity, or other factors. While support persons can act as brokers

and advocates to facilitate access, in practice, this often means that the individual is excluded from the dialogue, and therefore loses their rights to be addressed and to answer effectively.

These findings provide rich insights into precisely how linguistic diversity impacts on access to such areas as health, housing, and wellbeing, thus extending studies from New Zealand and elsewhere (Altinkaya & Omundsen, 1999; Blake et al., 2017; Cheung & Phillimore, 2017; Mortensen, 2011; Shrestha-Ranjit et al., 2020; Tip et al., 2019). They also illustrate how and why these impacts should be viewed from the perspective of linguistic inequalities or injustices (Piller, 2016) and seen as the result of structural and ideological factors (Blommaert et al., 2005). The findings also suggest that policies to promote social cohesion, social inclusion (Webb, 2020), and successful refugee settlement in New Zealand must address linguistic inequalities if they are to be effective.

The study also offers a broader significance in suggesting that the dialogical perspective provides a way of investigating linguistic inequalities as well as social cohesion. A dialogical, intersubjective understanding of social cohesion situates social cohesion in the various interactions between the individual and a range of actors, including other individuals but also, importantly, institutions and policy makers. Bringing language to the forefront, it highlights how linguistic inequalities negatively impact on social cohesion. Further, through a dialogical framework, we can understand linguistic inequalities and injustices from an ideological as well as an interactional perspective. Ideologically, inequalities are justified by denying the linguistically and culturally diverse the status of dialogical Other, a fully unique, and participating subject and, instead, through our authoring, reducing them to a differentiated *other* with no agency or uniqueness (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). Interactionally, by not viewing the culturally and linguistically diverse as full partners in interaction, institutions and individuals fail to provide the linguistic facilitation needed for refugees to add their voice and express their value positions, thus depriving them of agency (Hall et al., 2005; Vitanova, 2005, 2010). A dialogical interpretation of social cohesion thus suggests that dialogical inclusivity, where the culturally and linguistically *other* is treated as a dialogical Other and thereby given a voice, is a crucial step towards enhancing social cohesion.

This chapter has focused on social cohesion from the perspective of everyday interactions between refugees and their new society, primarily on an institutional level. It has highlighted the importance of the linguistic dimension and suggested that refugees deal with a range of language-based inequalities, as well as other exclusions. It has situated exclusions primarily in everyday interactions, but also suggested that these are conditioned by discourses and ideologies that

present refugees as lesser subjects. The next chapter will investigate further how ideology and public discourses are used to construct concepts such as 'social cohesion' and 'belonging' and how these concepts can be politicised to create exclusions and promote nation building. It will then look at how these constructions impact on the lived experiences of refugees who encounter the discourses, but also the effects of the discourses, in the behaviour of people they engage with in their daily lives. To explore these dimensions, I will focus on the Swedish context, and specifically on the 2022 election year.

Chapter 7: Contested belonging in an election year: The case of refugees living in Sweden

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7.1. Introduction

Social cohesion and belonging, in the context of humanitarian migration, are often expressed in terms of an imagined cohesive in-group in relation to a different and threatening *other*. Migration is thus conceived of as a challenge to the cohesive nation-state and its values that needs to be carefully managed, through ensuring that belonging is only granted to those who have qualified through a journey of 'integration' into the culture and values systems of the imagined community (Boucher & Samad, 2013; Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012). Belonging is then politicised and employed in creating demarcations between *self* and *other* relying on a rhetoric of differences in cultural and civilizational terms (Brubaker, 2017; Kamali, 2016). These discourses can, in turn, impact on the sense of belonging newcomers experience and on the level of recognition they receive in their communities (Delanty et al., 2008; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008).

To explore how social cohesion and belonging are portrayed, contested, and acted out, this article will adopt a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective to investigate processes of self-and-other authoring and their consequences in the context of refugee settlement in Sweden. Sweden is an interesting site for exploration as it has historically received significant numbers of refugees but has become increasingly restrictive since 2015 (Emilsson, 2020; Hagelund, 2020). There has also been a distinctive turn towards nationalist sentiments, fuelled by discourses on threatened social cohesion, integration failures, and dangerous segregation (Aylott & Bolin, 2023; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019). To capture the changing climate and some of the tensions a critical period of time was chosen for the study: the 2022 election year, where immigration, integration and segregation were again high on the pre-election agendas after an increase in crime and urban unrest.

In order to comprehend how inclusions and exclusions are discursively constructed and reproduced and impact on the lived experiences of those authored as excluded *others*, this article

draws on data from political discourses prior to the election as well as interviews with refugees in the four weeks immediately following. The article will address the following research questions:

RQ1: How are refugees presented in political discourses?

RQ2: How is this representation contested and experienced by refugees?

7.2. Literature review

7.2.1. Refugee reception in Sweden

While Sweden has built up an international humanitarian reputation through years of generous asylum policies, things have changed considerably since 2015. Until 2015, Sweden had asylum and family reunification policies that went beyond the requirements of the Refugee Convention (Emilsson, 2020), and during what was commonly labelled the 'refugee crisis', Sweden received around 160,000 asylum seekers (SCB, 2023), which was more than six times the EU per capita average (Emilsson, 2020). This caused significant strain on asylum reception systems (Emilsson, 2020) and led to a number of interim measures which have since gained a level of permanence (Hagelund, 2020; Stern, 2019). Measures included tougher immigration rules but also less desirable conditions for those receiving asylum in Sweden: temporary residence permits became the norm for all except quota refugees, with requirements for financial self-sufficiency for those wanting to transition to permanent residence or apply for family reunification, including that of their spouse and children (Emilsson, 2020; Hagelund, 2020). Numbers dropped as a result, and in 2022, Sweden accepted about 9,000 quota refugees and asylum seekers and just under 3000 family reunification cases (Migrationsverket, 2024a). The government elected in 2022 aimed to reduce numbers further, with the quota decreasing from 5000 to 900 and further restrictions on asylum seekers to be implemented, with exceptions for Ukrainian refugees (*Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige*, 2022).

7.2.2. Social cohesion, 'integration' and politicised belonging

Migration, particularly in the European context, has long been presented as the main challenge to social cohesion (Boucher & Samad, 2013). There has been an increasing focus on promoting shared values and managing threats from parallel societies, terrorism, radicalisation, and violence (Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012) and an emphasis on one-sided societal integration, particularly values integration, on the part of the newcomer (Boucher & Samad, 2013; Triadafilopoulos et al., 2012). These social cohesion and integration discourses rely on the idea of politicised belonging, where the imagined community is subject to ongoing boundary drawing (and redrawing) as well as contestations, negotiations, and reinforcement of boundaries (Yuval-Davis, 2006). Politicised belonging emphasises membership and place ownership with an

ongoing negotiation between those 'who claim belonging' and those who have 'the power of "granting" belonging' (Antonsich, 2010, p. 650), relying on exclusionary practices that are not necessarily overtly racist, but focus instead on cultural differences and distances (Delanty et al., 2008; Wodak, 2008). The political project of defining belonging also impacts on social recognition and feelings of belonging for individuals. According to Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2008), while individuals may form attachments to the new country and identify with the target community, there is also a need for the individual to go beyond 'identification with' (the migrant's desire to identify with the target community) to 'identification as' (the target community's recognition of migrants as accepted members) for belonging to fully develop. Living with an 'absence of recognition' (Delanty et al., 2008, p. 3) becomes a form of everyday exclusion, even in the absence of more overt actions.

7.2.3. Social cohesion and legitimised belonging in Sweden

There has been a substantial amount of research carried out on how social cohesion is conceptualised in Sweden, and how boundaries between belonging and non-belonging are drawn and contested in discourse. A discursive discussion of cohesion using metaphors of home and family (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018) has been used to construct a bounded imagined community in need of protection (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019) and *utsatta områden* ('vulnerable areas'), earlier commonly called *utanförskapsområden* (literally 'areas of exclusion'), are used as a way of speaking of the segregated *other* who is not part of, and therefore threatening, cohesion. While vulnerable areas exist in practical reality as suburbs vulnerable to crime, with low socioeconomic status and a high percentage of individuals with foreign background (Polisen, n.d.), these areas are also mobilised in discourse as metaphors of segregation and absence of Swedish law, order, and values (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018). Thus, the areas have become a device for justifying tougher immigration and integration measures (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018) and for discursively linking immigration and crime (Aylott & Bolin, 2023).

Boundary drawing for the Swedish identity is also achieved through the conceptualisation of Sweden as a superior democracy and champion of human rights and democratic values (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019; Norocel, 2017) and the conceptualisation of the immigrant *other* as a threat to these values (Alinia, 2020; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018). This is seen in the discourses of populist parties (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019) and in political strategies more generally (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018) as well as in initiatives that intend to promote inclusion and integration. Studies suggest that in the latter contexts, Sweden is presented as a historically homogeneous and uncontested entity that has steadily progressed to reach a high level of democracy and prosperity (Bauer et al., 2023) with integration conceptualised as a one-way process of adopting Swedish democratic values (Hudson et al., 2023; Muftee & Lundberg, 2016). Refugees are thus subject to a deficiency

discourse and presumed to need instruction in diligence, productivity and the duty to contribute to the welfare state as well as other fundamental Swedish values (Hudson et al., 2023; Muftee & Lundberg, 2016). Research on Swedish fundamental values, particularly in relation to migrants and refugees, highlights the emphasis placed on gender equality as one of the least negotiable of the Swedish values (Hudson et al., 2023) and an essential part of Swedish self-authoring (Carlson, 2015; Norocel, 2017). Immigrant women are constructed as less equal than Swedish women and in need of interventions in integration programmes (Carlson, 2015; Hudson et al., 2023), while gender equality in Sweden is presented as already achieved and an integral and unproblematic part of Swedish society (Hudson et al., 2023). This is particularly the case for Muslim women (Lövheim, 2020).

In recent years, Sweden has witnessed an increased presence of nationalist and exclusionary ideas in politics, seen in the success of the nationalist party *Sverigedemokraterna* (the Sweden Democrats, or 'SD') as well as in changes within mainstream parliamentary parties. While Sweden was long viewed as exceptionalist in that it did not have a right-wing nationalist party in government, SD has gradually established a presence and an influence over the years (Rydgren & Van der Meiden, 2019; Schierup & Ålund, 2011). A parliamentary party since 2010, the 2022 elections saw SD gain considerable influence as it not only gained 20.5 percent of the vote making it the second largest party but was also for the first time included in formal collaborations by other parties (Aylott & Bolin, 2023). While it did not become part of the coalition government, it had substantial influence over the direction of the government through the *Tidö* agreement (*Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige*, 2022), an agreement between SD and the government (Aylott & Bolin, 2023). The agreement contains a summary of directions and proposed policies for the collaboration and has a particular focus on crime and immigration. The proposed changes to immigration policy have as an overall aim to limit immigration, deter asylum seekers, and increase return migration. Proposed measures include decreasing the refugee quota, making the asylum process more difficult through stricter requirements and less support, and imposing further restrictions on family reunification. Further, the agreement signals a move from permanent to temporary residence permits, higher thresholds for citizenship and restricted welfare access for non-citizens.

The creation of acceptability has for SD, as for many other nationalist parties in Europe, involved reframing xenophobia in terms of culture rather than race (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019), racial superiority as civilizational superiority (Brubaker, 2017), and immigration as a threat to social cohesion (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019). However, these discourses are no longer exclusively employed by SD but have also been adopted by more mainstream parties (Aylott & Bolin, 2023). A general increase in xenophobia can also be seen in increases in racial harassments, particularly

those relating to islamophobia (Forselius & Westerberg, 2019), which are particularly prone to affect women (Stendahl & Axell, 2021).

As evident from the literature review above, there is a significant amount of research undertaken in the Swedish context, particularly in areas connected to social cohesion, exclusions and belonging. However, few studies exist that tie together political perspectives and the perspectives of refugees themselves and bring together discursive constructions and lived experiences (see Christensen and Jensen, 2011; White, 2015). Further, there is of yet little research on what can be considered a critical point in Swedish immigration and integration history, the election year 2022 which saw significant and likely far-reaching changes and brought integration and segregation to the top of the agenda through the so-called Easter riots (see section 7.5). Further, with politics and media focusing primarily on cities, vulnerable areas and crises, there is a need to understand the everyday lived experiences of those living everyday lives in smaller municipalities.

7.3. Conceptual framework

To understand the complexities of social cohesion, belonging and exclusion as both discursively constructed and as lived realities, this article adopts a conceptual framework based on Bakhtinian dialogism. A dialogical perspective acknowledges the intersubjective nature of identity and belonging (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2010) and recognises that these are constructed and negotiated in the interactions between Self and Other, while also influenced by how identities are portrayed in public and private discourse. From a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective, identity is created through acts of *authoring*, where subjects through their utterances author themselves in relation to those around them (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010) and also author others and in turn are authored by others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). While ideally identity constructions should occur in a dialogical relationship where each subject is recognised in their uniqueness (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007), in reality power dynamics and processes of exclusion often determine whose authoring is seen as valid (Holquist, 1990). Thus, certain groups may be authored – in public or private discourse – as a lesser *other*, 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004) to serve certain ends, for example in projects of nation building (Kostogriz, 2005). However, in face of reductive or negative authoring, dialogical subjects are still able to exercise agency and engage in contestations of meanings and discourses and in that way 'transcend their subject positions' (Vitanova, 2005, p. 156) and create space for their own voice (Hall et al., 2005).

7.4. Methodology

7.4.1. Data collection

In order to investigate the construction of the 'foreign' *other* and how this impacts on feelings of belonging and recognition, the analysis draws on data obtained from political discourse prior to the elections, as well as data obtained from semi-structured interviews with refugees ($n = 29$). Samples of political discourse were selected from two sources: party leaders' speeches at *Almedalsveckan* 2022 and a party leaders' debate in May 2022. As a nationally significant and highly mediatised yearly event that enables party leaders to highlight their core values and policies, *Almedalsveckan* is a fruitful site for analysis (see also Norocel, 2017; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018). The May debate was chosen as a sample due to its timeliness (following the 'Easter riots') and its strong focus on integration.

The interviews with refugees were carried out in a post-industrial/rural municipality, 'Nyfält'. Nyfält was chosen as it received a significant number of refugees in 2015 and the years following and has had strong electoral support for the Sweden Democrats (about 40 percent in the 2022 elections, compared to the 20.5 per cent national average). With no large city in the municipality, Nyfält lacks the extreme residential segregation of larger centres, but is overall a municipality with comparatively low socioeconomic outcomes. Fieldwork was undertaken, on site, in the four weeks following the 2022 national election. At this time, though it was clear that there was a right-wing majority, and that SD would be conceded significant power, the final agreement (*Tidöavtalet*) was yet to be completed.

Refugee background participants in the study were recruited through educational institutions and snowballing and included quota refugees ($n = 3$), earlier asylum seekers ($n = 13$) and family reunification cases, primarily spouses ($n = 13$). All were Swedish residents (temporary or permanent) or citizens at the time of the interviews, and no participant had been in Sweden longer than ten years. Countries of origin were mainly Syria and Eritrea, but also other Arab and African countries. Interviews were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee, embedded in the broader sociocultural context (Tanggaard, 2009), and included open-ended questions that allowed participants to redirect the conversation to topics of interest to them. Interviews were carried out in Swedish, with interpreters as requested or required. All interviews were transcribed by the author/researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features. Translations from Swedish to English are by the author. Full ethics applications were submitted prior to data collection and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Commission (SOB 20/51) as well as by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635). All names of participants and places are pseudonyms.

7.4.2. Dialogical analysis

To analyse data, I drew on a dialogical approach that was both semantic and structural. Semantically I chose to adopt a method that looks for the dialogical processes and developments expressed in interview data, as well as the generalised or larger scale dialogical interactions taking place outside the interview context. Using the NVivo software, semantic analysis was undertaken through a coding methodology that was based on the Grounded Theory Method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006), but deviated from this in that it adopted a dialogical perspective as a guiding framework for analysis. The semantic analysis was supplemented by a dialogical narrative inquiry in order to understand how discourses were reproduced and contested, and how subjects authored themselves, were authored by others, and contested this authoring (Vitanova, 2010). Following a dialogical narrative approach, I paid attention to how utterances responded to the positions and utterances of others, including those present (for example interviewer and interpreter) but also absent Others, a generalised Other or even a less embodied Other such as a sociocultural norm or discourse (Brookie, 2018; Vitanova, 2010). This enabled me to distinguish not only the most prevalent discourses, but also how individuals and groups authored themselves in response to these.

7.5. Findings

In this section I will first present an analysis of political discourse and then findings from the interviews with refugees. When analysing political discourse, I have looked for common and general themes that are present in the discourse of several parties, albeit expressed slightly differently. In selecting representative quotes, I have primarily focused on the mainstream parties, including *Socialdemokraterna* (the Social Democrats, 'S'), *Moderaterna* (the Moderates, 'M', the mainstream right-wing party), *Liberalerna* (the Liberals, 'L') and *Kristdemokraterna* (the Christian Democrats, 'KD'). This is done in order to best represent prevalent ideas, beyond those of the overtly nationalist party, SD. Other mainstream parties, including *Miljöpartiet* (the Greens, 'MP'), *Centern* (the Centre party, 'C') and *Vänsterpartiet* (the Left, 'V') were included in the analysis but their representations often deviated from those of the other parties, as they highlighted divisions based on class rather than ethnicity (V and MP) and presented themselves as anti-racist and anti-nationalist.

7.5.1. Threatened social cohesion and the authoring of the excluded *other*

While there were distinct differences in approaches between political parties, many themes or discourses appeared to be widely adopted across much of the political spectrum. Sweden was, overall, authored as a socially cohesive and progressive democratic welfare state, with strong fundamental values, and currently under threat by a range of factors. These factors could be

summarised under the label of segregation, as expressed by Magdalena Andersson (Socialdemokraterna, 2022): 'Something is fundamentally wrong in our nation. That wrong is spelled segregation'.

A common exemplification of segregation was through metaphors built on the so-called vulnerable areas, which functioned as a form of reification of the boundary between the cohesive society and the excluded *other* and also opened up for a range of classifications of the 'segregated *other*' that homogenised and problematized immigrants overall (cf. Dahlstedt and Eliassi, 2018). While some parties – notably the Left and the Greens – challenged the general representations and focused instead on class (V) and political neglect (MP), overall, the imagery of the threatening segregated *other* was utilised diligently. Areas with large immigrant populations were commonly referred to as 'parallel societies' (S, M, SD) and painted as areas of 'clan rule' (L, SD), lawlessness (L) and religious fundamentalism (SD) and were even coined 'culturally encumbered areas' by the Sweden Democrats (Agenda, 2022).

Drawing on the concept of spatially segregated areas also enabled politicians to discursively create an imagined segregated community ostensibly devoid of Swedish values. Thus, the leader of the Social Democrats was able to imply the deficiency of values by presenting a utopian scenario where Swedish values spread out and encompassed all regardless of area:

> Sweden shall be the Sweden we love in every residential area. In every block. With the same book of law and the same security. Where every child knows that she or he can shape their own life and a good future. Where both women and men go to work every morning. For with your own job, yes, then comes an independent income and the freedom to decide for yourself how you want to live your life and with who. And Swedish gender equality, it applies to all girls and women in Sweden. (Socialdemokraterna, 2022)

The same strategy was adopted by the leader of the conservative *Moderaterna*, though perhaps less subtly:

> A Sweden without gang crime, without clan rule, where law and equality applies to all people … where all children see their parents go to work, where it always pays to work and do your very best. Where diligence and toil always trump cheating and poor excuses. (Moderaterna, 2022)

An analysis of these and other passages highlights the values that are presented as central to what it means to be Swedish: democracy, social cohesion, justice and rule of law, duty and diligence, freedom of speech and religion, and gender equality. This aligns with earlier analyses of values discourses in Swedish politics (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018) and with representations of immigrant

women as victims of patriarchy (Norocel, 2017); however, there is also some indication that these discourses are becoming acceptable across a broader political base.

Drawing on value discourses enabled politicians to present a division that was not based on race or overt xenophobia, but relied on other, more subtle forms of *othering* while claiming that they subscribed to 'a Swedishness that is not based on skin colour or background but that is based on the values that are so fundamental in our society' (Liberalerna, 2022). These values were then used to contrast the *other* who was authored as either deficient in Swedish values or subject to an opposing value system and constituted a threat to Sweden. This was evident in the rhetoric of for example Ebba Busch, the leader of *Kristdemokraterna*: 'We are about to lose that fight against those who want completely different values than those that built Sweden strong to prevail' (Agenda, 2022).

7.5.2. The Easter Riots and freedom of expression

To illustrate how Sweden was authored as unfailingly democratic in contrast to the ignorant or dangerous *other*, I will now turn to accounts relating to the so-called 'Easter riots' in April 2022, events that elevated segregation on the pre-election agendas. The events were triggered by the actions of Rasmus Paludan, a Danish far right, anti-Islam activist, who had obtained permission to burn the Qur'an and criticise Islam in the vulnerable areas of major cities in Sweden during Ramadan. A significant police presence was required for these events which triggered riots in several places (*Dozens arrested at Sweden riots sparked by planned Quran burnings*, 2022). While Paludan's actions were subsequently criticised and referred to the courts for hate crime trials (Civil Rights Defenders, 2023) and the question of Qur'an burnings later became a diplomatic issue (Syed, 2023), the immediate political reaction was to defend the right to freedom of expression, without problematizing this in terms of hate speech or hate crime.

In political debates and speeches, the events served to create an even stronger demarcation between the Swedish *self* and the foreign *other* and focused the discourse on immigrants as 'problematic'. The fact that the rioters were throwing stones was picked up by all party leaders and emphasised in speeches often with the subtext of stoning as a religious punishment. Islamophobia, otherisation, and devaluing were further promoted by referring to the actions as 'medieval barbarianism' (M) and Sweden as a nation being destroyed by 'clan rule, shadow societies, Muslim riots' (SD). Most importantly, perhaps, was the portrayal of the *other* as undemocratic and unable to appreciate freedom of expression:

> Some people who were there and who actually do not like the Swedish freedom of expression. People who think that it is wrong that the democracy has as its baseline that we shall be allowed to express ourselves. (Johan Pehrson, Liberalerna (Agenda, 2022))

The data from the political speeches and debates thus suggest an authoring of refugees and non-European immigrants as culturally distant, and deficient in some of the values that underpin Swedish society, such as freedom of expression, gender equality, diligence and law and order. Presented as outside the cohesive, orderly, democratic Swedish society, their belonging, or 'identification as' (Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2008) Swedes is thus put into question.

7.5.3. Authoring Self as an acceptable Other

Interviews with refugee participants were designed to allow for narratives and discussions on some of the themes identified in the analysis of political discourses, including integration, segregation and belonging, as well as reflections on the elections, the results, and the general political climate. Participants engaged with these questions to varying extents, based on language level and, especially, on their level of contact with Swedish individuals and institutions. Overall, participants whose interactions with Swedes were mostly limited to the language school were less likely to have encountered hostile discourses and actions as they moved within a relatively safe, but isolated, sphere:

> I come to school, go home. Not working, I not, I don't know, I don't know them

However, participants proficient in Swedish and with higher levels of contact through education or employment were the ones most likely to express feelings of alienation and recognise negative authoring by politicians and wider society, as well as more likely to contest this authoring in the interviews.

Through a dialogical analysis focusing on instances of contestation, data revealed the ubiquity of negative discourses and indicated that refugees were tasked with authoring an acceptable identity, often through distancing themselves from what they knew to be prevalent discourses and representations. They contested the reductive authoring of refugees – an incredibly diverse group in terms of religious and political beliefs as well as educational and professional backgrounds – as a homogeneous group where one mistake could affect the entire imagined community:

> The problem is that when a [refugee] does something wrong, crime or something, they collect them all in the same basket.
>
> you are not angels, and we are not devils … We are people. We have the devils, and we have the angels. And you also.

In their self-authoring, participants more specifically contested the authoring of refugees as unmotivated, unproductive, and careless by presenting themselves as motivated, punctual, and productive:

> I was very engaged, I had a lot of enthusiasm, I want – I want to become someone. I don't want to be a problem. I want to show that we, we came here to be like ordinary people, to help, to integrate into society.
>
> We have this in my home country too… that you, for example, you respect times, you are punctual.
>
> Like I said forty people [from my extended family] come to Sweden. Thirty-three we work

Other common contestations involved contesting the authoring of refugees as uncivilised, intolerant, and threatening:

> But we are not dangerous. Yes, we have religion, that is Islam, but we are not dangerous, and we respect all religions
>
> I come from Lebanon. In my family we don't have the close-minded… we are open.

Because of the prevalent negative authoring of refugees, individuals also needed to author themselves as not belonging to the non-compliant, or to those who may been seen to confirm the stereotypes. Participants generally did not contest that there were those who did not contribute to society, but strongly distanced themselves from these imagined, or actual, others by speaking of 'some others' or 'some families' that were problematic:

> Some families they didn't want to… like they didn't want to study the language, they thought just that I have moved to Sweden. It's enough if we study and for example if we get no job then we can stay home and [social services] pay for them every month… We didn't think like that… Me and my husband thought no we don't want that and we haven't gone through welfare.

Identity construction, or self-authoring, is thus done within a context of negative authoring by powerful members of Swedish society and requires significant contestation in order to construct an acceptable identity of belonging in Sweden. I will now turn to how the negative authoring of refugees impacts on dimensions of everyday life.

7.5.4. Living as *other*

Analyses of narratives about everyday interactions in society revealed a range of lived experiences of othering, from absence of recognition to overtly racial incidents, all impacting on the individual's sense of belonging. Thus, even participants with limited societal engagement reported that they felt perceived as different, and treated with a level of caution and distancing:

> Sometimes they don't want hello, just silent.

Those with higher levels of engagement needed to purposely author themselves in real life to counteract the negative perceptions in society, as in this example from a staff member at a primary/intermediate school:

> Earlier they were really careful and scared … like I tried all the time to show to the other that I am positive, I am happy, kind, nice, not harsh. Not that I am like they talk about us that they are dangerous something, but very helpful if they need help with anything.

This sense of being on probation until you had proven yourself trustworthy was shared by several participants, particularly those in paid employment and who were seen as successfully integrated. After proving themselves, they could gain the respect of those close to them; however, it did not appear to challenge the overall perception of refugees as non-compliant, and non-belonging. Instead, it appeared to be viewed as a transition from out-group to in-group for that one individual:

> Okay, we know Abbas, Abbas is good. So we are kind. We take care of… Abbas. We take Abbas from this group of immigrants to our place.

Further, for the individual, the respect and legitimised belonging only lasted within the work or social setting, and as soon as they stepped outside that setting, they were subjected to the same negative narrative and had to contest it yet again. Thus, even if someone was highly respected in their workplace, they may not have any respect in the wider community:

> If I just start my car and go to [the supermarket] I lose all my respect. Because nobody knows I am working.

This context-specific belonging was experienced by one participant who had gained acceptance as an equal member of the teaching staff at her school, yet experienced the differential treatment between herself and a Swedish colleague when they found themselves on the maternity ward at the same time:

> we had our babies like the same day… I was on the same, same corridor yes and met each other but only they helped her, and they didn't come to me. Sure, a short while with me but mostly with her and other, Swedish women… And then their way of talking. So I felt sometimes like [I] am rubbish or something. But I am a person.

In addition to the subtle forms of alienation and othering, many participants also spoke of overt racial harassment, which further impacted on their sense of belonging:

> There was an old woman and her husband and then she looked like this [contemptuously] and she did this, she stood in the corner and [clutched her bag and struck a defensive

> pose] she did so she was so darn scared… so [my daughter] started to talk do you have a problem, yes? So she looked up and started saying bad words, bloody [ethnic slur] and Arabs and all.

There was also evidence that negative experiences increased in line with political rhetoric and changes:

> Earlier there was racism but it was inside. Now it is inside and outside and everything.

> I can say this year, we notice, we feel it, like now when we go into town or want to go shopping we see it, so it is really difficult for us. So it has affected over me a lot. And then when I get home I start talking to my husband and sometimes I cry.

7.5.5. Gender and religious freedom

While alienation and discrimination were experienced by both men and women, narratives suggested that the intersection of ethnicity, religion and gender was significant, with Muslim women more likely to have negative experiences despite the common Swedish narrative of gender equality and Sweden as a haven for women (see also Hudson et al., 2022; Norocel, 2017). The women who participated in the study had varying experiences of gender equality, education, and professional engagement prior to migration, but all were familiar with the Swedish gender-equal discourse and had aligned themselves with Swedish expectations of women and mothers as participants in education and employment. However, Muslim women also expressed that their gender, and particularly their gendered expressions of religion, gave rise to new forms of discrimination and harassment in the Swedish context. The link between hijab wearing and harassment was stated in a matter-of-fact manner by participants:

> But you know. I have a scarf. They think not good, Arabic.

The Swedish gender-equal discourse tends to author immigrant women as lacking in gender equality and freedom (Carlson, 2015; Hudson et al., 2023) and their liberation as an act of emancipation from cultural norms assisted by Western society (Norocel, 2017). This narrow view, coupled with the negative authoring of refugees and Muslims in general, impacted on the choices available to Muslim women. This was exemplified in the account of one participant, Hanadi, as she went through a process of determining what gender equality and freedom meant to her. Feeling that the hijab had been imposed on her as a child, soon after arrival in Sweden she gradually started socialising with Swedish people without her hijab, experiencing an initial sense of freedom:

> I have had some parties with my friends, Swedish friends, yes, so I didn't have the veil on me so I tried that … I mean I felt I am a real woman who's danced and had a beautiful dress on

However, while she enjoyed the experience, she concluded that for her, at this point in her life, the hijab was an important part of her identity, and feeling free to choose, she elected to wear the hijab as an expression of who she was:

> It gives me so much when I wear it. Like I feel, I feel that really happy … I feel even more beautiful when I wear it … I am Arabic from Syria, I have religion, it is Islam.

However, while the perceived cultural emancipation of removing her hijab was encouraged and acceptable, she did not experience the same freedom in her decision to wear it, as it laid her open to verbal harassment in public spaces. The anxiety and fear she experienced on an everyday basis led her to prohibit her daughter from wearing the hijab, despite repeated requests, in order to keep her safe. Thus, the freedom to choose religious expression, which was denied Hanadi as a young girl in Syria, was now denied Hanadi's daughter in Sweden.

There were also indications that the intersection of gender, religion and religious expression impacted on the rights of Muslim women to participate on equal terms in education and employment. One participant reported ongoing harassment in her work delivering circulars, and others reported distancing and alienation due to their hijab wearing as well as harassment in public spaces. A male participant, Abdul, explained that his wife was working in a care role part-time as well as studying full-time. As she had greater academic ability than him, he took part time Swedish classes and ran the household while she was studying and working. However, his wife was frequently subjected to harassment in the community:

> My wife has eh veil and she walks many people look. And [spit]… [She] comes home and [cry] … And my wife drives car and [they spit] on the window much… [She] comes home: 'Not go to school. Not to work'

Thus, while Swedish gender equality technically supported her right to study and work, this right – and her general freedom of movement – were threatened by societal responses to her gendered expression of religious beliefs.

7.6. Discussion

In this article, I have demonstrated how belonging and exclusion are discursively constructed through positive self-authoring and negative other-authoring, and how these representations become pervasive in talk about refugees to a point where they impact on the lived experiences of refugees in Sweden. While the strategy of demarcating belonging along lines of culture and

civilisation has long been used in nationalist rhetoric in Sweden and elsewhere (Brubaker, 2017; Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019), the analysis of political discourse suggests that these demarcations are now adopted by several mainstream parties. Though the threat to Swedish values has been utilised politically at other critical points, including times of urban unrest (Schierup & Ålund, 2011) and in response to the 'refugee crisis' (Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018), the analysis indicates an increase in otherization and anti-immigration rhetoric from across the political spectrum. Refugee participants, through the contestation of discourses in their self-authoring, not only exercised their dialogical rights as unique individuals to respond to the multiple utterances about them, but also, in their contestations, revealed the extent to which these negative discourses were present to them and incongruent with their own self-authoring.

This article makes an important contribution to the study of social cohesion, segregation and belonging, as it examines not only the portrayal of the *other* in discourse and society but also how this impacts on the lived experiences of those who are authored as *other*. The contestations that were carried out in the interviews also needed to be carried out in everyday life as individuals authored – through words and actions – an acceptable identity in contrast to the identity imposed by others' authoring. The suggestion by Krzyżanowski and Wodak (2008) and Delanty et al. (2008) that belonging requires recognition by those perceived as already belonging to a place is exemplified in this article through demonstrating the struggles of living as *other* and being seen as not belonging, and also through the everyday contestations of negative authoring that participants engaged in. The persistence of otherizing discourses is evident in how individuals may 'cross over' to the in-group but not change the in-group's overall perception of the *other* and also in how acceptance is strictly tied to the setting where the individual has already contested imposed identities and authored themselves in dialogical interaction. The increase of social discomfort apace with the increase in xenophobic discourses in general exemplifies the effect of discourse on everyday experience.

Further, the article demonstrates the importance of values discourses in the Swedish context, highlighted by a number of authors (Bauer et al., 2023; Brookie, 2018; Dahlstedt & Eliassi, 2018; Hudson et al., 2023; Schierup & Ålund, 2011) and also complexifies this understanding by arguing that using values as a device for authoring the *other* negatively in reality may lead to an impingement on the rights of these *others*. Data exemplify that Swedish values and human rights are indeed seen as something sacred and also something that is crucial for authoring the Swedish identity. The reactions to Paludan's tour exemplify the strong attachment to certain values, but also the strong conviction that these values are somewhat uniquely Swedish. This view of values as Swedish and unique mean that interpretations of values like gender equality and freedom of religion become inflexible, and the portrayal of the *other* as a threat means that individuals are

unable to live out the freedom they are entitled to. The strongest example of this is the impact on the gendered expression of religious devotion for Muslim women, who do not feel that they have the freedom to express their religious devotion, and that if they do, they may experience restrictions to their movements.

7.7. Conclusion

In this article, I have suggested that the authoring of refugees as distant from the Swedish culture and as threats to Swedish democratic values creates a simplistic and monological understanding of social cohesion and belonging where a significant portion of the population are living with some forms of exclusion and lack of recognition. It prevents any problematizing and dialogical engagement, for example in terms of defining the boundaries between freedom of speech and hate speech, and in terms of what equal rights, especially for women, means for the culturally and religiously diverse in a democratic society.

This article has some limitations. By exploring a range of dimensions, there has perhaps not been sufficient opportunity to explore some of these in-depth. Further, this article has focused on the discursive constructions of belonging and rights, and the impacts of this in daily life, and has not looked at some of the more practical dimensions, such as the increase in precarity due to changes in policies or the difficult socioeconomic conditions that many of the refugees are dealing with. These would be fruitful, and important, topics for further inquiry.

In this chapter I have demonstrated that social cohesion is constructed not only on policy levels, but also constructed discursively, and that an exclusionary presentation of social cohesion as homogeneity may in reality lead to breakdowns in cohesion. Further, I have argued that belonging is contested, and often politicised for the purpose of defining national boundaries and national identity. This necessitates a definition of who belongs and who does not, and often defines even those refugees who legitimately reside within the national borders as non-belonging. Such representations therefore require contestation as refugees claim belonging to their destination community and create a legitimate identity in the face of reductive representations. In the next chapter, I will investigate one strategy used by refugees for claiming belonging and recognition, and for constructing a full and legitimate identity. Using Bakhtin's concept of the *chronotope*, I will explore how refugee-background participants may draw on the chronotope of 'home' to author complex identities and contest identities imposed by others.

Chapter 8: Chronotopes of home and dislocation: recognising the lived experiences of refugees

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8.1. Introduction

Forced migrants are often presented from a reductive perspective focusing solely on their vulnerability and their status as refugees, without acknowledging other aspects of their identity or life history (Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019). From a political perspective, portraying refugees as vulnerable justifies their settlement and also assists in the depiction of a destination nation as humanitarian and hospitable (Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019), and from the perspective of the individual, a narrative of vulnerability and need is essential for gaining recognition as a refugee (Marlowe, 2018; Maryns, 2005; Smith & Waite, 2019). As Mahendran et al. (2019, p. 588) suggest, refugees thus become subject to 'diachronic freezing'; that is, they are seen only from the perspective of a fleeing individual, only existing in the time and space of arrival, without a meaningful past or potential future, and as an object of humanitarianism rather than as an agentive individual. While they may be recognised as legitimate refugees, they may not be recognised as full and legitimate participants in society even after settlement (Eliassi, 2016; Marlowe, 2010, 2018). This misrecognition, or lack of recognition, leads to more or less subtle forms of exclusion (Delanty et al., 2008; Fraser, 1998) and may impact on settlement outcomes and the individual's future in their destination country (Marlowe, 2018).

Refugees are thus subject to reductive portrayals, or 'authoring' (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2010; see also next section), but, on an individual level, they may resist this authoring (Mahendran et al., 2019; Svensson, 2024b) through acts of self-authoring or identity construction. This article will analyse how refugee-background participants narrate their lived experiences prior to settlement to construct a fuller identity with a legitimate origin, presenting themselves as purposeful agents, making 'ethical choice[s]' (Steinby, 2013, p. 122) within the constraints of their context. To analyse these narratives, and how identity is constructed, I will consider how individuals draw on *chronotopes*, or time-spaces (Baynham, 2015), including how they present these, and how they locate themselves within them.

The concept of chronotopes, initially introduced by Bakhtin (1981), is used in this article to understand contexts as located in particular time-spaces and impacting on the individual's opportunity for action. The idea of the chronotope recognises that time and space are intertwined and that therefore the interpretation of a particular location (e.g. Syria) can vary significantly depending on the time period (e.g. before or after the commencement of civil unrest). Chronotopes are also subject to scale (Blommaert, 2015; De Fina et al., 2020), where the higher-scale, or more easily communicable, chronotopes can be invoked to denote a well-known time and space (Agha, 2007; Blommaert, 2015), and lower-scale chronotopes may deal more closely with an individual's lived experience (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021). However, while higher-level chronotopes (e.g. *the Gulf War*) are easily communicable and can be used to invoke a certain time and place, they are also ideologically charged, open to misrepresentation, and contestable, and may not adequately communicate the lived experience of those situated in it (Karimzad, 2021; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021).

To shed light on some of these issues, I will explore how chronotopes of home and dislocation are invoked, contested and elaborated in open-ended interviews and narratives with refugee-background participants to construct a complex and rich identity. In particular, I will seek to answer the following research questions:

> RQ1: How do refugee-background participants draw on chronotopes of home and dislocation to author themselves and claim recognition?
>
> RQ2: To what extent do commonly known or mass-mediated chronotopes assist in understanding and recognising the lived experiences of refugees?

8.2. Literature review

8.2.1. Identity, recognition, and participation

This article employs a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective on identity, conceptualising identity as intersubjective and constructed and negotiated in interactions between Self and Other, while also influenced by how identities are portrayed in public and private discourse (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz, 2005; Vitanova, 2010). From this perspective, identity is created through acts of authoring, where subjects through their utterances author themselves in relation to those around them (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010) and also author others and in turn are authored by others (Sullivan & McCarthy, 2004). While, ideally, identity constructions should occur in a dialogical relationship where each subject is recognised in their uniqueness (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007), in reality certain groups may be authored as lesser subjects, 'impoverished' or reduced to a type without individual uniqueness and value (Sullivan and McCarthy, 2004). In the context of forced displacement, self-authoring can become complex as individuals seek to be recognised not only

as legitimate refugees needing legal protection, but also as unique individuals and 'full partner[s] in social interaction' (Fraser, 1998, p. 3) in their destination community. As suggested by Marlowe (2018), refugees thus need to present a convincing narrative of their vulnerability (see also Blommaert, 2001; Marlowe, 2010; Maryns, 2005), but at the same time prevent this narrative from becoming a 'master status' (Marlowe, 2010, p. 185) that defines them solely from a deficit perspective of vulnerability and need (Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018; Slade, 2019; Smith & Waite, 2019) as such narratives are unlikely to promote 'parity of participation' (Fraser, 1998, p. 5). To achieve parity of participation, or, in other words, to be able to participate socially and economically on the same terms as others (Fraser, 1998), refugees need economic inclusion, but also recognition as valuable members of the new community. For refugees, self-authoring may thus involve contesting imposed identities (Mahendran et al., 2019; Svensson, 2024b; Vitanova, 2005), but also the creation of a congruent identity where the past and present are brought together as a narrative whole (Dufva & Aro, 2015; Hall et al., 2005), originating in a legitimate past, spanning several times-spaces, or chronotopes, and presenting an identity with potential for the future.

8.2.2. Chronotopes, scale, and communicability

To analyse how individuals author themselves, this article will focus on how they draw on chronotopes to locate their narratives in time and space to narrate a coherent history. The concept of chronotopes recognises that time and space are intricately connected and together provide the contextualisation of narratives. The concept was initially introduced by Bakhtin as a tool for literary criticism (Bakhtin, 1981) to represent 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' (p. 84), functioning as 'the organizing centers for the fundamental narrative events' in literature (p. 250). As such, the chronotope is instrumental in creating the entire contextual backdrop for narrative action, as it 'makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). While Bakhtin only applied chronotopes to literary analysis, he suggested that their potential applications were broader (Bakhtin, 1981; Holquist, 1990; Parslow, 2020; Steinby, 2013) and the concept has lately been adopted in humanities and social sciences (Agha, 2007; Bauer et al., 2023; Blommaert, 2015; De Fina et al., 2020; Dick, 2010; Dufva & Aro, 2015; Karimzad, 2021; Koven, 2023; Landau, 2019; Lawson, 2011; Mahendran et al., 2019; Parslow, 2020; Perrino, 2015) where it can be conceptualised as 'elaborate frames in which time, space, and patterns of agency coincide, [and] create meaning and value' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 110). The chronotope thus becomes the frame of reference for how reality is perceived (De Fina et al., 2020) and how identities are created (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Tode, 2023), and also for identifying what opportunities for action are available (Blommaert, 2015; Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990;

Karimzad, 2021; Landau, 2019; Steinby, 2013) and how individuals, uniquely positioned in their context, are able to avail themselves of 'the freedom of ethical choice' (Steinby, 2013, p. 122). Chronotopes are also complex in that while 'chronotope' can be used to refer to a temporally and spatially extended concept (e.g. *the Soviet Union*, see Karimzad & Catedral, 2021), the concept is also applicable to more limited time spaces, such as an academic year at a university (Blommaert & De Fina, 2017) or the micro-context of a specific lesson in a specific classroom (Tode, 2023), and may refer to imagined or idealised time-spaces as well as real ones (Dick, 2010). Chronotopes are not mutually exclusive, but instead they co-exist and interact, envelop and dominate each other, and contradict each other (Bakhtin, 1981; Blommaert, 2017).

As specific times and spaces that carry particular meanings, chronotopes also become semiotic (Agha, 2007; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) and can be drawn on for meaning in narratives (Perrino, 2015), as 'invokable chunks of history' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 105) that provide the context for the narrative. However, chronotopes are also subject to scale (Blommaert, 2015; De Fina et al., 2020), and have varying 'scope of communicability' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 105), from mass-mediated chronotopes (Agha, 2007) or idealised, national chronotopes (Karimzad, 2021) that are understood by large numbers of people, down to an individual's own lived experiences that may be only understood by a few (Karimzad, 2021) but of significant importance to that individual (Blommaert, 2015). Narrators may therefore move between scales, and '"zoom in" and "pan out" of both time and space, expertly weaving personal experiences together with real and imagined cultural and social histories in order to situate themselves' (Pritzker & Perrino, 2021, p. 367). These movements can occur across time-scales but also in terms of 'resolution' (Karimzad, 2021; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021), that is, moving between higher-level, more generalised and easily communicable chronotopes and the lower-scale chronotopes presenting fuller understanding of lived experiences within these contexts. However, even larger-scale chronotopes are not universal, but rather a 'cultural resource' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 112) making them more or less communicable depending on context, and may therefore, when invoked, require further elaboration (De Fina et al., 2020). Further, chronotopes, as operationalised in discourse, have a values dimension (Holquist, 1990) and represent different world views (Blommaert, 2015; Steinby & Klapuri, 2013) and are therefore open to contestation and competition (Agha, 2007; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021). All these aspects – the invokable nature of chronotopes, the possibility of scalar movements to aid communicability or to provide greater resolution, and the contestability of various chronotopes – make them fruitful for analysis of identity construction, or self-authoring, in narratives.

8.2.3. Chronotopes and forced migration

While, arguably, a time-space orientation as opposed to a purely temporal orientation would benefit narrative analysis in general (Baynham, 2015), it is particularly useful when analysing narratives of mobility where temporal and spatial movements often coincide (Baynham, 2015; Blommaert, 2017), and where chronotopes can become de-centred (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) as well as politicised and contestable (Bauer et al., 2023; Landau, 2019). In the context of forced migration, chronotopes can be operationalised to control migration flow (Landau, 2019), to construct a superior national identity in which refugees are positioned as outsiders (Bauer et al., 2023), or to portray refugees from certain locations in a negative light (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021). Additionally, the 'refugee' label itself may portray individuals as confined to a *refugee* chronotope, where they are seen as 'frozen in the initial act of flight' (Mahendran et al., 2019, p. 578) without a meaningful past or a potential future. For forced migrants, authoring self thus requires a narration that situates the individual as a legitimate participant in an earlier chronotope but also demonstrates an involuntary dislocation from this chronotope of home, and a narrative that is at once personal, 'zooming in' on high resolution chronotopes (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021), and communicable, 'panning out' to provide the broader context in which the lived experience is situated (Baynham, 2015; Blommaert, 2001). In this endeavour, they also need to take into account the interlocutor's previous familiarity with relevant higher-scale chronotopes (Blommaert, 2015; De Fina et al., 2020) to determine to what extent they will need to 'provide detailed contextualised accounts' (Blommaert, 2001, p. 428) to clarify what the chronotopes entail, and to what extent they may need to contest competing chronotopes and perhaps 'rechronotopize' (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) their place of origin to challenge reductive or negative representations.

8.3. Methodology

8.3.1. The chronotopes of data collection

The chronotopes of data collection, or the 'narrating chronotopes' (Koven, 2023, p. 352), included the higher-level chronotopes of New Zealand in 2021 and Sweden in 2022, as well as the immediate chronotopes of the interview contexts. In terms of national contexts, New Zealand is a country with a fairly restrictive refugee reception, and hence a limited understanding of refugee issues among the population as a whole (see also Svensson, 2023). Sweden, on the other hand, has received relatively large numbers, but has become increasingly restrictive, with increasingly nationalist and exclusionary rhetoric employed in public and political discourse (see also Svensson, 2024b). The interviews themselves were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee (Tanggaard, 2009) and employed open-ended questions and a conversational format, designed to create a safe space for participants to narrate their

experiences. As questions were open-ended, participants were also able to re-direct the interview to topics of importance to them, and also to retreat from topics that they were not comfortable with discussing in-depth. While some participants were familiar with the researcher through community or professional networks, many were not; however, it appeared that the majority of participants felt comfortable to share their opinions and experiences, particularly with the guarantee of anonymity.

Interviews were conducted in either Swedish or English, with interpreters as required or requested by participants. To ensure accuracy of interpretation, selected passages of interpreted narratives were transcribed and translated after the interview (see Svensson, 2024c for a full discussion on language matters in the interviews). A full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (SOB 20/51. In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross in New Zealand and by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635).

8.3.2. Participants

The article draws on data from interviews with refugee-background participants (n = 56). New Zealand participants had either permanent residence or citizenship, while the Swedish participants had citizenship, permanent residence permits, or temporary residence permits requiring biennial renewals. Participants in New Zealand included Rohingya, Afghan and Palestinian adults who had been settled as part of the UNHCR quota system or through family reunification. Participants in Sweden included Syrian, Lebanese, Iraqi, Palestinian, Eritrean and other African adults, who had been granted residence as asylum seekers, through spousal family reunification or through the UNHCR quota system. Participants were approached through educational institutions and settlement organisations. Participation was voluntary, and all participants gave written consent. All names used throughout the article are pseudonyms.

8.3.3. Data analysis

Data was transcribed in the language of the interview (English or Swedish) by the researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features, and Swedish data was not translated until the write-up stage, enabling coding and analysis to be carried out in both Swedish and English. All quotes included in this article from the Swedish data set were translated by the researcher. For this article, data was analysed dialogically, with a strong focus on chronotopes and how they are used as a 'time-space framing' in narratives (Perrino, 2015, p. 142). While narrative analyses often focus on the movement of time, with space as a taken-for-granted backdrop (Baynham, 2015; Lawson, 2011), the chronotopical analysis, which combines time and space, is particularly fruitful

in studies of forced migration where the combination of time and space, and movement across these, are a significant part of the analysis (Baynham, 2015). A careful analysis of transcripts was undertaken to identify chronotopes in interview accounts, which were then coded using the NVivo software. Codes for chronotopes could include a geographic location at a certain time period (e.g. *Syria at war*) or an emotionally significant chronotope (e.g. *the homeland*). Subsequently, chronotopes were analysed to determine whether they functioned as 'invokable chunks of history' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 105) where the simple naming of the chronotope contained enough information to provide context, or whether they required further explaining or contestation. A closer analysis was also undertaken of scale in chronotopic narrations (Blommaert, 2015) to identify higher scale chronotopes and chronotopes that were more closely tied to lived experience. Attention was also paid to dialogical aspects, including self-authoring and contestation (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010).

8.4. Findings

8.4.1. Chronotopes of home: Belonging and dislocation

Chronotopes proved vital for participants' self-authoring as both legitimate claimants of refugee status and as legitimate and full participants in social settings with a congruent narrative of origin and future potential. This dual purpose could be achieved by locating belonging and full participation in an earlier chronotope, prior to disruptions and upheaval, and by presenting a chronotope of dislocation that explained their decision to leave their home. Narrators employed chronotopes as 'invokable chunks of history' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 105) but in many cases also elaborated on these, introducing aspects of scale (Agha, 2007; Blommaert, 2015), contestations of mass mediated chronotopes (Agha, 2007), and agency: both in terms of their own agency and in terms of the opportunities for agency available within the chronotope (Blommaert, 2015; Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990; Karimzad, 2021; Landau, 2019; Steinby, 2013). As suggested by Blommaert (2001) when analysing 'home narratives', explaining the conditions that lead to displacement often required the narrator to add significant amounts of contextual information, thus moving between higher level, more communicable chronotopes and the lower level chronotopes of lived experience. Below, I will analyse narrations from Iraqi Palestinian, Syrian, Afghani and Rohingya participants, where these features are salient.

8.4.2. Wars in Iraq: Contested chronotopes, lived experience and agency

The shifting in scales between the lived experience and higher-level chronotopes, along with a contestation of these chronotopes, were clearly demonstrated in the narratives of Karim, a generationally displaced Palestinian who was born in Iraq and lived through several wars before leaving the country and later resettling in New Zealand. Karim linked his identity to Iraq primarily

in terms of active participation and contribution as a well-educated professional – an engineer – and a respected member of the community. In presenting his narrative, Karim appeared to be acutely aware of the gap between a knowledge based on mass-mediated chronotopes and the understanding that comes from lived experience. Thus, when asked what he wanted New Zealanders to understand about refugee experiences, he responded:

> anyone [who has always] lived in [a] safe area maybe just look in media, war happen inside Syria, inside Iraq and Myanmar and, and, and, and. They are, maybe they are become sad about these people but… they have no idea what [they've] been through they don't fully understand.

This gap was also evident in his narrative, where he relied on frequent shifts between mass-mediated chronotopes and his lived experience, as he juxtaposed these. Organising his narrative primarily around three war chronotopes (*the war with Iran*, *the Gulf War* and *the US invasion*), Karim focused on how they intersected with his lived experience, disrupting his everyday life and the lives of those immediately around him:

> 1980 it is different. The war started between Iraq and Iran
>
> Three days before my wedding there was a bombing. There was a bombing two streets before my house.
>
> It was the type of bomb that it was like a nine-meter bomb that would destroy a whole area…
>
> [But] the war was basically on the border or there were like the occasional bomb.
>
> It wasn't chaos. It was mainly on the border. There were people who would die, but it wasn't like the American, yeah.
>
> We still lived our lives.

The excerpt demonstrates how the higher-level chronotope of the war with Iran intersects with an important event in Karim's life: his wedding. In his narrative, Karim moves from the historical chronotope of the war to the intersection point (the bombing three days before his wedding) but carries on to explain that the war with Iran did not significantly impact on his ability to live his life.

However, while the war with Iran was experienced as a higher scale chronotope that only occasionally interacted with personal chronotopes of living, the Gulf War significantly disrupted normal life. Further, the mass-mediated chronotope of *the Gulf War* was contested in Karim's narrative by subjecting it to the viewpoint of civilians in Iraq. This was achieved by Karim through

naming the chronotope *the America problem,* and also in his narrative of how it impacted civilian life:

> You can go to the media and saw what happened in I think in this night, 16 to 17 of January… This night eh bombing start at 1 night to 4 pm the next day. So just through that time 4,000 air strikes.
>
> And the funny thing I had a film in the TV and turn off and go to sleep. Ok? When I put my head on… the pillow I hear Grrrrrrrrrr. What happened? I looked in the window. This night very cold... I open, I hear maybe I thought 100 fighter bombers…

In his narrative, Karim shifts between the high level chronotope and his lived experience of that particular moment. He outlines the start of the airstrike and then shifts to personal experience to show how it punctuates the ordinary life of a family man enjoying a movie and getting ready to go to bed and the immediacy of the cold weather that night. Slightly later in his narrative, Karim provides further contextual information to explain the temporary break in airstrikes, and introduces his lived experience again with 'I have a story', where he bears witness to the fatalities:

> After two days eh the American gave us four hours like rest…
>
> I have a story. My neighbour… He have a headache this time, he have a [high blood] pressure and diabetes and a lot of thing. And he told me please … took me to the hospital please. I curse that day that I entered the hospital. Why? I saw the blood when I… when the car stopped in the street I saw the blood, looks like a river came from inside the hospital to- to outside. You imagine?

The most prolonged disruption to Karim's lived experience was the US invasion and its aftermath. Within this chronotope, life had to carry on, but could not carry on as before, due to economic breakdown, significant security concerns, and regime-change that led to hostility against Sunni-Muslims like Karim. During this time, Karim testified to witnessing daily car bombings, and to attending burials of friends or family weekly, with some of them particularly traumatic:

> Imagine spending a day with a person talking with them all the time and talking about problem and then you go home and you receive a phone call… Hard, huh? You imagine?

However, while describing the impact on his personal life and the struggles of surviving during these times, he also authored himself as agentive, and as a strategic planner for his family's safety:

> I took two apartments… When the battles and bombing becomes close to… the first apartment directly I took my family. We put… five bags prepared with essential items, just in case. And when incidents happened and [I] hear that some people were killed, [I]

> expected that then the bombings would start. So it starts like that, starts with a couple of people being murdered and then bombings start so that's the time when [we] take the bags and move to the other apartment.

In his narratives, Karim challenged mass-mediated chronotopes by redefining them from the perspective of the civilians who lived through them, and also challenged the limited understanding of those relying on mass-mediated chronotopes only. This was done overtly in the initial quote from Karim, but also implicitly in the phrase 'You imagine?' incorporated throughout his narratives. However, within the war chronotopes, Karim also highlighted his own agency and authored himself not as a victim, but as a person of resolution and resource.

8.4.3. Syria: contestations, personal tragedy, and alternative identities

As the civil war in Syria and the resulting forced migration is well known globally, Syrian participants were able to, to a great extent, rely on the high-level chronotope of *Syria at war* as a way of explaining their dislocation:

> [My husband] was in Syria, but the war has started there.

However, the mass-mediated chronotope of *Syria at war* tended to engulf any other possible chronotope of life in Syria, reducing *Syria* to a place of war and its people to objects of humanitarianism only (c.f. Marlowe, 2018). Discourses in Sweden, where the Syrian participants had settled, also located Syria outside Western civilisation, portraying it as less progressive than Sweden and bound by traditional norms (Bauer et al., 2023; Svensson, 2024b). Many Syrian participants therefore focused on elaborating the chronotope of *Syria before the war*, as an advanced and civilised society, in contrast to external perceptions:

> I swear to God in our "third [world] country", you go to doctor with pain. You don't know what is that. I have pain here, within three hours you will be in operation. And you will go out the next day fully recovered.
>
> *Syrian man*

Participants also elaborated on their own roles and contributions within this chronotope, including their education, professional experience, and financial resources:

> Five years study. Damascus work. Hospital very big. I manager.
>
> *Syrian woman*
>
> My home country I have two shop. Um textiles and one shop, clothes. And I work maybe every day or only Friday sit at home… I have lots have money in Syria, I, my home country, have lots of money.

Syrian man

Participants thus redefined the chronotope of home, or, in the words of Karimzad and Catedral (2021), 'rechronotopized' it, constructing a valuable chronotope in which their participation could also be seen as valuable. They thus challenged the reductive authoring of themselves, providing alternative interpretations of their identity beyond the imposed 'master status' (Marlowe, 2010, p. 185) as refugees fleeing from war.

Further, while *Syria at war* may be used as an overriding chronotope for dislocation, participants linked their dislocation not only to the overall situation, but to the war chronotope punctuating individual lives in significant ways. In this way, their self-authoring established them as not just 'war refugees' part of a mass exodus, but as individuals with specific threats to their lives and life-roles. Catalysts for displacement could thus include threats, as when a shopkeeper was 'visited' by the mukhabarat (Syrian intelligence service) and promptly decided to leave. It often involved personal tragedy, as in the following excerpt:

> We came because of the war, to feel some safety.
>
> We arrived very tired already.
>
> I have three children. And my oldest son has died in an airstrike. So we have one more boy… so we are worried and afraid that it will happen to him so therefore we came.

The narrator starts with the high-level war chronotope, and its well-known implications of danger and ongoing feelings of insecurity to legitimise her claim to refugee status. She then moves on to the effect of the war on her family in particular, and how it had taken an emotional toll. Finally, she shifts to the moment of decision making, which is when the chronotope of the war intersected with her family's personal life with tragic consequences, and they were compelled to leave in order to protect their younger son. Her narration, as she expands the high-level, easily communicable chronotope to include her lived experience creates the fuller, and gendered, identity of a mother who has suffered severely, but also taken action as a parent and protector of her child. The same was true in the narrative of another woman who lost an unborn child in her eighth month of pregnancy:

> So one day I was at home with my children and my husband was in Damascus, he worked in Damascus, so he couldn't enter…
>
> Like they closed borders and everything, yes then the soldiers went around to all the apartments and they just want all the people that they open and they went in and threw things and yes

> Then they came to me and knocked on my door so I was really scared with my little girls I couldn't open the door. So then I opened a little and yes my husband isn't here and so they pushed me like there in the stomach and then after I bled a lot but I couldn't go to emergency
>
> because they closed for about three days
>
> After three days my husband could come and see me, but I was totally exhausted yes so when we went to hospital the [unborn baby] boy was dead

In this narrative, the participant tells an emotionally charged and very intimate story, interspersing it with information to contextualise it within the localised chronotope of the siege. Thus, after setting the scene in her own home, she brings in the context of the localised chronotope, the siege of the village, before reverting to her story. The injuries she personally sustained, and the subsequent loss of her child need to be understood within the broader context of a husband working in another location, the siege of the village, and the closure of the hospital. Her contextualised lived experience creates an identity that foregrounds her gendered identity as a grieving mother and is located in a chronotope where agency is severely restricted.

8.4.4. Afghanistan: contested chronotopes and gendered experiences

The Afghan participants had left Afghanistan at varying times, some during the earlier Taliban rule, but many after the 2001 invasion by US and allied forces. Like Syrians, participants who had fled Afghanistan were able to draw on well-known, mass-mediated chronotopes to contextualise their displacement but also struggled against the reductive images of Afghanistan and Afghans, as they were almost solely recognised as refugees:

> we were not born like refugees. We had our own like place to live, our own farms and families and our own jobs.
>
> *Afghan woman*

The reductive authoring of Afghans and Afghanistan required contestation from narrators as they authored their identity. This occurred within the interview context, but participants also reported real life contestations, as in a young woman's experience in an English language class in New Zealand:

> they just wrote on the board, like we ask each other like what do you know about our country? So they just, they have written like terrorism, refugees, poor people… I tried to explain for them like Afghanistan is not really like a poor country. It's actually a rich country it has many you know resources, natural resources. But on the other hand, we are refugees just because from other people, like other nations around the world.

Further, as most of the Afghan participants had gained access to settlement because of their status as unprotected women (widowed, divorced or fatherless), chronotopes needed to be interpreted from a gendered perspective. Thus, while various *Afghanistan* chronotopes could be invoked to explain decisions to move, narrators also explained the difficulties for women living and acting within these chronotopes:

> Afghanistan, it has become a warzone. It's not a safe place to live, especially for those people who have little children. It's just getting very dangerous.
>
> In Afghanistan we don't have work opportunities for women. Even if we do want to go to work what are we supposed to do with our kids? Where should I leave them, who's going to look after them?
>
> So all these situations I had to leave my own country and come here.

The woman, a widow with three children, starts with an elaboration of the chronotope of *post-invasion Afghanistan* (Afghanistan after 2001), outlining its general dangers. She then shifts from the general dangers to the difficulties for single mothers, before stating her decision to leave.

Contextual elaboration of chronotopes was also necessary for women whose flight was as a direct result of having no male protectors, placing them at risk of gender-based violence or threats. This was the case for Sakina, who was orphaned at a young age and who, together with another unmarried sister lived with her oldest sister and this sister's husband. When the oldest sister lost her husband in a bomb explosion, the three sisters were left in charge of a valuable family farm. This led a male relative to attempt to claim them as brides for his sons in order to access their property. After threats, violence and the kidnapping of one sister, they fled Afghanistan. This very personal story needed to be framed within a higher-level chronotope of lawlessness and gender-based oppression and abuse to explain their limited agency if remaining in Afghanistan:

> There's no police! Ha!… there's no like lots of opportunity for the women. You know, if you go to the police they want *something* from the women to help you. You understand?

However, as Afghan women linked the higher-level chronotopes to their lived experiences they also described acts of agency within their imposed limits:

> When we were going to school we said really goodbye to our mother in the morning because in our school lots of girls they dead by poisoning.
>
> In Afghanistan, the Taliban always poisoned the water, to drink.
>
> But we always, my mum put a water bottle in our bag – we never drink water from the tap from the school.

In the narrative, a young Afghan woman situates her lived experience as a schoolgirl in Afghanistan in a post-invasion chronotope where hostile acts by the Taliban were common. She begins with her personal experience of fear and living an unpredictable life, before contextualising her experience within the higher-level chronotope. She then returns to her individual experience, and her mother's agency. The simple act of providing her daughters with bottled water gains significance as an act of agency and resistance when understood against the backdrop of gendered experiences for women and girls in post-invasion Afghanistan.

8.4.5. Rohingya: elaborating a little known chronotope

Unlike participants from Iraq, Syria or Afghanistan, Rohingya participants did not have access to many easily communicable, mass-mediated chronotopes when sharing their narratives. The situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar is complex in that it has been a protracted process of oppression and displacement, punctuated by times of increased violence, such as the genocide in 2017 that gained brief attention worldwide (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021; Farzana, 2017). Participants referred to a chronotope of oppression and alienation encompassing an extended time period that dated at least as far back as 1982 when the Rohingya's Burmese citizenships were revoked, rendering them stateless.

This complex context made it more difficult for individuals to author themselves as belonging to Myanmar, or even to the Rakhine state, their traditional region. For some, claiming a home involved an invocation of an earlier chronotope of prosperity:

> We have a lot of land. We have a lot of farm in our grandpa time. Why we are rich men! In our area we have a gas, we have a diamond, we have a gold.
>
> *Rohingya man*

For others, the claim of belonging itself became an act of contestation:

> [My home country] is always Myanmar. Even if they don't recognise me, it's still the place where I belong to. Where my ancestors belong to – this is where my heart, soul and body belong to.

Further, the absence of easily communicable chronotopes meant that narrators had to work harder in their narratives to provide the necessary context and promote understanding. This was seen in the narrative of Najida, a Rohingya woman:

> So, I don't expect you to understand everything about being stateless
>
> but when you are stateless you are pretty much excluded from the system, from so many things, deprived [or] restrictions on education and everything.

> And I experienced that direct and indirect discrimination in my entire life since I was very little, until up to the point that I felt compelled that I need to leave from the country…

Najida, aware that her experience may be more difficult to convey, as indicated in her opening sentence, provides a brief explanation of what it means to be stateless before linking it to her own lived experience and her need to eventually leave Myanmar. Later on, Najida explains further, highlighting misrecognition and harassment, and restrictions on movement:

> I don't like to use this example, it's like first and foremost we got called by a derogatory term… it's derogatory and offensive to us and we don't get to choose.
>
> …and instead of having a childhood where I should be very happy and just, you know, focusing on my education, every single day I go to school, I have to expect the harassment from my home to the school, on the way, in the classroom, by the teacher, by my classmates…
>
> and every time that we need to, we must travel from our city to another city there were so many interrogations and getting travel document just to travel for a couple of days. And then it's just – there is always unpredictable interrogation from the Burmese immigration for any reason whatever…
>
> when I was a teenager I witnessed, I mean I witnessed like about fourteen working men just coming from a township nearby our township to the place in between my town and their town just to get some woods and bamboos. Because of this reason, these fourteen men were arrested and detained in the prison in our township. We went to see them in the prison because they didn't have enough food in the prison, we just went to provide them some food and water. After a couple of weeks, they were killed just because they travelled. Very inhumanely killed, like tortured and killed in the mountain.

In her narration, Najida builds up the chronotope by moving between general claims about the situation for Rohingya and her lived experiences; however, in Najida's case, what I have referred to here as 'lived experiences' are not limited to events impacting on her or her family personally, but extended to the things she has witnessed, and which serve as exemplifications of a chronotope that requires a greater level of contextualisation.

Other Rohingya participants also provided elaborated explanations of life for Rohingya in Myanmar, often authoring a collective identity, using the first-person plural:

> They'd always arrest us, and they'd fine us to pay money, they exploit our money from us. And also, I couldn't study. We couldn't study like other Burmese people. And we just lived and survived, and we couldn't study.

Rohingya woman

The excerpt indicates that the participant is unable to rely on shared chronotopical understandings of life for Rohingya in the Rakhine state and instead has to construct this understanding. This is particularly evident as she speaks about education. Stating that she couldn't study, she immediately follows up with the same statement but in first person plural, showing that this was not only her particular personal circumstances, but the circumstances of the Rohingya.

The chronotope of oppression was generally presented as a chronotope of exclusion without any viable future – just living and, hopefully, surviving – and the participants of the study had all left the country to escape the ongoing oppression. However, this had been followed by the intrusion of a new chronotope: that of the 2017 genocide, which had led to mass displacement and a disruption to any connection to the land in Rakhine:

> they have burnt down our houses, they have confiscated everything that belongs to us. Family members have died, relatives have been murdered… We have nothing left in our country
>
> *Rohingya woman*

The belonging that was previously contested thus became even more so, as dislocation extended beyond the personal to the familial and ancestral, and the chronotope of home became distant in time as well as in space.

8.5. Discussion

In this article I have demonstrated how chronotopes are drawn on in narratives and how scale is employed to connect high-level, mass-mediated chronotopes to lived experience, as refugees author an origin story that reaches back beyond the moment of dislocation and flight. Through these narratives, refugees author themselves (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010) not only as claimants for protection but also as unique individuals (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007) and 'full partner[s] in social interaction' (Fraser, 1998, p. 3), challenging reductive representations of refugees (Mahendran et al., 2019; Marlowe, 2010, 2018) as well as of their countries of origin (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021). In the interviews, this was achieved by participants in a range of ways. Firstly, it was achieved by creating a congruent narrative where the past and present are clearly linked (Dufva & Aro, 2015) and where the self is authored as an important contributor, situated in a valuable chronotope, with potential for the future. Thus, Syrian participants 'rechronotopized' (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) *Syria* to be not only a location of war, but also existing in an earlier, progressive chronotope where they were successful participants in the

community, both economically and socially. Likewise, Afghan participants contested the reductive presentation of a country that they viewed as a rich and beautiful location subjected to invading forces. Secondly, by 'zooming in' (Pritzker & Perrino, 2021) on their lived experience and increasing the resolution (Karimzad, 2021; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021) participants were able to bring to the forefront other aspects of their identities that were more universally relatable, such as Karim's identity as a family man, and the two Syrian women's identities as grieving mothers. Lastly, narrators authored themselves as agentive, within the constraints of their chronotopes (Blommaert, 2015; Blommaert & De Fina, 2017; Dufva & Aro, 2015; Holquist, 1990; Karimzad, 2021; Landau, 2019; Steinby, 2013), resisting an exclusive victim identity (Marlowe, 2018). Thus, the Afghan mother feared sending her children to school, but ensured they had safe water, while Karim strategically moved his family based on the situation in Baghdad. Agency was also presented as the reason for leaving: the bereaved Syrian mother presented her flight as an act of agency to preserve her young son, and Sakina and her sisters, constrained in their agency by misogynist practices, chose to leave Afghanistan.

Throughout the narratives, while narrators 'zoomed in' on lived experiences, they often situated these experiences in high-level, mass-mediated chronotopes to provide a sense of backdrop. However, the invocation of mass-mediated chronotopes was problematic, as these were often contestable (Agha, 2007; Karimzad & Catedral, 2021), in many cases did not provide sufficient contextualisation (Blommaert, 2001), and at other times were not sufficiently mass-mediated and therefore not widely available (Blommaert, 2015; De Fina et al., 2020). The latter was the case particularly for Rohingya participants, whose experiences of oppression have been suppressed and discounted by Myanmar and have only received intermittent interest globally. Rohingya participants thus faced a greater challenge in providing the contextual backdrop to their stories, as seen in Najida's narratives where she is required to work harder as she 'makes narrative events concrete, makes them take on flesh, causes blood to flow in their veins' (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 250). Najida and other participants appeared to respond to this challenge by authoring a collective identity, incorporating personal experiences but also accounts of what they had witnessed when they 'zoomed in' on lived experiences. However, mass-mediated chronotopes also proved to be insufficient in providing context for other participants, as they need to provide further contextualisation (Blommaert, 2001), for example the gendered experiences of women in Afghanistan, and were seen as insufficient in portraying lived experiences, as demonstrated in Karim's narratives about the wars in Iraq. Lastly, chronotopes, when functioning as 'invokable chunks of history' (Blommaert, 2015, p. 105) were often contested by participants as misrepresentations of reality (Karimzad & Catedral, 2021). Thus, Karim contested the chronotope of *the Gulf War*, presenting it instead as *the America problem*, populating it with the

experience of Iraqi civilians enduring the airstrikes, and Afghan participants contested the Western idealisation of the *post-invasion* chronotope by providing contextual evidence of ongoing problems and insecurities.

8.6. Conclusion

In this article I have shown how refugee-background participants draw on chronotopes of home and dislocation in order to author themselves as unique individuals, recognisable not only as refugees, but also as agentive and as full participants in social settings, thus suggesting a potential for future participation in their destination community. This is achieved by invoking and redefining mass-mediated chronotopes that are widely known, and shifting between these and lived experiences, or, where the high-level chronotope is not well known or understood, by providing contextualisation, shifting between lived experience and the high-level chronotope to improve understanding of both. The invocation of mass-mediated chronotopes can, however, be problematic as these require contestation and can, at best, provide a reductive summary of experience. To understand and recognise the lived experiences of refugees, it is important to explore higher resolution chronotopes that demonstrate a fuller identity and highlight how high-level chronotopes intersect with lived experience.

The chronotopical analysis promoted in this article provides a useful theoretical framework for understanding the experiences of forced migrants; importantly, the insights can also have broader implications for policy and practice in relation to settlement. Firstly, the contestability of commonly accepted chronotopes and the differences between these and the higher resolution chronotopes dealing with lived experiences affirms the value of educational projects that promote a more nuanced view of refugee experiences among settlement nations, and particularly among policy makers and practitioners involved directly in refugee settlement. Secondly, refugees' self-portrayals as legitimate and valuable participants in an earlier chronotope and their contestations of reductive representations and misrecognition highlight the need for settlement nations to aim not only for humanitarian care or economic inclusion of refugees but for parity of participation, where refugee-background residents or citizens are participating on the same terms as other residents and citizens. Lastly, the significant gap identified between mass-mediated or commonly known chronotopes and the lived experiences of refugees suggests that there is a need for greater involvement of refugee-background residents when deciding on policies and practices to facilitate settlement, inclusion and participation.

This chapter has investigated how refugee-background participants authored their life story in relation to their 'home' chronotope, including their identities prior to displacement, and their

attachment to their place of origin. Thus, in contrast to the preceding chapters, it has focused on the experience prior to settlement and on the sense of belonging to places other than the destination community. The next chapter will bring together countries of origin and destination communities to investigate transnational belonging and how this is negotiated. It will recognise that belonging is not only important in relation to the destination community, but that transnational belonging, and transnational relationships, continue to be significant for refugees after settlement. Further, for refugees, transnational relationships are often complicated by increasingly strict family reunification policies and ongoing or repeated upheaval in their country of origin, something that may have significant impact on settlement outcomes.

Chapter 9: Transnational belonging and disrupted care relationships

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9.1. Introduction

In recent years, there has been a greater acknowledgement of the importance of transnational belonging and care and how this is carried out by families in an age of increasing mobility and digital connectivity (Baldassar et al., 2014). Migration research recognises the strategic mobility of voluntary migrants and their transnational care practices (Madianou, 2019), and how 'global care chains' (Yeates, 2012) are created as migrants, engaged in care-related employment abroad, transnationally arrange for the care of their own children and parents back home. In the case of forced migrants, transnational living is often the result of forced displacement in combination with increasingly strict barriers to family reunification (Grace, 2019; Hiitola et al., 2023; Marlowe, 2018) and the implications of this remain underexplored (Marlowe, 2018). In this article, I will argue with Marlowe (2018, p. xii) that 'refugee settlement needs to be conceptualized as an ongoing transnational experience' where the well-being of the individual cannot be seen separately from its transnational social context.

Studies of transnational belonging and transnational family relationships have highlighted the importance of these for the ongoing exchange of familial care and affect (Baldassar et al., 2014; Wilding et al., 2020; Wise & Velayutham, 2017) and also highlighted the increased affordances available through the use of new communication technologies which facilitate digital co-presence (Madianou, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021; Palmberger, 2022). Research has also suggested that there are complications inherent in these transnational relationships, due to feelings of obligation and guilt (Grace, 2019; Marlowe, 2018) as well as the significant emotion work involved (Leurs, 2019; Skrbiš, 2008; Wilding et al., 2020). For refugees, transnational care relationships may take on a higher-stakes dimension due to the precarious and high-deprivation living conditions of their family members, whether in displacement or in the country of origin (Leurs, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021). These relationships are also more liable to disruptions through restricted mobility (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Aziz, 2022b; Huennekes, 2018) or connectivity (Marlowe, 2018).

In this article, I will investigate the transnational experiences of refugees settled in New Zealand and Sweden, and particularly their experience of disrupted care relationships. Using a dialogical lens, I will consider how their sense of answerability – or responsibility – towards their transnational family impacts on their lives when they are unable to provide sufficient responses to requests for care, and how this in turn impacts on activities designed to promote settlement. Specifically, I will address the following research questions:

RQ1: How are transnational care relationships for refugees created and disrupted?

RQ2: What are the effects of disrupted transnational care relationships and unfulfilled care obligations for resettled refugees?

A greater understanding of transnational care relationships, and particularly of how disruptions to care impact on resettled refugees, is necessary in order to provide appropriate support for refugees but also, importantly, to reconsider the obligations of host countries in relation to refugee-background residents or citizens and their rights to family unity.

9.2. Literature review

Refugee settlement is often viewed from a local lens where belonging and adjustments to the destination community are privileged and other, equally important, belongings are ignored; however, refugees experience multiple belongings, and their settlement experience is significantly impacted by their belonging to transnational networks (Marlowe, 2018). In this article, I draw on a Bakhtinian dialogical perspective and conceive of identity – and by extension belonging – as intersubjective and discursively created in dialogue with others (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Vitanova, 2010). Belonging, and identification with a group, is thus created through dialogical interactions with important others in this group: be it an imagined national community, an imagined transnational community, or a family connected across spaces. Within this social space, the individual exists as a unique moral being, creating and reinforcing belonging through exchanges of words and acts in their everyday experience (Vitanova, 2010), addressing others, and responding when addressed (Holquist, 1990).

9.2.1. Forced migrants and family separation

While transnational families with transnational care arrangements can be strategically created (Madianou, 2019; Yeates, 2012), for forced migrants transnational care relationships are often the last resort, and the only possible act of resistance to imposed family separation (Grace, 2019; Hiitola et al., 2023). Internationally, while the right to family unity is a human right, refugee-receiving countries often impose significant limitations to family reunification (Morris et al., 2021) through financial and bureaucratic restrictions (Palander et al., 2023) and through

employing the narrowest possible definition of 'family' (Löbel, 2020; Marlowe, 2018; Morris et al., 2021). Family separation has been shown to have significant negative effects on refugees after settlement with trauma from the 'everyday' social separation often overshadowing any trauma arising from 'extraordinary' events to do with displacement (Marlowe, 2018). Documented effects include worsened emotional wellbeing through sadness, loneliness, and helplessness (Morris et al., 2021), feelings of insecurity (Beaton et al., 2018; Hiitola et al., 2023) and poor mental health (Ali-Naqvi et al., 2023; Dubow & Kuschminder, 2021) with greater risk of depression and PTSD (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2021; Liddell et al., 2021; Marlowe, 2018). Poor mental health not only affects those separated from their immediate nuclear family but also, importantly, adult children separated from their parents (Löbel, 2020), particularly in cultures with strong intergenerational reciprocal care practices (Serra Mingot, 2020). Family separation also impacts negatively on integration outcomes as it affects the ability of the individual to focus on cognitively demanding tasks such as language learning (Beaton et al., 2018) and may be costly for receiving countries. Morris et al. (2021) suggest that the effort required to ensure transnational family are safe leaves less time and energy for activities that support integration and delays entry to sustainable employment. Additionally, as Ali-Naqvi et al. (2023) suggest, the mental health implications of family separation carries costs for receiving countries in terms of mental health service provision, not only to ameliorate the effects of separation but also to address trauma, depression and other mental health factors that become more urgent in the absence of the protective function of familial relationships.

9.2.2. Transnational care and answerability

Faced with forced family separation, maintaining transnational connections becomes vital for wellbeing and for integrating the past with the present as refugees settle in a new context (Marlowe, 2018). The maintenance of connectivity has been greatly aided by recent developments in ICT, including social media and a greater prevalence of smart phones (Baldassar et al., 2014; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021; Palmberger, 2022) which have enabled 'digital co-presence' where physical co-presence is not a possibility (Madianou, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021; Palmberger, 2022). Digital co-presence potentially creates a sense of being together even while geographically separated, through a range of media that facilitates both direct communication – through direct messaging, audio calls and video calls – and 'ambient co-presence' achieved through seeing each other's social media posts (Alinejad, 2019; Madianou, 2019). These ongoing interactions can assist with settlement and be 'central to feeling "in place"' (Marlowe, 2020, p. 282). However, digital connections are not without challenges, due to limited access to devices, disruptions to internet connections, and potential risks through surveillance, particularly in refugee camps, conflict zones and authoritarian settings (Marlowe, 2018). Digital co-presence can

also be emotionally taxing, especially if family members are living in precarious situations (Leurs, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021).

Studies of transnational family relations have highlighted that these, like other family relations, are complex and involve the circulation of emotion and affect. Wise and Velayutham (2017) use the concept of 'transnational affect' to describe how transnational belonging is created and strengthened through the exchange of affect, whether this is digital or material, and whether connected to positive or negative emotions. Similarly, Wilding et al. (2020) use the term 'circulation of affect' to explain the transnational ties families engage in, arguing that shared emotions can be negative or positive, but still strengthen the family collective as they are shared across spaces. Acknowledging the emotional aspect of transnational relations also means acknowledging that these require 'emotion work' (Leurs, 2019; Skrbiš, 2008; Wilding et al., 2020), a term initially introduced by Hochschild (1983) and referring to the need to manage and display emotions acceptably to maintain relationships. This can be time and energy consuming, impacting on the individual's ability to engage in other demanding activities.

Transnational family relations are also organised around the notion of care. Baldassar et al. (2014) suggest that the transnational family network is organised around 'care exchanges' (p. 159), which can be emotional/moral, financial and material, practical, or involve personal care and accommodation. While in some cases forced migrants are able to engage in complex, flexible, and geographically fluid transnational care arrangements (Serra Mingot, 2020; Serra Mingot & Mazzucato, 2019), limits on mobility imposed on refugees (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Aziz, 2022; Huennekes, 2018) may limit the types of care exchanges to emotional care through frequent phone calls or material care through remittances. Remittances are perhaps the most documented form of care exchanges, and perhaps the most fraught. Research suggests that remittance practices can cause a sense of guilt and obligation for those struggling to resettle (Marlowe, 2018). Sending remittances can also impact on settlement outcomes as this may cause deprivation for the sender and lead to them foregoing education in favour of rapid labour market entry (Lim, 2009). Further, it can impact on other transnational practices, as the frequent sending of remittances impacts on the settled family member's financial ability to visit and achieve physical co-presence (Lim, 2009), and also competes with more long-term goals of sponsorship and reunification which may require financial resources and stable employment. However, for many refugees, remittances are instrumental in maintaining relationship (Huennekes, 2018) and may be the only means for their family to survive and meet their basic subsistence needs (Lim, 2009).

The dialogical perspective adopted in this paper further adds to the understanding of care and care obligations through the ethical concept of *answerability*. Dialogical answerability conceptualises the individual as responsible to others in their lives, both in the sense of having a

moral obligation to them and in the sense of being compelled to respond and act when addressed (Holquist, 1990). The dialogical subject is conceptualised as uniquely positioned to respond to the address of others (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010), and this dialogical answerability is the essence of being fully human. Answerability thus entails a 'sense of orientation to the needs of another' (Vitanova, 2010, p. 98) in everyday relational encounters and carries obligations that cannot morally be deferred (Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007). Agency, from a dialogical perspective, is embedded in this exchange between Self and Other through responding to and addressing others (Vitanova, 2010). The dialogical framework can, to some extent, explain the emotional tension arising for transnational individuals who are unable to respond to requests for remittances (Huennekes, 2018) or to pleas for types of care that can only take place in person (Amelina & Bause, 2020).

9.2.3. The contexts of the study

This study engages with two national contexts, New Zealand and Sweden, which have very different approaches to refugee reception and family reunification. While the study did not aim for direct comparison between the two contexts, bringing these contexts together facilitates an understanding not only of how the experience of family separation is impacted by specific national reunification policies, but also how the disruption to care relationships can be theorised in a manner applicable to a range of contexts.

New Zealand primarily accepts refugees through the UNHCR quota system, and the country aims to receive 1,500 individuals yearly (Immigration New Zealand, 2023b). There are also small numbers of approved asylum seekers (around 100 yearly; see Immigration New Zealand, 2023d). In addition, New Zealand aims to accept up to 600 family reunification cases yearly, through a two-tier system which enables sponsorship of extended family members for some refugees (Community Law, 2023; Immigration New Zealand, 2023e, 2023f). Refugees with no immediate family in New Zealand (excepting dependent children under the age of 25) are given priority – or 'Tier 1' status – and are eligible to apply to sponsor one extended family member and that family member's immediate family unit (spouse and dependent children). Tier 2, for those with immediate family in New Zealand, is only considered if there are spaces left after the Tier 1 applications have been processed and has not been open for application in recent years (Community Law, 2023). The number of actual family reunification cases in both categories declined significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic with a total of only eight individuals being granted residence in the 2020/21 business year, and only 86 in the 2021/22 business year (Immigration New Zealand, 2023d).

Sweden, traditionally a country known for its generous policies for asylum seekers and refugees, has become increasingly restrictive since 2015 (Hagelund, 2020; Stern, 2019). In response to the

large numbers of asylum seekers arriving as part of the refugee 'crisis' (160,000 in 2015 alone (SCB, 2023)), Sweden introduced a set of measures to discourage prospective asylum seekers, who often arrived alone, relying on family reunification processes to bring their spouse and children. These measures included stricter rules around family reunification, including a self-sufficiency requirement (Hagelund, 2020). In practice, this requirement means that after gaining residence, a former refugee needs to be permanently employed, earning above a certain threshold and have a contract for suitable accommodation before bringing a spouse and children (Migrationsverket, 2023; Palander et al., 2023). Family reunification only extends to spouse/partner and children under the age of 18 (Migrationsverket, 2023).

9.3. Methodology

9.3.1. Data collection

The data that forms the basis for this article was collected through qualitative, semi-structured interviews in New Zealand (2021) and Sweden (2022). A dialogical approach was adopted from the outset, and interviews were conceived of as dialogical interactions between interviewer and interviewee, embedded in the broader sociocultural context (Tanggaard, 2009). This meant that while an interview guide was prepared and referred to, questions were open-ended, allowing the interviewer to follow up matters of interest in a manner similar to that of a conversation. The dialogical approach also acknowledged the agency of the interviewee and allowed them to redirect the interaction to topics of importance to them and to redirect it away from topics they were uncomfortable to discuss, as well as make choices in terms of language use (see also Chapter 3). Interviews were conducted in either Swedish or English, with interpreters as required or requested by participants. Data was transcribed by the researcher, focusing on lexical and syntactic features. Analysis was done in English and Swedish, and quotes included in this article from the Swedish dataset are translated by the researcher. All names are pseudonyms. A full ethics application was submitted prior to data collection and was approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (SOB 20/51). In addition, ethics approval was sought and obtained from the Migration Research Working Group at Red Cross in New Zealand and by the Swedish Ethical Review Authority (dnr 2021-03635).

9.3.2. Participants

The article is based on a larger study of refugee settlement in New Zealand and Sweden, which included a total of 85 participants who were approached through educational institutions, ethnic organisations, and agencies. Participants included former refugees (n = 56), language teachers and tutors (n = 14) and individuals working in roles supporting refugee settlement (n = 15). For the purposes of this article, the main focus is on the voices of refugee-background participants,

although data from interviews with language teachers and support workers was used to inform overall understanding. Refugee-background participants in New Zealand were primarily Hazara from Afghanistan and Rohingya from Myanmar, all settled as part of the UNHCR quota system or through family reunification. The New Zealand data collection (2021) coincided with three important international events: the still ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the February 2021 coup in Myanmar, and the 2021 Taliban offensive in Afghanistan. Refugee-background participants in Sweden primarily included Syrians and Eritreans, who had been granted residence as asylum seekers, through spousal family reunification or through the UNHCR quota system. Swedish data collection (2022) took place in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, with continuing instability in both Syria and Eritrea, and the Tigray war on the Eritrean border still ongoing.

9.3.3. Data analysis

To understand the data, I drew on a dialogical analysis that was both semantic and structural. Using the NVivo software, semantic analysis was undertaken through a coding methodology which was based on the grounded theory method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007) but deviated from this in that it adopted a dialogical perspective as a guiding framework for analysis, instead of prioritising the generation of new theories. Transcribed data was coded inductively, focusing on processes and actions expressed and described in the interviews, and these became the starting point for analysis. Nodes were then combined into larger processes and concepts (see Charmaz, 2006) and analysed dialogically. As an example, the coding of data yielded nodes such as the in-vivo code *The way my mother cared for me*, which were combined with other nodes into a larger concept-node labelled *The greatest concern*, based on participants' labelling of family separation as their most important concern after reaching safety. Another node, *Coping with ongoing crises*, dealt with the disruption to life and care relationships resulting from ongoing or emerging situations in countries of origin. These nodes, along with other, related nodes, were then analysed and compared across datasets to gain a dialogical understanding of transnational belonging, care, and answerability. The semantic analysis was supplemented by dialogical narrative inquiry, which acknowledged that utterances and narratives in the interview were dialogical and always in response to other utterances, and in turn addressing specific individuals, situations, discourses, and utterances both within and outside the interview context (Vitanova, 2010). Analysis thus paid attention to participant addressivity (who they addressed explicitly and implicitly in their utterances) as well as participant responses and the situations or earlier utterances these responded to.

9.4. Findings

In this section I will explore how family relationships become transnational through displacement and individual agency, and how these relationships may be disrupted through

ongoing instability or new crises (RQ1). I will then explore the effects of living with family separation and unfulfilled care obligations, and how individuals respond to these circumstances (RQ2).

9.4.1. Becoming a transnational family

Participants' families had generally become transnational through precarious circumstances and prohibitive family reunification policies (Grace, 2019; Hiitola et al., 2023; Marlowe. 2018) in combination with their agentive responses to these situations. Syrian participants in Sweden had fled their country because of the civil war and its effects on their safety and livelihood. Sweden-based Eritreans had fled the oppression imposed by an authoritarian government, including forced military service and human rights breaches (Belloni & Massa, 2022), as well as continuing unrest due to ongoing conflicts with neighbouring Ethiopia. For most of the Syrian and Eritrean participants, the process of asylum seeking involved a planned temporary family separation (Dubow & Kuschminder, 2021), primarily due to the significant dangers inherent in the journey:

> when you flee, actually it's not a very good pathway that you can travel with the children and that so we thought first then my husband has to travel alone yes, and then see and everything, it was because he had a really difficult journey.
>
> *Syrian woman in Sweden*

While husbands made the journey across the Mediterranean and through Europe and commenced the asylum process, the wife and children usually waited in a country of temporary refuge, most commonly Lebanon or Turkey (for Syrians) or Ethiopia or Sudan (for Eritreans), relying on support from husband, family, or itinerant work. Participants who had achieved family reunification spoke of the period of separation as a painful part of their life:

> When go to Sweden and… I not like, it is very difficult. It is very difficult [pause]. I not like talking about it. It is very difficult. Not together family when go. My wife and children in Saudi Arabia… I don't want to talk [about] it.
>
> *Syrian man in Sweden*

The changes to family reunification policies in Sweden after 2015 (Hagelund, 2020; Palander et al., 2023) meant that those granted asylum after this time faced almost insurmountable obstacles to achieving timely family reunification. As an example, Amanuel fled Eritrea in 2014, leaving his wife and children in neighbouring Sudan while he undertook the perilous journey to Libya and then across the Mediterranean, expecting to bring them through family reunification processes as soon as he was granted asylum in Sweden. However, before Amanuel was granted asylum, family reunification policies in Sweden were tightened, imposing requirements of permanent

employment. A farmer from Eritrea, with basic schooling and only a basic grasp of Swedish, Amanuel had little prospect of gaining a permanent position and was still separated from his family eight years later. He kept in touch daily, sending remittances, and when able to secure temporary employment saved up money so that he could visit them.

The narrow definition of family used in Western contexts (see Löbel, 2020; Marlowe, 2018; Morris et al., 2021; Palander et al., 2023) also meant that most participants in Sweden were separated from parents and siblings, and in many cases from adult children. The separation from parents was particularly difficult when parents were in a situation of danger, deprivation, or uncertainty as was the case for participants with family remaining in Syria or Eritrea.

The Rohingya participants living in New Zealand had left Myanmar to avoid ongoing ethnic-based persecution and oppression (see Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021). Most of the women had fled through the most secure means available to them: marriages to Rohingya men displaced in Malaysia, arranged by parents who were no longer capable of ensuring their safety in the Rakhine State in Myanmar. A transnational family was thus created, where the daughter was expected to help her parents financially as much as she was able, a prospect that was expected to increase when she gained third country settlement in New Zealand (see Huennekes, 2018). These women thus lived with their nuclear family in New Zealand, while separated from their extended family, which was seen as an unnatural arrangement:

> We are very holistic. So we do not see individuals as an individual. We see it as a family unit… No parents, almost no children from our community expect to be separated from their children or from their parents like this.

Most of the Afghan participants had been settled in New Zealand under the 'Women at risk' category of the New Zealand refugee quota, meaning that they had no male head of family in a context where this fact rendered them unsafe. Settled without immediate family – other than dependent children – meant that they were qualified to apply to sponsor one family member and this member's immediate family unit (Immigration New Zealand, 2023e, 2023f). Selecting a family member was often challenging, as the original intent – to provide support for the individual in New Zealand – tended to be overshadowed by the needs of relatives who were living in conditions of hardship and danger. Further, the New Zealand bureaucratic definition of the family unit differed from that of Afghanistan, as in Narges' case:

> I have a lot of problem, a lot of stress about my mum. First time we start the case with for my brother we told… to lawyer please bring my mum too, because my mum stay [lives] with my brother. When my brother comes to New Zealand, where [can she go]? But the lawyer told me, you choose just one family.

In the end, Narges' mother urged her to choose her brother's family to give his children a better chance in life. Narges and her brother would then take turns to visit the mother.

Paradoxically, while single parents who had settled in New Zealand were able to sponsor a blood relative, it was very difficult for them to bring a spouse, whether this was a new marriage contracted abroad, or a spouse whom they had managed to reconnect with after years of involuntary separation. Zakina and her husband left Afghanistan and lived in displacement in Pakistan but were eventually forced to become a transnational family with her husband seeking employment in Iran. With frequent moves, no mobile phones, and neither of them literate, they lost contact, and Zakina, presuming her husband missing or dead, applied to settle in New Zealand. After settlement, Zakina's husband found her family in Afghanistan, and the couple re-established contact. Zakina had twice applied for family reunification. The first time, Immigration New Zealand declined her application as the relationship was not deemed a genuine and stable relationship due to the long period of no contact, and because her husband's narrative lacked factual details such as exact dates of travel, due to his limited access to education. The second time, Immigration New Zealand had closed all processing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and applications were automatically declined. The ongoing separation was affecting her wellbeing:

> I see counsellor every week. And I have, I need special help. I need someone to support me. I have no family here. Only I have husband. It's a lot of pressure on me. I have to raise my children, which is already hard… Everything is new. And plus we struggle with bringing our husband. It's something inside us just burn us. And it's easy for them to say 'Because of the border'. But they don't know how we suffer.

The provision of counselling in lieu of dealing with the root cause (the absence of her husband) was something she returned to again in the interview as an example of how settlement support failed to address the real issues. Language teachers and support workers confirmed that Zakina's situation was not unique, owing to the ongoing precarity of Afghan displacement.

To ameliorate the effects of separation, participants in Sweden and New Zealand maintained frequent contact with family members, primarily through video and voice calling apps where possible. These contacts enabled a sense of belonging to the family unit, maintained relationships, and facilitated care exchanges (Alinejad, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021; Palmberger, 2022). As in most cases of transnational care, remittances were an important part of the circulation of care (Huennekes, 2018; Lim, 2009; Marlowe, 2018). As in Lim's (2009) study, participants emphasised that the remittances were not merely symbolic tokens of care or obligations imposed on them through the expectations of their relatives, but essential for their family members' survival:

> If you do not support the family left behind they're going to starve. They will not have food on their table… That is how serious it is. It's not like buying a new Apple watch or… Or buying a phone it's their very basic needs. For their survival.

Remittances thus went beyond cultural obligations to essential aspects of care and survival.

9.4.2. Disrupted care

Transnational care systems, however carefully planned and operationalised, can be threatened by volatile situations in countries of origin, and refugees suffer stress as family members are subject to increased precarity or deprivation (Leurs, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021), mobility is further limited (Huennekes, 2018), or connectivity disrupted (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Aziz, 2022; Marlowe, 2018).

Ongoing limits to mobility and disruptions to connectivity impacted on Syrian participants in Sweden, and became particularly salient in face of personal tragedies such as the sickness, death, or vulnerability of a family member:

> Mummy now died. Twenty days ago. Unfortunately I haven't seen her for almost ten years. Even when she got sick. I couldn't visit her, nor could I bring her here. My sister went to Syria to see her. My sister lives in Jordan also. She is also a widow, and she has ten children. She is 45 years old. She went to see her [mother], then all of a sudden she got kidnapped… And still to this day we don't know anything.

Disruptions to connectivity also significantly impacted on Eritrean participants in Sweden, as digital blackouts were employed by the authoritarian regime to control citizens:

> Mummy and daddy they Eritrea. Not see them, also phone, not internet. A lot of stress. No internet, now shut.

Many Eritrean participants also had family close to the Tigray region, with whom Eritrea and Ethiopia were at war. Knowing that these family members lived in precarious circumstances without being able to contact them and ensure that they were well caused considerable pain and disrupted the digital care exchanges that had previously been their only possible expressions of care.

The Rohingya women in New Zealand had all left Myanmar prior to the 2017 genocide. The genocide, unleashed in response to Rohingya militants' attacks on police posts in Myanmar, resulted in a range of atrocities perpetuated by the Myanmar army on the Rohingya (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021) and the displacement of nearly one million Rohingya to Bangladesh (Sajjad, 2022). The situation of the displaced Rohingya is dire, with poor accommodations in camp, exposure to inclement weather, frequent landslides and a lack of food

and medical assistance, despite aid efforts (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021; Sajjad, 2022; UNHCR, 2024). This meant that family were now more reliant on help than previously:

> during this crisis [2017 crisis] they have burnt down our houses, they have confiscated everything that belongs to us. Family members have died, relatives have been murdered, and now I have my mum and one sis and one brother and family in Bangladesh refugee camp.

Those who still had family in Myanmar after the genocide, had been shaken by the 2021 coup and resulting disruptions to digital communication:

> And things going on at the moment in my country, their safety – we don't know whether – on and off, internet cut off and sometimes we talk, sometimes we don't talk.

The Taliban take-over of Afghanistan took place part way through my interviews with Hazara Afghan participants in New Zealand. For individuals like Zakina, who was trying to reunite with her husband, and for others whose applications had been put on hold due to the pandemic, this period was particularly stressful as the Taliban was closing exit routes, renewing their rhetoric of hate against Hazara and increasing violent attacks. The Taliban takeover also meant that effective transnational family arrangements were no longer possible, as there were limits to cell phone reception and visits were no longer safe. Thus, the transnational care planned between Narges, her brother and mother – already hampered by the COVID-19 pandemic – became impossible to carry out:

> Now the situation in Afghanistan very bad you know. Before little bit better, but now it's very bad. I can't to visit my mum now… I tell my mum, mum my brother's came to New Zealand I visit you every year or after eight months, or like this, I visit you for two months or three months. She's happy. She was happy. But now I can't go to there because of the situation in Afghanistan. Every border's closed.

Knowing that family were unsafe took a significant toll on participants, impacting on settlement, language learning and mental health:

> every single day you have to deal with the stress and anxiety of thinking of whether your family is safe, and if you're ever going to hear any horrible news about your loved ones. It's not one day, it's not two days, it's not during covid, it is like every single day… And then if you expect refugees to be well settled and heavenly happy here in New Zealand just because you give them resettlement, having their loved ones in a very risky place, you are dreaming.

> And if you expect people to be able to focus on that language and education so that they can integrate better without worrying about those things it is not happening
>
> *Refugee woman in New Zealand*

9.4.3. Living with an unfulfilled burden of care

Participants were thus engaged in complex, and shifting, transnational exchanges and obligations of care but were not always able to sufficiently address the needs of their transnational family members, even when asked (Amelina & Bause, 2020). Findings suggested that the feeling of answerability – the need to respond when addressed and respond sufficiently and ethically (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007) – when unfulfilled created significant stress for individuals, which added to the stress resulting from the precarious situation of family members. With their comparatively privileged positions, participants strongly felt that they were seen as uniquely placed to respond (Holquist, 1990; Vitanova, 2010), but at the same time, experiencing their powerlessness to respond sufficiently (Marlowe & Bruns, 2021).

Amanuel, the Eritrean transnational father living in Sweden, was constantly addressed by his children:

> Every day call me 'daddy come, daddy'. I have no money, I say that. I hope, I hope come, say that. 'Why not bring me to Sweden?' I hope one day money and ring and say that.

Uniquely answerable and uniquely placed to care for his children in his role as father, Amanuel was unable to even visit unless he gained temporary employment, and unable to bring his family to safety unless he gained permanent employment. The power to ensure his children's care was therefore no longer in his hands, and arguably not even in the hands of the Swedish state, but in the hands of an arbitrary employer willing to sign a permanent contract (see also Palander et al., 2023). Amanuel was thus limited to digital care exchanges and to sending remittances from his welfare benefit, which often impacted on his ability to provide for his own basic needs. The situation was significantly affecting his mental health:

> Lots of thinking, what to do. The family, all days children phone to me. Daddy, daddy they say. You think about it. So you can't sleep. What shall I do? You think a lot.

After the Taliban takeover, Zakina's relationship with her husband shifted. Instead of her needing his support, she now became responsible for his safety, as he was in hiding in Kabul and she was his only possible lifeline out of Afghanistan. Other Afghan participants were placed in similar positions: seen as uniquely privileged, they were addressed by family members seeking to reunite in safety in New Zealand, and they in turn petitioned lawyers, immigration advisers, politicians,

and teachers, but without avail. The impact on their mental health was noted by teachers and support workers.

The Rohingya women felt that their transnational care was no longer sufficient since their parents and siblings had become refugees in Bangladesh. Aisha, an eldest child, felt responsible for her sick parents and younger siblings living in the camps:

> they are in vulnerable situation. No one from my family is working and earning. And my parents are sick, and I am the eldest daughter of the family. And I have younger siblings and I'm worried for them.

The care she could provide via social media was not sufficient as a comfort to her family, who had real practical needs. While she was able to send remittances, juggling the needs of her children and her husband's family, this was not sufficient for the medical needs of her father:

> Only some little bit of money, because we are on benefit. We have to pay for our own survival and food as well… We are trying but we cannot afford to get the proper medication for him.

Katiza described her transnational care relationship with her mother and siblings and that she and her husband kept in regular contact with family over the phone and also sent remittances. However, she found this insufficient, and felt powerless when speaking with them:

> they are sleeping on the ground, there is landslides, there is water inside their tents in the rainy season. It's really hard. If they tell us about this, we feel stressed.

Additionally, the phone calls often contained a plea for family reunification, where Katiza's current life was held up as a contrast to the life of her family:

> So when I talk to my mother and she says I'm happy that you have a good life, if you can try to bring me over, try.

The situation for Aisha and Katiza was further complicated by the fact that there appeared to be little hope of their families leaving the camps. Though Bangladesh has recently started allowing some limited resettlement to third countries from the camps (UNHCR, 2024), at the time of the study, they did not support third country solutions (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021) and as repatriation was also impossible, refugees in Bangladesh had few options but to remain.

For Aisha, Katiza and the other Rohingya women, the suffering of their parents became linked to their own bodily sensations, as a contrast to any pleasure they were experiencing:

> Whenever we eat good food we think of them. Where our mum doesn't have those kinds of nice food. That is our concern.

In Rohingya culture, intergenerational care is a life-long, reciprocal commitment, and their lack of sufficient care for their parents in the present thus became linked to their parents' care for them in the past, as well as their own care for their children in the present:

> whenever I care about my own kids it reminds me, maybe this is the way how my mother raised me – we think of them in every breath and step we take – this is the way how my mother cared about me. Now how come I become very far away from her? I can't care about her and she doesn't have any good food and the refugee camp under the very hot sun and heat and rain, no good shelter.

As most of the Rohingya women were beginning language learners, language barriers meant that they were not able to access professional counselling support to deal with the mental and emotional effects of family separation:

> it has been a long time that I didn't find anybody to talk about this… the government was still supporting me to have [counselling] interview monthly, but I couldn't do that because I didn't have an interpreter.

The quote highlights the increased mental health needs resulting from intergenerational family separation, and also the inadequate provision of linguistically and culturally appropriate support in receiving countries.

9.4.4. Agency and addressivity

Transnational arrangements of care exchanges and circulation of affect were not sufficient for participants whose family were in danger or precarity, and the only sustainable solution for these participants appeared to be reunification in a safe country – preferably their own country of settlement (Morris et al., 2021). They exercised their agency within the structural limitations of their contexts (Vitanova, 2010), addressing authorities and support persons in order to forward their cause. Thus, Amanuel sought out and addressed employers, employment agencies and social services to obtain the employment necessary to qualify for family reunification. Afghan women in New Zealand sought out and addressed immigration lawyers and community lawyers to support them. As things in Afghanistan deteriorated, their addressivity broadened to incorporate politicians and media:

> I emailed everyone like immigration, Ministry of Immigration, [local Member of Parliament], [councillor], even talked to the news. There's no improvement. And asked my [immigration] advisor, please work hard.

However, participants also used the interview context to exercise their agency by addressing me as a proxy for the host country, and as a potential voice speaking in their favour. Thus, during open-ended parts of the interviews, the family situation was brought to the fore:

> Researcher: Is there anything that you think that New Zealand people need to understand about Rohingya refugees?
>
> Aisha: My parents are in trouble, both of them, mum and dad, they are sick and they cannot get access to medication… So if they can ever come here, and reunite with me, and get resettled, that would be better.

Some participants also pleaded with me directly to find a way to bring their family members, or to commit to advocacy:

> You asked us about our parents, our siblings. It makes us feel as if you are bringing them to us and if you can somehow advocate or help us to do that, it will be great.

Others specifically asked me to write about the plight of those with family in precarious situations, thus addressing a wider audience:

> It will be great to write about refugees and the refugees who are more vulnerable and if they can help us, help the refugees in a way that… if they can apply from those camps, if they can reunite with their families that will be great.

This exercise of dialogical agency became one way for participants to fulfil – to some extent – their answerability towards their family. Finding themselves in a position with limited ability to respond when addressed, they in turn addressed others who may have the potential to either help directly or to add to their voices.

As an addressee, I found some of their pleas unsettling. While in some cases I could refer individuals to community lawyers able to advise them, in other situations, such as those of the Rohingya, I knew that there was little I could do. Not only was there no New Zealand provision for the married Rohingya women to bring extended family members, but at the time of the interviews, there was also no possibility for third country resettlement for their family members in camps in Bangladesh, due to the official stance of the government of Bangladesh (Bhattacharya & Biswas, 2021). In the interviews, I clarified that I had no power to act on their behalf, though I was sympathetic to their struggles, and I assured them that I would include their concerns in my published writing.

9.5. Discussion

The findings suggest that transnational care relationships are created as part of the disruption to ordinary life that takes place during displacement in combination with barriers to family reunification. This confirms earlier research by Grace (2019), Marlowe and Bruns (2021), Palmberger (2022) and others, who recognise transnational care as an expression of agency but also, and more importantly, as a response to prohibitive restrictions on physical reunification. Though family reunification policies differed in the two national contexts of the study, in both cases the right to family unity was limited (Morris et al., 2021). In Sweden, reunification of immediate family was limited by self-sufficiency requirements, as in the case of Amanuel (see also Palander et al., 2023), and in New Zealand it was limited by bureaucratic processes, as in the case of Zakina. In both contexts, narrow definitions of 'family' meant even greater restrictions for adult children and their parents (Löbel, 2020; Marlowe, 2018; Morris et al., 2021) and disruptions to intergenerational care relationships (Serra Mingot, 2020). To compensate for separation, transnational connections were established, where digital co-presence replaced physical co-presence (Alinejad, 2019; Marlowe, 2020; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021; Palmberger, 2022) and remittances became the primary means of practical help (Lim, 2009; Marlowe, 2018) as in the case of the Rohingya women. While mobility is often limited for forced migrants (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Aziz, 2022; Huennekes, 2018), in some cases transnational care also involved planned or sporadic visits, as in the cases of Narges visiting her mother and Amanuel visiting his wife and children.

However, the findings demonstrate that transnational arrangements are also subject to disruptions, due to ongoing instabilities or emerging situations in the country of origin, or a country of displacement. Circulation of care can be disrupted when mobility becomes increasingly restricted (Amelina & Bause, 2020), as was the case for participants with family in Myanmar or Afghanistan during civil unrest, and further restricted when digital connectivity is limited due to authoritarian regimes (Marlowe, 2018), as in Myanmar and Eritrea. Further, new incidents of unrest or persecution can place family members in dangerous or extremely deprived situations, rendering remittances and digital co-presence insufficient as care expressions (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Leurs, 2019; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021). This was the case for Rohingya participants after the 2017 genocide displaced their families, and for Afghan Hazara participants after the Taliban takeover. Naturally, knowing that close family was in danger or in severe need, or being unable to visit or even contact family, significantly impacted on the wellbeing of individuals.

For those living with disrupted care relationships and unfulfilled care obligations, there was, as suggested in literature (Ali-Naqvi et al., 2023; Beaton et al., 2018; Dubow & Kuschminder, 2021;

Hiitola et al., 2023; Hvidtfeldt et al., 2021; Liddell et al., 2021; Löbel, 2020; Morris et al., 2021), significant negative mental health impacts. Participants spoke about mental health in terms of stress, anxiety, worry and concern, and in terms of hopelessness, over-thinking, suffering and a burning inside. They reported difficulty with sleeping, and difficulty enjoying simple pleasures like eating. The mental distress was described as a constant factor in their lives, existing there 'every single day' and 'in every breath and step', and impacted on concentration, language learning and settlement.

9.6. Conclusion

This article has employed a dialogical interpretation of transnational identity and belonging and has conceived of care exchanges as based on the dialogical concept of answerability (Holquist, 1990; Kostogriz & Doecke, 2007; Vitanova, 2010;). This theoretical perspective extends our understanding of disrupted care relationships by bringing to the fore the human and moral dimension. The article thus highlights the moral suffering experienced by refugees when they are addressed by transnational family members but unable to respond adequately to requests for help. While they are in some cases able to provide emotional care through phone and video calls along with small financial remittances, family members often need practical support, significant financial help, and ultimately assistance to reach a place of safety. Additionally, the dialogical perspective highlights the failure of receiving nations – including politicians, policy makers and bureaucrats – to respond when they are addressed by their own refugee-background residents or citizens, and their evasion of answerability in the context of family reunification.

The dialogical perspective taken in this study makes it clear that an individual's sense of duty to those engaged in relationships with them, their dialogical answerability, is a fundamental expression of what is means to be human (Holquist, 1990). Thus, while the transnational situations described above may be seen as extraordinary in terms of the suffering they are causing for the parties involved, it is important to bear in mind that the reactions to these situations are far from extraordinary. There is nothing extraordinary about a young mother struggling with her daily life when her father is living in deprivation with untreated medical conditions, or about the lack of concentration of a father whose wife and young children are displaced in Sudan, living a subsistence life without access to basic human rights. However, what is extraordinary is the response. The findings from this study raise important questions about the inadequate response from Western nations, and the evident expectation that refugees would not be impacted by inhumane situations. In conclusion I would suggest that there is a case for resettlement nations to reconsider their responsibilities – and responses – towards those settled within their borders. This would include repealing legislation that makes reunification of immediate family contingent on sustained financial self-sufficiency, as in the Swedish context. It would also entail a broadening

of reunification policies to encompass family constellations other than the nuclear family and facilitate the reunification of extended family, especially where these are in vulnerable situations. Further, it may involve targeted efforts to address protracted situations like that of the Rohingya in the Bangladeshi camps, through humanitarian aid as well as through engaging in negotiations to expand the scope for third country solutions.

Chapter 10: Conclusion

To conclude a dissertation that has employed dialogism as its main framework has unique challenges, given that dialogism rejects the notion that any representation can be finalised, or is finalisable (Bakhtin, 1984; Frank, 2005). As Frank (2012, p. 36) suggests:

> On the one hand, there is no ending: People tell stories in order to revise their self-understanding, and any story stands to be revised in subsequent stories. But on the other, research reports have a practical need to end.

The participants whose stories formed the basis of my research will continue to change and to tell new stories, perhaps radically different from those told to me in 2021 and 2022. Thus, while 'Zakina' in Chapter 9 may appear to be frozen in time in my research as a woman longing for her husband, the woman behind the pseudonym did eventually succeed in her family reunification efforts. Likewise, 'Mahdia' in Chapter 5 is no longer struggling as a single mother, as she met and married a man already resident in New Zealand. However, 'Narges' in Chapter 9, who felt guilty about her mother living unsupported in Afghanistan, never managed to remedy the situation before her mother passed away due to illness. Several participants in 'Nyfält' have had to move, as the municipality has started demolishing affordable housing and building more expensive properties in an effort to attract residents of a higher socioeconomic status. Some participants have been affected by illnesses or job losses, while others have finally managed to secure employment, complete a degree, or had the joy of bringing a child into the world. The stories of all these participants, if told today, would have been different. However, the experiences of the participants, when understood in the context of the chronotope in which they were expressed, have provided some useful starting points for understanding refugee experiences relating to representation, belonging, social cohesion, and language.

In this final chapter, I will reflect on my methodology and then discuss the implications of my chosen framework, Bakhtinian dialogism, before responding to the research questions posed in the introduction. Finally, I will consider the implications of the findings for policy and practice and propose directions for further research in order to continue the dialogue.

10.1. Reflections on methodology

The main method used for data collection in this research, the semi-structured interview, is one that is commonly accepted and firmly established in qualitative research. To align with the

theoretical framework, interviews were conceived of not only as active events and sites of social practice (Talmy, 2011) but also as dialogical interactions (Tanggaard, 2009) and they allowed room for agency, contestation, and the inclusion of a multitude of voices. Practically, this meant that no two interviews were exactly the same, as each interview was shaped in negotiation between researcher and participant (and sometimes the interpreter). This meant that rich data was obtained, that there was room for the participant's voice, and that participants had the opportunity to guide the conversation away from particularly sensitive topics. It also meant that not every aspect could be compared across all datasets; however, with a total of 85 participants there was still enough data to support the conclusions drawn from the study. As outlined in the introduction, the other method for data collection, narrative frames, was abandoned due to limited uptake by participants.

The qualitative interviewing was complexified and enriched by the multilingual context, as outlined in Chapter 3. The engagement of interpreters proved crucial for the study, as did the decision to allow participants to choose the level and type of language support provided. Decisions around language were seen as ethical choices (Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023) and were made with the intention of encouraging and facilitating participant agency (Rolland et al., 2023; Schembri & Jahić Jašić, 2022). The engagement of interpreters made possible the inclusion of participants whose voices may otherwise have been excluded (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Holmes et al., 2022; Resch & Enzenhofer, 2018; Tesseur, 2022), and the careful selection and preparation of interpreters, as well as the practice of interpreter-transcribed passages, mitigated most of the issues commonly encountered with interpreted interviews. Further, the translanguaging approach (Ganassin & Holmes, 2020; Gordon, 2022; Holmes et al., 2022; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023; Rolland et al., 2023) and the opportunity for language learning and development provided in the interviews (Polo-Pérez, 2023; Polo-Pérez & Holmes, 2023) not only provided participants with opportunities to draw on a fuller linguistic repertoire and engage in language acquisition but also provided opportunity to observe their engagement in language and learning.

In terms of data analysis, the combination of semantic analysis, focusing on processes and actions spoken of in the interviews and a narrative analysis, focusing on how participants relayed their experiences, yielded interesting and well-supported findings. The semantic analysis allowed me to draw on data from all the interviews instead of only considering a selection of passages, and the coding methodology, inspired by the Grounded Theory Method (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007; Charmaz, 2006) enabled me to engage with the data inductively and be guided by the voices of the participants. Memo-writing, an important feature of GTM, also proved crucial as I was seeking to make sense of experiences very different from my own. The closer dialogical narrative analysis allowed me to strengthen my understanding of salient points by analysing how participants

dialogically authored themselves, contested discourses and Others, and made use of polyphony. The dialogical aspects of my analysis will be expanded on below as I discuss the theoretical framework more generally.

10.2. A dialogical framework

The dialogical framework adopted in the study enabled me to investigate language, belonging, and social cohesion from multiple and interacting perspectives. Adopting an analysis that was both semantic and structural, that took into consideration not only the larger processes and personal experiences described in the data but also how they were expressed, enabled me to gain a greater understanding of salient issues in settlement and also the responses of individuals to these issues.

Furthermore, the dialogical approach enabled a conceptualisation of agency as situated on the border of the individual and their social context, taking into consideration both their status as acting subjects and the constraints of their particular chronotopes (Vitanova, 2010). Acts and utterances of individuals could be conceptualised as responsive to their contexts but, at the same time, creative and capable of generating a dialogical response from others around them (Dufva & Aro, 2015). Thus, the settlement journey of refugees is conceptualised as a continuous and complex interaction between the individual and the multiple Others in their lives, including those in close relationships with them but also the Others of their past contexts as well as the Others of their settlement location. A dialogical view of the subject avoids reductive representations of subjects as either self-sufficient and self-determined or, conversely, as victims, allowing them instead to be presented as fully human and continuously creating and recreating their identities in interactions with Others and the world.

A dialogical perspective allows us to conceptualise belonging and social cohesion as relational and created in the micro-interactions between individuals in daily encounters as well as in the interactions between the individual and society, as represented by institutions as well as discourses, both public and private. It also allows us to understand the impacts of these interactions as we access them through the narratives of individual speakers who are able to contest other voices and to subject discourses and personal interactions to their own interpretation as they relate them to an interested dialogical Other (Vitanova, 2010). By paying attention to polyphony, parody, contestation, and addressivity, we are able to distinguish the voices that have impacted on the lived experiences of our participants, and that have in turn impacted on their ability to create a sense of belonging to a cohesive society. Within these contexts, full of statements that are 'overpopulated… with the intentions of others' (Bakhtin, 1981a, p. 294), individuals author themselves, their identity, and their sense of belonging in their

intersubjective encounters with the Others around them, and in private dialogue with these voices.

In the context of language learning and use, dialogism opens up the possibility of an increased understanding of the difficulties of beginner language users who are often denied status as dialogical subjects and may struggle to contest their subject positions (Vitanova, 2010), particularly in contexts where monolingual ideologies are prevalent. Thus, their exclusions are often language-based, and where they are not, the inability to employ the host language to effectively contest exclusions makes them more difficult to overcome. Dialogism also provides additional insight on the language learning process, through its conceptualisation of agency as both a reflection of the ethically acting subject and of the particular chronotope(s) of that subject. Investment in language learning is thus not solely an individual endeavour but emerges from this interaction between the individual and their past and present chronotopes and the possibilities and constraints inherent in these both in relation to identity and in relation to action (Dufva & Aro, 2015).

Dialogism also allows us to critically consider reductive representations by investigating how powerful narrators author the culturally or linguistically *other* and how this impacts on policies and practices as well as on the behaviours of individuals in everyday encounters. Reducing the Other to a differentiated and monologically presented *other* means that their utterances, as they address and respond to others, do not need to be taken into consideration and that answerability, or moral responsibility, towards them is lessened. This can be seen in policies and practices that on a minimal level fail to acknowledge individual uniqueness but also, at a more extreme level, blatantly deny basic human rights (UN General Assembly, 1948), such as the right to family (Article 16), education (Article 26), material wellbeing (Article 25) and freedom of expression (Article 19) even in countries that portray themselves as progressive or humanitarian.

I will now summarise the findings of this dissertation and seek to address, in brief form, the research questions posed in the introduction, namely:

RQ1: How are refugees represented in public and political discourse and how are these representations experienced and contested by refugees?

RQ2: How is local and transnational belonging negotiated in the face of politicised belonging, reductive representations, and exclusionary polices?

RQ3: How are social cohesion and inclusion constructed discursively, and how does this impact on policy and outcomes?

RQ4: How does language proficiency and use impact on social cohesion, inclusion and belonging, and how do exclusions and inequalities impact on language learning outcomes?

10.3. RQ1: Representations

This dissertation contributes to an understanding of refugee representations by not only analysing the overt representations found in, for example, political speeches (see Chapter 7) but also by recognising that reductive representations can be revealed in narratives and dialogues as individuals reproduce or contest the voices of others (Bakhtin, 1981a; Frank, 2012; Pavlenko, 2007). The analysis suggests that public representations of refugees are almost always reductive and often negative and exclusionary. Chapter 7 argues that in Swedish discourse refugees are primarily represented as a threat to Swedish values, to security, and to stability (Elgenius & Rydgren, 2019; Kamali, 2016). This leads to boundary-drawing, where the *other* remains an alien without legitimised belonging to the collective, and to 'vulnerability' discourses where the *other* is seen as needing civilising interventions (Bauer et al., 2023; Hudson et al., 2023). The chapter demonstrates that these representations have gained increasing acceptance in public discourse and also have significant impacts on refugee-background residents, who need to contest negative representations in order to claim legitimisation, recognition, and belonging. Chapter 6 suggests that in the New Zealand context, representations are perhaps less overtly negative, but they are highly reductive and othering and fail to acknowledge uniqueness either in terms of needs or in terms of strengths. Thus refugee-background residents are often denied a voice (the ultimate marker of uniqueness, see also Vitanova, 2010) and are expected to rapidly contribute through filling labour market needs. Within both contexts, women – especially refugee-background Muslim women – experience a more reductive portrayal as they become subject to a 'liberation' discourse (see Chapters 6 and 7) where Western values are seen as desirable and the turning from traditional or religious values is seen as integration success.

As suggested in the introduction, reductive or negative representations always have a purpose. The negative portrayal of refugees in Swedish electoral discourse not only serves populist or strategic vote-gathering purposes but also assists in constructing the nation-state both in terms of its boundaries and in terms of its superiority (Hudson et al., 2023). The positive portrayal of refugees as a willing labour force in New Zealand discourses assists in strengthening neoliberal and market-driven views (Piller, 2016). Taken together, reductive representations, through their portrayal of the *other* as less than a full subject and their exclusion from the position of dialogical Other, serves the important purpose of justifying policies and practices that would otherwise be considered unacceptable or incongruent with a progressive and humanitarian national identity.

Conceptualising refugees as 'types' engaging in an integration quest where success is dependent only on their own willingness and effort (see Chapter 4), is necessary for justifying a regime of incentives and penalties. Thus, Amanuel in Sweden (Chapter 9) must be presented as a man in charge of his own destiny and responsible for his own failure to justify denying him the right to reunification with his wife and children. Likewise, refugees in New Zealand must be seen as solely responsible for their language proficiency to deny them appropriate linguistic support (Chapter 6).

Reductive or negative representations, whether explicit or implicit, were contested by refugees as they sought to author themselves as 'full partner[s] in social interaction' (Fraser, 1998, p. 3) and claim recognition as unique individuals entitled to respect and belonging in their new context. In the interviews, this contestation was carried out through bringing a multitude of voices into the narrative and laying them open to contestation through parody or through directly addressing them. Contestations were also carried out through counter-narratives, as seen in Chapter 8. In these instances, participants authored a history of themselves that portrayed them as valuable members in a previous context, as agents in their own destiny, albeit with significant difficulties to overcome, and as complex and multifaceted individuals. However, contestations were not confined to the interview context. The findings presented in Chapter 7 suggest that reductive and negative representations impact on day-to-day interactions, and therefore need to be contested in each social context.

10.4. RQ2: Belonging

This dissertation outlines some of the complexities in negotiating local and transnational belonging, particularly as these are situated within contexts where belonging is politicised (Yuval-Davis, 2006). The most obvious example is presented in Chapter 7, in relation to the politicisation of belonging in Sweden where increasingly negative representations of refugee-background residents are creating boundaries around who belongs and who does not, with the result that many residents or even citizens are seen as non-belonging. This impacts on the lived experience of individuals, who feel that their belonging is not taken for granted but needs to be continuously justified and who encounter negative attitudes. The study has not presented a comparative analysis for the New Zealand context, largely because refugee reception in New Zealand has been very limited compared to that in Sweden and has seldom reached the significance needed for populist uptake in political discourse. Thus, in the 2023 general election in New Zealand, refugee reception and 'integration' of immigrants were largely untouched by populist parties who, instead, focused on diminishing the standing and rights of the tangata whenua, New Zealand's indigenous Māori (O'Sullivan, 2023). However, there is evidence that in public perception refugees, or those seen as culturally or linguistically *other,* are not granted the

same belonging as others. This has a range of implications, including access to services (see Chapter 6).

Boundary-drawing which stipulates who belongs where and with whom also impacts on transnational relationships of belonging and thus on the individual's ability to fully experience belonging in a new place (see Chapter 9). In the Swedish context, the 'probationary' belonging given to those granted asylum, who need to prove their belonging through ongoing and stable labour market participation, means that individuals are bound to a transnational family life. With spouses and children remaining outside the borders, in a physical space of non-belonging, they themselves struggle to fully belong and give their full attention to the settlement process. In the New Zealand context, a poor understanding of the spousal separation resulting from displacement and a high suspicion of the motives of any spousal reunification leads to transnational marital relationships where individuals struggle to develop their sense of feeling at home. For both contexts, the definition of who belongs to a family for reunification purposes means that there is little acknowledgement and recognition of relationships between adult children and their parents, or between adult siblings.

Thus, while transnational connections and transnational families have become increasingly commonplace in a globalised world, for refugees, transnational living is often an agentive response to prohibitive family reunification policies and is fraught with difficulties. Compared to migrants living transnational lives, refugees are often subject to restrictions in movement (Amelina & Bause, 2020; Aziz, 2022a; Huennekes, 2018), unreliable digital connections (Marlowe, 2018) and have family members in high needs situations (Leurs, 2019; Lim, 2009; Marlowe & Bruns, 2021). Additionally, this study shows that ongoing instability, increases in oppression, or emergent situations can disrupt established care patterns or increase the needs of family members. Taking a dialogical perspective and analysing transnational care from the perspective of answerability, Chapter 9 argued that former refugees struggle with their unfulfilled responsibilities towards family members who are suffering and that many are constantly addressed by family but are unable to provide an adequate response. The unfulfilled care obligations, in combination with concern for family members who are living in situations of danger or precarity, impact on the individual's mental health, as well as on their ability to engage in activities designed to promote belonging and positive settlement outcomes.

10.5. RQ3: Social cohesion and inclusion

This dissertation extends our understanding of social cohesion and inclusion by analysing not only social cohesion or inclusion outcomes but also how social cohesion and inclusion are discursively constructed and how they are implemented as policies. The analysis suggests that

there are contrasting constructions of these concepts not only between the two contexts but also within each context. In the Swedish context, social cohesion is constructed primarily as the property of a homogenous in-group with a shared values system, subject to the threats of an outsider or *other* with conflicting values. This is seen in the portrayals of immigrants and immigrant-dense areas as deficient in Swedish democratic values and in the reluctance to consider alternative interpretations of tensions, such as the ones that arose in connection with the Qur'an burnings (Chapter 7). By including work-ethic as a typical Swedish value that *others* may not possess, barriers to labour market inclusion are often ignored and exclusions are seen as the fault of the individual's value system. Paradoxically, the narrow definition of some of the Swedish values, for example those relating to gender equality and freedom of expression, in practice means that some refugee-background women feel restricted in their movement and in their right to express themselves. Social inclusion, in the Swedish context, is primarily seen as an adaptation to Swedish values along with engagement in the labour market, a process that is considered to be the responsibility of the individual. In the New Zealand context, social cohesion, as portrayed in recent initiatives, is a broader concept that values diversity and acknowledges New Zealand's bicultural foundation (Royal Commission, 2020a; Webb, 2020). The model that forms the basis for New Zealand social cohesion initiatives is one that is based on reciprocity and requires the state to facilitate inclusion, participation, and belonging through recognition of individuals and legitimacy in terms of institutions and policies (Jenson, 1998; Peace et al., 2005). However, this study suggests that social cohesion initiatives fail to take into consideration aspects to do with language and linguistic inequalities and that, institutionally, there is little recognition available for those who are ethnically or linguistically diverse (Chapter 6). Furthermore, in practice, social inclusion is framed primarily as labour market inclusion achieved through the diligence of the individual themselves. The social inclusion narrative is thus remarkably similar in the two contexts, as outlined in Chapter 4, although the values dimension is much stronger in the Swedish version.

A social inclusion narrative that focuses on labour market participation and conceptualises the process as an individual endeavour or engagement will inevitably lead to polices that are a combination of incentives, penalties, and heavy-handed interventions, rather than policies that focus on facilitation and acknowledgement of individual rights (see Chapter 4). Where self-sufficiency is seen as the natural outcome of an individual's effort, reductions in benefit payments and barriers to residence or family reunification are presented as motivating factors to increase effort and thus grant inevitable success. However, as this study suggests, penalties and incentives do not facilitate inclusion or cohesion but often have the opposite effect. Trust in institutions – an important aspect of social cohesion (Spoonley et al., 2005) – is broken when a family with young

children in New Zealand face a 13-week stand-down period with no income. Endless work experience placements for Swedish refugees disrupt language learning and slow down the journey to sustainable employment. Rapid entry into unskilled employment for beginner language users in New Zealand leads to financial self-sufficiency and inclusion in the economy but not to self-sufficiency or inclusion in other areas. Chapter 4 suggests that for social cohesion and social inclusion to work, the focus needs to shift from a focus on individual effort and conformity to a focus on rights. A rights-based approach would consider the structural barriers as well as the individual's own unique needs.

10.6. RQ4: Language

In language learning, as in labour market inclusion, the process is generally seen as an individual endeavour, based on motivation and effort, a perspective that then tends to lead to incentives, penalties, and restrictions (Piller, 2016). This perspective was apparent in both contexts of the study and part of the general social inclusion narrative as well as discernible in teachers' analyses of slow learner progress. However, the refugee-background participants in the interviews authored themselves as motivated language learners whose investment was driven by a range of factors. The primary drivers across all groups appeared to be a desire for independence and a desire to fully belong in the new society. In addition to this, participants spoke of other significant factors, such as their desire to gain employment, to support their children in their learning and hobbies, to undertake further study, or to improve their standing in society. Language learning agency and strategies were also observable in interviews (see Chapter 3), as participants engaged in interviews in their target language in order to develop their proficiency through informal interactive learning or took opportunities within the interview context to acquire new lexical items or improve their pronunciation. The study thus suggests, in line with previous studies (Lindberg & Sandwall, 2017; Morrice et al., 2021), that refugees are in general highly motivated language learners.

However, many refugee-background language learners are also subject to a range of exclusions and inequalities, both in their country of origin and in their country of settlement, that impact on language learning outcomes. Chapter 5 dealt in-depth with exclusions and inequalities relating to literacy and formal education in countries of origin and how these impacted on the language acquisition for learners who are simultaneously learning a new language and learning to read and write. Additionally, in the country of settlement, a poor understanding of the complexities of adult language acquisition tended to limit access to language courses by imposing restrictions on courses or financial support for students. This was exemplified in the New Zealand context with the five-year limit for intensive literacy and language classes or restrictions in financial support (see Chapter 4). Additionally, refugees were often excluded from language-rich spaces where

informal learning could take place as the host population were reluctant to engage with them and many ended up in employment where there was minimal opportunity for interaction with proficient speakers. Lastly, inequalities in access to financial support, services and family reunification meant that individuals were often subject to significant stressors which impacted on their ability to concentrate on language learning.

Inequalities, inequities, and exclusions were also worsened for those who were beginner users of the host language. Chapter 6 dealt with the linguistic inequalities faced by refugees in New Zealand, in a context where social cohesion is promoted but does not sufficiently consider the language aspect. While there is, at a policy level, an imperative to provide suitable language support for multilinguals in medical appointments and other government institutions (MBIE, 2016), in reality participants found it difficult to access appropriate language support. In the New Zealand context, this was seen as an outcome of reductive conceptualisations of refugees, where they were not seen as full partners in interaction, and thus not considered to have a voice or the right to be fully informed. The Swedish context did not present the same struggles, partly because there has been consistent provision of interpreters in most medical contexts and partly because significant and ongoing immigration has meant that many government agencies have multilingual speakers who can assist. However, the government coming into power in Sweden after the 2022 election has proposed to revoke the free interpreting services for medical appointments except for those still in the early stages of settlement (*Tidöavtalet: Överenskommelse för Sverige*, 2022), which could have serious implications.

Exclusions based on linguistic inequalities in combination with restrictions in language learning opportunities have an impact on social cohesion, inclusion, and belonging as they impact on access to services, on sustainable labour market engagement, and on opportunities for social mobility. Furthermore, there are impacts on the individual's ability to participate in dialogical interactions and in that way create an identity of belonging in the destination community.

10.7. Implications

Throughout the dissertation, I have attempted to demonstrate that there is a significant need for change, not only in policy and practice, but also in how refugees are conceived of and represented, given that reductive representations become vehicles for inequitable policies and ineffectual approaches. Therefore, the strongest need for change is on the level of ideology and representation, where refugees need to be authored not as reduced subjects or types but as a dialogical Other and as individuals with full and complex identities, with their own voice and uniqueness and with the right and ability to participate fully in social interactions. I will turn again to the words of Bakhtin (1984, p. 58), quoted in Chapter 4:

> A living human being cannot be turned into the voiceless object of some secondhand, finalizing cognitive process. In a human being there is always something that only he himself can reveal, in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something that does not submit to an externalizing secondhand definition.

With this ideological perspective in mind, I will turn to some possible implications for policy and practice.

First, the study suggests that for social cohesion initiatives to be effective, they cannot be founded on exclusionary principles or practices, whether these are in the shape of discourses and boundary drawings based on perceived cultural and civilisational differences (see Chapter 7) or based on institutions perpetuating linguistic inequalities due to ignorance or for the sake of perceived efficiency (see Chapter 6). It also suggests that social cohesion and inclusion, while it must be promoted at governmental level, will not be effective unless there is a significant effort to improve everyday practices and interactions in institutional settings; neither will be effective without greater understanding of the different target groups, in this case refugees. Importantly, refugees are more likely to achieve labour market participation and other forms of social inclusion through individual support, face-to-face meetings, and tailored interventions than through incentivisation or increased demands for compliance.

Second, belonging needs to be understood as impacted not only by an individual's own 'identification with' the destination community but also their 'identification as' part of that community by other members (Delanty et al., 2008). Discourse and policy that draw exclusionary boundaries around belonging therefore need to be challenged and reconsidered to allow for individuals to develop a sense of belonging to their destination community. This involves recognition of refugee-background residents institutionally and changes to policies that create exclusionary boundaries towards those already resident, for example through probationary and temporary residence permits and limitations to access and rights. Further, belonging needs to be understood and promoted from a perspective that takes into consideration not only what community the individual belongs *to* but also which other individuals they belong *with*. In other words, belonging needs to be understood as relational. Developing a sense of belonging and a sense of feeling at home in a country is significantly impeded by knowing that the individuals you belong with are not only geographically distant, but also in a position of danger or uncertainty. For successful settlement to occur, policies must therefore consider the need for more generous family reunification policies.

Third, while there are significant differences in language acquisition among refugees, the study suggests that for many, there are significant barriers to language learning and that these barriers

must be taken into consideration both on a policy level and on a pedagogical level. While some individuals, primarily those with higher education and experience of adolescent or adult language learning, may learn a language in 1-2 years or less, for most, it takes significantly longer. Chapter 5 discussed the challenges faced by a particularly disadvantaged group: women learning a new language while also learning to read for the first time. The full study also included individuals who were literate but had limited or disrupted formal education, which also provided barriers to language learning. There is currently poor understanding of how long language learning should take – and, indeed, what level of proficiency is aimed for – and minimal allowance for a lengthy period of acquisition. To avoid social exclusion and disenfranchisement, it is crucial that language learning is facilitated for learners who encounter multiple barriers, even if this takes a longer period of time. In the Swedish context, this would mean removing incentivisation measures that are detrimental to language acquisition, such as policies that make residency and family reunification contingent on permanent employment. In the New Zealand context, it would mean extending the provision of programmes like the Intensive Literacy and Numeracy fund beyond its current parameters (500 hours per year for up to 5 years) and/or extend the time available to achieve the levels of the national certificates (NZCEL). It would also mean, in both contexts, ensuring that financial support was adequate for those engaging in formal language instruction and providing in-work language training for those in employment. There is also an urgent need to increase the skills and understanding among teachers in relation to LESLLA learners and to learners who, while able to read and write, do not have fully developed text literacy.

Finally, while I have attempted to represent the voices of refugees throughout my dissertation, I have become increasingly aware throughout my work that there are things that I, despite dialogical interaction and intersubjective co-construction of meaning, will never understand because of my privileged position. Chapter 8 suggests that there will always be a gap between the understanding of a sympathetic researcher and the understanding that comes from lived experience. It is therefore imperative that the creation of policies and practices that are designed to facilitate settlement and inclusion involve those with lived experience, who can draw on their own personal and communal experiences of war, oppression, and barriers to inclusion when formulating which measures will best facilitate successful settlement.

10.8. Directions for further study

This study has been broad and multifaceted, involving two settlement locations, refugees from several ethnic and national backgrounds, and data from language teachers, settlement support workers, and electoral discourse as well as data from refugee-background participants. Therefore, while the study has provided some tentative answers, it has also raised a range of questions yet to be answered. Further, from a dialogical perspective, no investigation is ever

finalised but simply one utterance in the chain of many, and it is my hope that my contribution will be engaged with and form the basis for further research in a range of areas. Here I outline some possible directions.

My dissertation touches on issues of gender and how these impact on belonging and language acquisition. I have argued that women are particularly disadvantaged due to barriers to formal education and literacy earlier in their lives and due to ongoing gendered responsibilities in the country of settlement. I have also suggested that different perceptions of gender roles in past and present chronotopes impact on the investment of women in language learning. Further, I have suggested that women may be particularly subject to racial/ethnic or religious exclusions, and that their freedom of religious expression may be impacted by negative representations in their countries of residence. The relationship between gender and settlement is an area that would benefit from further investigation, particularly in terms of identity, belonging, and investment and how these are impacted by structural inequalities as well as by ideologies and discourses on gender roles and religious differences.

Further, while this study has focused on belonging, particularly from the perspective of politicised belonging and how this impacts on the lived experience of belonging, it has not explored, in detail, which actions individuals take to create a sense of belonging and a feeling of being at home in the face of these experiences or, in other words, how individuals contest exclusions from national belonging through performative action. An exploration into this would extend the understanding of the practical implications of politicised belonging and the resistance to dominant discourses.

There would also be significant benefits in undertaking longitudinal studies, something that is often beyond the possibilities of a doctoral thesis. This would be particularly useful in relation to LESLLA learners who despite recent advances in scholarship remain an under-researched group. Longitudinal studies could combine classroom observations and objective progress measures in literacy as well as oral language with qualitative interviewing to better understand identity, investment, and language learning processes. Such studies would require the involvement of multilingual researchers or research assistants.

A significant avenue for research is in the area of incentivisation. The qualitative data presented in this study suggest that incentivisation measures have primarily negative impacts on language learning and settlement outcomes as they impact on investment, ability to concentrate, and affective factors in general, but also because they may lead to material and financial deprivation. Financial deprivation becomes a result of incentivisation measures when financial support is curtailed and when remittances need to be sent to spouses and children who do not as yet qualify for reunification. Quantitative studies exploring the link between incentivisation measures and

settlement outcomes would help determine the effects on settlement outcomes for those most likely to experience a challenging route to labour market participation, for example individuals with no post-primary education in their country of origin. This is particularly urgent in the Swedish context, with the government elected in 2022 moving to implement immigration and integration policies based primarily on perceived deservingness and narrow incentives. However, it is also pertinent in the New Zealand context, where incentivisation measures and the expectation of rapid labour market integration have the potential to assign particular social locations for refugees, where they have limited opportunity for broader social inclusion. As has been seen in Sweden and elsewhere, systemic exclusion of immigrant groups from various social spaces and spaces of influence tend to create complex social problems over time.

Finally, the dialogical perspective used in this study presents a valuable framework for investigating refugee settlement as it allows for an analysis of the multiple interactions within the settlement process. Further research could extend this perspective by investigating instances of dialogical *practice* in a range of areas relating to inclusion, language learning, and the development of social cohesion. Such an approach could include identifying existing examples of dialogical practice but could also involve engaging in action research where new approaches are introduced and evaluated.

10.9. Concluding reflections

From this research, we have a picture of refugee settlement in New Zealand as a humanitarian effort that is strongly impacted by utilitarian concerns but also affected by what can be seen as limited understanding of the refugee experience among policy makers and those working on the frontline in mainstream agencies and institutions. Thus, while the resettlement of quota refugees is framed as a benevolent act designed to benefit those most in need, the settlement process itself emerges as a neoliberal project designed to address labour shortages and promote rapid financial self-sufficiency. Furthermore, the inadequate understanding of the language acquisition process for the diverse groups of individuals collectively labelled 'refugees' and the subsequently varying needs for language support means that language learning opportunities as well as language supports are often insufficient, particularly for groups who have experienced earlier disadvantages. Whether and how recent changes to the New Zealand Refugee Resettlement Strategy (MBIE, 2023) will move the focus from refugees' obligations to reach rapid financial self-sufficiency to their right to access education and employment is yet to be seen; however, current austerity measures and increased sanctions for beneficiaries makes this unlikely, at least in the short term.

In terms of Sweden, the thesis describes a country that has rapidly moved from a nation with generous policies for refugee acceptance as well as post-settlement support to increasing restrictions with the attendant consequences of alienation and exclusion. 'Integration', in the Swedish context, is a broad concept that encompasses the unquestioning adoption of Swedish values, as well as the achievement of high levels of language proficiency and inclusion in the labour market. This can sometimes lead to conflicting expectations, as rapid inclusion in the labour market is expected and used as incentivisation for ongoing residence and for family reunification, while the high levels of language proficiency required for employment prevents labour market entry. Along with the restrictions on policy level, political boundary drawing against the refugee *other* has led to increasingly exclusionary rhetoric which in turn has impacted on the sense of belonging experienced by refugee-background residents in the country. While many of the initiatives announced in *Tidöavtalet* (the agreement between the governing parties and SD, the supporting party) are still at the exploratory stage, the general direction is clearly towards a more restrictive approach to refugee reception and an approach to 'integration' that places the onus more firmly on the individual to adapt and achieve their own integration success. A recent media release (Regeringskansliet, 2024) outlines a new integration goal that 'clarifies individual responsibility' in the social inclusion process.

Within these contexts, individuals navigate settlement and seek belonging, recognition, and social inclusion with a strong awareness of the need to learn the language, as well as a strong desire to have a voice and be seen as a legitimate speaker in their new context. Individuals experience exclusion and delegitimization when their need for language support is not taken into consideration in policy and interactions with agencies, institutions, and providers and when they are not recognised as full participants due to linguistic and cultural differences. The struggle for inclusion and the desire to have a voice is often the main motivating factor for language learning, as articulated below:

> I have to speak from my own tongue. It's better, it's reliable, it's convenient.
>
> *Afghan woman in New Zealand.*

Language learning is also motivated by identity, including past and present identities as well as the possibilities imagined for the future. Thus, investment in language learning is greatest where this aligns closely to the goals of the individuals, and with how they perceive themselves within their new context.

Language learning, while conceptualised both in Sweden and in New Zealand as an individual endeavour and largely contingent on the individual's intrinsic motivation and dedicated effort, is impacted by a range of factors, both personal and social, spanning both time and space.

Disadvantages and discrimination prior to displacement that impact on schooling and on literacy development have significant impacts on language learning for adults after settlement. In the country of settlement, the reluctance of proficient speakers to engage with new users limits informal language learning opportunities and measures designed to incentivise early labour market engagement often impact on access to formal learning. Further, unfulfilled transnational care obligations, resulting from family separation and aggravated by ongoing unrest in countries of origin, impact on the individual's ability to focus on language learning and other activities required for successful settlement.

Throughout the thesis an image emerges of refugees desiring to learn the language of their new society, engage in the labour market, become part of a cohesive society, and to develop a sense of belonging: aims that directly align with the stated aims of the receiving nations. However, it appears that in both New Zealand and Sweden, there is a tendency to eschew state responsibility when these aims fail and instead attribute any failures to the ostensible lack of motivation or willingness of refugees. Along with this, there appears to be a significant gap in understanding in relation to refugee experiences, as depicted below by one of the refugee-background participants:

> …they have no idea what [refugees have] been through they don't fully understand.
>
> *Iraqi-Palestinian man*

The dialogical framework employed in this thesis could provide a starting point for a more informed approach to settlement: one that explores the dialogical nature of settlement, as well as the possibilities for greater understanding of settlement and more effective settlement that can result from dialogical interactions between the receiving nation and refugee-background residents.

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Appendix 1: Information sheets (English)

Information sheets followed the format outlined below but were adapted based on the target audience.

[Print on Massey University departmental letterhead]
[Logo, name and address of Department/School/Institute/Section]

Language, belonging and social cohesion: a study of refugees settling in Sweden and New Zealand

INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Hanna Brookie[5], and I work as a teacher of English for migrants and refugees in New Zealand. I was born and grew up in Sweden, but I have lived in New Zealand since 1995. I am currently studying for my PhD and my research is about refugees who come to New Zealand or Sweden to live.

[Insert one of the following sections, depending on which participants are sought:]

[For refugee background participants:]

I am interested in the experiences of those who have come to New Zealand/Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers. I would like to know more about the settlement process, and what it is like to learn a new language. I am also interested in finding out what makes a newcomer feel like they belong in a new country – or what makes them feel like they don't belong. I am inviting you to be part of this research project if you are happy to talk to me about these things.

I am looking for participants in [add area] who have arrived in New Zealand/Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers, or who had to move here because the situation in their original country was not safe. I would like to interview [insert demographic specifications, e.g. ethnicity, gender, age]. I will ask you for one interview, and may also ask to interview you again at a later time.

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I will arrange an/the interview(s) with you. [If applicable, insert: I am planning to do group interviews, where you and some friends will talk to me together. But if you prefer, I am also happy to interview you by yourself.] The interview will probably take about half an hour to an hour/an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask you questions and listen to your stories of living in a new country. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you don't want to. If I have more questions, I may ask for a second interview, but you have the right to say no to this. If you want, you can have a family member or support person with you in the interview. The interview will be in English/Swedish, but if you want an interpreter I can arrange this/I will arrange an interpreter who speaks [insert language].

[For language teachers:]

For this part of the project I am interested in the experiences of language teachers or home tutors who have worked, or are working with students who have come to New Zealand/Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers. I would like to speak to teachers of [insert specifications regarding ethnicity, language level, area etc.] I would like to know more about how teachers perceive the settlement process, the challenges of language learning and what it takes for students to develop a sense of belonging in New

[5] My last name was changed from Brookie to Svensson after the main fieldwork period.

Zealand/Sweden. I am inviting you to be part of this research project if you are happy to share your expertise with me.

The project will involve written tasks and one or more interviews. The written tasks will be "narrative frames" which are sets of sentence starters that encourage you to write a short (paragraph length) narrative on a particular scenario or event. After this, you will be asked to participate in an interview. You may be asked for a follow up interview at a later date, but will have the option to decline.

> [*For participants in a new settlement location, insert:*
> You will be asked to complete three written tasks. The first one will be in the early stages of teaching the new group, the second one after approximately six months, and the last at the end of the first year. Interviews will be held after the end of the first year.]

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I will email you the (first) narrative frames in [month]. They should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. After [insert time frame] I will arrange an interview with you. The interview will probably take about half an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask you questions relating to what you wrote in the narrative, and further questions on the same theme. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you don't want to.

[For representatives of groups and agencies:]

This project aims to find out more about the settlement process of those who have arrived in [place] as refugees or asylum seekers, and particularly how they learn a new language and become part of a new society. My focus is both on former refugees and on the receiving society. Therefore, while my project primarily involves research interviews with former refugees I am also interested in finding out the views and experiences of other stakeholders, including community groups and agencies involved directly or indirectly with refugee reception and settlement.

For this part of the project I am looking for participants who are part of community groups or agencies that work with refugees in [place] at some point of their journey. I would like to know more about the existing challenges as well as what systems or processes have been put in place to facilitate settlement. I am inviting you to be part of this research project if you are happy to share your expertise with me.

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I will arrange an initial interview with you. The interview will probably take about half an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask questions relating to your perception of your community, challenges to do with refugee settlement in the community, and initiatives that have helped, or could potentially help. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you choose not to. You may be asked for a follow up interview at a later date, but will have the option to decline.

[All letters will contain the following:]

The information I collect will be used for my research project. This means it will be used in my PhD thesis, but may also be used in academic articles and conference presentations that I do. I will record the interviews, but I will store the recordings in a safe place, so that other people cannot listen to them. I will also transcribe the interviews and I will store these in a safe place on my computer. When I have finished my research, I will give you a summary to read, or tell you about what I found, if you want me to.

I will do my best to make sure your information is confidential. When I write about what you said, I will not use your real name, so that people will not know that it is you. I will not tell other people that you were part of this project. [If we use an interpreter, the interpreter will also be bound to confidentiality, and will not tell other people about the interview.]

You do not have to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- bring a support person
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study before the interview, or up to two weeks after the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;

- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

If you have any questions regarding this research project, please feel free to contact me. You can write to me at Hanna Brookie, PhD Candidate, School of Humanities, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, email me at hannabrookie@yahoo.com, or phone/text me on XXXXXXXX

You are also welcome to contact my supervisor, Prof Cynthia White, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand, Email c.j.white@massey.ac.nz

Committee Approval Statement

- *This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application SOB 20/51. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz .*

Appendix 2: Information sheets (Swedish)

Information sheets followed the format outlined below but were adapted based on the target audience.

Språkinlärning, tillhörighet och social sammanhållning: en studie av f.d. flyktingar/invandrare bosatta i Sverige och Nya Zeeland

Information till forskningspersoner

Vi vill fråga dig om du vill delta i ett forskningsprojekt. I det här dokumentet får du information om projektet och om vad det innebär att delta.

Vad är det för ett projekt och varför vill ni att jag ska delta?

Detta projekt har som mål att bygga upp en bättre förståelse för bosättningsprocessen och integreringen av de som kommit till Sverige och Nya Zeeland som nyanlända, och speciellt hur de lär sig ett nytt språk och kommer in i samhället. Det har även som mål att ta reda på vad som gör att nyinflyttade känner sig hemma i det nya landet – och vad som kan få dem att känna att de inte hör till. Projektet är genomfört som ett doktorandarbete i tillämpad lingvistik. Doktoranden heter Hanna Brookie.

[För f.d. flyktingar lägg till följande:]

Vi söker deltagare i [tillägg ort] som har anlänt till Sverige som asylsökande, flyktingar, eller på andra sätt bosatt sig i landet eftersom situationen i hemlandet inte var trygg. Vi skulle vilja intervjua [tillägg demografiska detaljer, t ex etnicitet, kön, ålder]. Vi skulle vilja ställa frågor om bosättningen och hur det kändes att lära sig ett nytt språk. Vi skulle också vilja fråga om vad som gör att nyinflyttade känner sig hemma, eller inte känner sig hemma, i det nya landet. Vi vill inbjuda dig till att delta i projektet om du är villig att prata om detta. Du har fått detta informationsblad eftersom [lägg till institution/person] trodde att du kunde vara intresserad av att delta.

[För språklärare lägg till följande:]

I denna del av projektet är vi intresserade av erfarenheterna hos språklärare som jobbar, eller har jobbat, med elever som kommit till Sverige som flyktingar eller asylsökande. Vi vill främst prata med lärare som jobbar med [lägg till detaljer, t ex etnicitet, språknivå, område osv.] Vi vill veta mer om hur lärare ser till bosättningen, svårigheter med språkinlärning och vad som behövs

för att eleverna ska känna sig hemma i Sverige. Jag vill inbjuda dig till att delta i projektet om du är villig att dela med dig av din kunskap och erfarenhet. Du har fått detta informationsblad till följd av att vi tog kontakt med [lägg till institution] angående möjliga deltagare.

[För föreningar och myndigheter lägg till följande:]

I denna del av projektet söker vi dig som jobbar i en myndighet eller förening som arbetar med nyanlända under något skede av deras bosättningsprocess i kommunen. Vi vill få bättre kunskap om svårigheter såväl som vilka system det finns som underlättar för nyanlända. Vi vill inbjuda dig till att delta i projektet om du är villig att dela med dig av din kunskap och erfarenhet. Du har fått detta informationsblad till följd av att vi tog kontakt med [lägg till institution] angående möjliga deltagare.

Forskningshuvudman för projektet är Massey University, Nya Zeeland. Med forskningshuvudman menas den organisation som är ansvarig för projektet. Ansökan är godkänd av Etikprövningsmyndigheten, diarienummer för prövningen hos Etikprövningsmyndigheten är ange diarienummer

Hur går projektet till?

[För f.d. flyktingar lägg till följande:]

Om du är villig att delta kommer jag (Hanna) att ordna en intervju med dig. [Om tillämpligt, lägg till: Jag planerar att göra gruppintervjuer, där du och några du känner tillsammans kommer att prata med mig. Men om du föredrar, kan jag också intervjua dig enskilt.] Intervjun kommer troligtvis att ta 30-60 minuter och kan vara när och var det passar dig. Jag kommer att ställa frågor och lyssna till när du berättar om livet i ett nytt land. Du väljer själv hur mycket du vill berätta, och du behöver inte svara på frågorna om du inte vill. Om jag har fler frågor, är det möjligt att jag kontaktar dig för en andra intervju, men du får själv bestämma om du vill delta i den. Du får gärna ha en familjemedlem eller stödperson med under intervjun. Intervjun kommer att vara på antingen engelska eller svenska, beroende på vad du föredrar. Om du vill kan vi också använda oss av tolk.

[För språklärare lägg till följande:]

Projektet kommer att innehålla skrivuppgifter och en eller fler intervjuer. Skrivuppgiften innebär att skriva enligt berättelsemallar. Berättelsemallar är korta historier där vissa delar redan är givna, t.ex. början på den första meningen. Senare kommer du att bli ombedd att vara med i en forskningsintervju. Du kan också bli erbjuden en uppföljningsintervju vid ett senare stadie, men du bestämmer i så fall själv om du är villig att delta i denna.

Om du är villig att delta kommer jag (Hanna) att maila berättelsemallar till dig i [månad]. Dessa borde ta cirka en halvtimme att skriva. [tillägg tidsram] senare kommer jag att ordna en intervju med dig. Intervjun kommer troligtvis att ta 30-60 minuter och kan vara när och var det passar dig. Jag kommer att ställa frågor om de ämnen du skrev om i berättelsemallarna, och eventuellt andra frågor om liknande ämnen. Du väljer själv hur mycket du vill berätta, och du behöver inte svara på frågorna om du inte vill.

[För föreningar och myndigheter lägg till följande:]

Om du är villig att delta kommer jag (Hanna) att ordna en första intervju med dig. Intervjun kommer troligtvis att ta 30-60 minuter och kan vara när och var det passar dig. Jag kommer att ställa frågor angående hur du ser på ditt samhälle, och angående svårigheter med integration och initiativ som har hjälpt eller skulle kunna hjälpa integrationsarbetet. Du väljer själv hur mycket du vill berätta, och du behöver inte svara på frågorna om du inte vill. Du kan också bli erbjuden en uppföljningsintervju vid ett senare stadie, men du bestämmer i så fall själv om du är villig att delta i denna.

Möjliga följder och risker med att delta i projektet

Som del av projektet kommer vi att ställa frågor som gäller dina upplevelser och åsikter. Detta kan kännas obehagligt för vissa individer och vissa kan känna sig upprörda när de talar om sådant som hänt tidigare i deras liv, eller när de talar om svåra situationer. Du har därför rätt till följande:

- Ta med en stödperson
- Vägra svara på vissa frågor
- Avsluta ditt deltagande i studien innan intervjun, eller be att få inspelningen och transkriberingen raderade upp till två veckor efter intervjun
- Ställa frågor om studien när som helst under deltagandet
- Be att inspelningen stängs av under en intervju

Vi kan även ge dig en lista med yrkesverksamma i din närhet som du skulle kunna få hjälp av efter intervjun om det behövs.

Vad händer med mina uppgifter?

Projektet kommer att samla in och registrera information om dig.

Den enda information som kommer att samlas in och registreras är den information du själv väljer att ge. Informationen kommer att användas till forskningsprojektet. Det innebär att den kommer att användas i en doktorsavhandling, men kan också användas i akademiska artiklar och föreläsningar. All information kommer att behandlas som konfidentiell. När vi skriver om vad du

sagt, kommer vi inte att använda ditt riktiga namn, för att du inte ska kunna identifieras i studien. Vi kommer inte att berätta för andra att du var en del av det här projektet. Intervjuerna kommer att spelas in, men bevaras på ett säkert ställe, så att de inte är tillgängliga för andra. Intervjuerna kommer också att transkriberas och bevaras säkert på en dator. När projektet avslutas kommer inspelningarna att raderas.

Eftersom Massey University ligger i Nya Zeeland, kommer all information och data att överföras till Nya Zeeland. Detta kommer att ske på ett säkert sätt. Enligt EU-kommissionen kan Nya Zeeland säkerställa en adekvat skyddsnivå för personuppgifter.

Dina svar och dina resultat kommer att behandlas så att inte obehöriga kan ta del av dem.

Ansvarig för dina personuppgifter är Massey University, Nya Zeeland. Enligt EU:s dataskyddsförordning har du rätt att kostnadsfritt få ta del av de uppgifter om dig som hanteras i projektet, och vid behov få eventuella fel rättade. Du kan också begära att uppgifter om dig raderas samt att behandlingen av dina personuppgifter begränsas. Rätten till radering och till begränsning av behandling av personuppgifter gäller dock inte när uppgifterna är nödvändiga för den aktuella forskningen. Om du vill ta del av uppgifterna ska du kontakta Professor Cynthia White, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand; telefon: +646 951 6565 Email c.j.white@massey.ac.nz. Dataskyddsombud nås på Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telefon 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz. Om du är missnöjd med hur dina personuppgifter behandlas har du rätt att ge in klagomål till Integritetsskyddsmyndigheten, som är tillsynsmyndighet.

Hur får jag information om resultatet av projektet?

Du har rätt att ta del av en sammanfattning av projektet när det är färdigt, såväl som all data och information om dig som använts. Du behöver inte ta del av denna information om du inte vill. Om du vill ta del av din information eller projektsammanfattningen kan du begära denna genom att ta kontakt med Hanna Brookie, PhD Candidate, School of Humanities, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, Nya Zeeland; email Hanna.Brookie.1@uni.massey.ac.nz; telefon XXXXXXX

Deltagandet är frivilligt

Ditt deltagande är frivilligt och du kan när som helst välja att avbryta deltagandet. Om du väljer att inte delta eller vill avbryta ditt deltagande behöver du inte uppge varför, och det kommer inte heller att påverka din framtida vård eller behandling.

Om du vill avbryta ditt deltagande ska du kontakta den ansvariga för projektet (se nedan).

Ansvariga för projektet

Ansvarig för projektet är Professor Cynthia White, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand; telefon: +646 951 6565 Email c.j.white@massey.ac.nz

Den som kommer att bedriva forskningsintervjuerna är Hanna Brookie, PhD Candidate, School of Humanities, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, Nya Zeeland; email Hanna.Brookie.1@uni.massey.ac.nz; telefon XXXXXXX

Ansvarig för etikprövning på Massey University är Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telefon 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

English translation:

Language, belonging and social cohesion: A study of refugees settling in New Zealand and Sweden

Information for research participants

We would like to ask you to participate in a research project. In this document you will get information about the project and what participation will entail.

What is this project and why would you like me to participate?

This project aims to find out about the settlement process of those who have arrived in New Zealand and Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers, and particularly how they learn a new language and become part of a new society. It also aims to find out what makes a newcomer feel like they belong in a new country – and what makes them feel like they don't belong. The project is carried out as part of a PhD in Applied Linguistics, with Hanna Brookie as the PhD candidate.

[For former refugees, insert:]

We are looking for participants in [add area] who have arrived in Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers, or who had to move here because the situation in their original country was not safe. We would like to interview [insert demographic specifications, e.g. ethnicity, gender, age]. We would like to ask questions about the settlement process, and what it is like to learn a new language. We would also like to ask about what makes a newcomer feel like they belong, or not belong, in a new country. You are invited to be part of this research project if you are happy to talk about these things. You have been given this information sheet because [insert institution/person] thought you might be interested in participating.

[For language teachers, insert:]

For this part of the project we are interested in the experiences of language teachers who have worked, or are working with students who have come to Sweden as refugees or asylum seekers. We would like to speak to teachers of [insert specifications regarding ethnicity, language level, area etc.]. We would like to know more about how teachers perceive the settlement process, the challenges of language learning and what it takes for students to develop a sense of belonging in Sweden. We are inviting you to be part of this research project if you are happy to share your expertise with us. You have been given this information sheet as a result of us approaching [insert institution] about possible participants.

[For other agencies/groups, insert:]

For this part of the project we are looking for participants who are part of community groups or agencies that work with refugees in [place] at some point of their journey. We would like to know more about the existing challenges as well as what systems or processes have been put in place to facilitate settlement. We are inviting you to be part of this research project if you are happy to share your expertise with us. You have been given this information sheet as a result of us approaching [insert institution] about possible participants.

[All letters will contain the following:]

The research entity responsible for this project is Massey University, New Zealand. Research entity refers to the organisation that is responsible for the project. The application has been approved by the Swedish Ethics Review Board, and the application number is SOB 20/51.

How is the project carried out?

[For former refugees, insert:]

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I (Hanna) will arrange an interview with you. [If applicable, insert: I am planning to do group interviews, where you and some friends will talk to me together. But if you prefer, I am also happy to interview you by yourself.] The interview will probably take about half an hour to an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask you questions and listen to your stories of living in a new country. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you don't want to. If I have more questions, I may ask for a second interview, but you have the right to say no to this. If you want, you can have a family member or support person with you in the interview. The interview will be in Swedish, but if you want an interpreter I can arrange this/I will arrange an interpreter who speaks [insert language].

[For language teachers, insert:]

The project will involve written tasks and one or more interviews. The written tasks will be "narrative frames" which are sets of sentence starters that encourage you to write a short (paragraph length) narrative on a particular scenario or event. After this, you will be asked to participate in an interview. You may be asked for a follow up interview at a later date, but will have the option to decline.

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I (Hanna) will email you the (first) narrative frames in [month]. They should take approximately 30 minutes to complete. After [insert time frame] I will arrange an interview with you. The interview will probably take about half an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask you questions relating to what you wrote in the narrative, and

further questions on the same theme. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you don't want to.

[For other agencies/groups, insert:]

If you are happy to be part of the research project, I (Hanna) will arrange an initial interview with you. The interview will probably take about half an hour, and will be at a time and place that suits you. I will ask questions relating to your perception of your community, challenges to do with refugee settlement in the community, and initiatives that have helped, or could potentially help. You can choose how much you tell me, and you don't have to answer my questions if you choose not to. You may be asked for a follow up interview at a later date, but will have the option to decline.

Possible effects and risks associated with the project

This project involves asking you questions about your experiences and opinions. This can be uncomfortable for some people and some people may feel upset when they talk about their past or about difficult situations. Because of this, you are allowed to do the following if you choose to:

- bring a support person to the interview;
- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study before the interview, or ask for the recording and transcript to be deleted up to two weeks after the interview;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.

We can also provide a list of professionals in your area who you can talk to if you need help after the interview.

What will happen with my information?

The project will collect and store information about you. The only information collected and stored will be the information you choose to give. The information will be used for the research project. This means it will be used in a PhD thesis, but may also be used in academic articles and conference presentations. All information will be kept confidential. When we write about the project, we will not use your real name, so that people will not know that it is you. We will not tell other people that you were part of this project. The interviews will be recorded, but will be stored in a safe place, so that other people cannot listen to them. The interviews will also be transcribed and stored in a safe place on a computer. When the research is finished, the recordings will be deleted.

Because Massey University is in New Zealand, all data will be transferred to New Zealand. It will be transferred securely. According to the EU commission, New Zealand has an adequate level of protection for personal data.

Your name will not be used, and your participation will be confidential. Your responses will be treated so that unauthorised people will not be able to access them. Massey University is responsible for your personal data. According to EU's data protection regulation you have the right to access, without cost, the information about you that is used in the project, and if needed, have any errors corrected. You can also demand to have details about you erased and that the use of your personal data is limited. This right does not apply when this data is essential for the research.

If you want to access the data you should contact Prof Cynthia White, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand; telephone +6469516565; email c.j.white@massey.ac.nz. Responsible for protection of data is Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz. If you are unhappy about how your personal data is handled, you may lay a complaint with the Swedish Authority for Privacy Protection, which is the responsible authority.

How do I obtain information about the results of the project?

You have the right to be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded, as well as any data included about you. You are not required to access any of this information if you don't want to. If you want access to your data or the project summary, you can request this by contacting Hanna Brookie, PhD Candidate, School of Humanities, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North; email hannabrookie@yahoo.com; phone/text +6421-053 8276.

Participation is voluntary

Your participation is voluntary and you can discontinue your involvement at any time. If you choose not to participate or to discontinue your involvement, you do not have to give a reason.

If you want to discontinue, please contact the main researcher below.

Responsible for the project

Responsible for the project is Prof Cynthia White, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, New Zealand; telephone +6469516565; email c.j.white@massey.ac.nz.

The person carrying out research interviews is Hanna Brookie, PhD Candidate, School of Humanities, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North; email hannabrookie@yahoo.com; phone/text +XXXXXXXXX.

Responsible for ethics approval at Massey University is Dr Gerald Harrison, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 356 9099 x 83570, email humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz.

Appendix 3: Consent form (English)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Language, belonging and social cohesion: a study of refugees settling in Sweden and New Zealand

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read and I understand the Information Sheet, or I have had it explained to me. I have had a chance to ask questions, and they have been answered. I know I can ask more questions any time. I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time before or during the interview, and up to two weeks after the interview.

1. I agree to the interview being sound recorded.
2. I wish/do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.
3. I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
+64 6 356 9099 / massey.ac.nz

Appendix 4: Consent form (Swedish)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Språkinlärning, tillhörighet och social sammanhållning: en studie av f.d. flyktingar/invandrare bosatta i Sverige och Nya Zeeland

INTYG OM SAMTYCKE

Jag har läst och jag förstår informationsbrevet. Jag har fått forskningsprojektet förklarat för mig, mina frågor har blivit besvarade till fullo, och jag är införstådd med att jag kan ställa ytterligare frågor när som helst under deltagandet. Jag har haft tillräckligt med tid för att bestämma mig för om jag vill delta i studien och jag förstår att mitt deltagande är frivilligt och att jag kan dra mig ur innan eller under intervjun, och upp till två veckor efter intervjun.

1. Jag går med på att min intervju spelas in
2. Jag vill/vill inte att inspelningen ges till mig i slutet av projektet
3. Jag går med på att deltaga under de förutsättningar som beskrivs i informationsbrevet

Deltagares samtycke

Jag lämnar härmed samtycke att deltaga i studien.

Underskrift: _____ **Datum:** _____

Namnförtydligande: _____

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand. T +64 6 356 9099
www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix 5: Interpreter confidentiality agreement (English)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Language, belonging and social cohesion: a study of refugees settling in Sweden and New Zealand

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

I ..... (Full Name - printed)

agree to keep confidential all information concerning the project .....

.....

..... (Title of Project).

I will not retain or copy any information involving the project, and I will not disclose any information shared by participants in this project.

Signature: ..... **Date:** .....

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand
+64 6 356 9099 | massey.ac.nz

Appendix 6: Interpreter confidentiality agreement (Swedish)

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES
AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
TE KURA PŪKENGA TANGATA

Språkinlärning, tillhörighet och social sammanhållning: en studie av f.d. flyktingar/invandrare bosatta i Sverige och Nya Zeeland

SEKRETESSAVTAL

Jag ..... (fullständigt namn)

intygar härmed att jag kommer att upprätthålla sekretess vad gäller all information i följande projekt:

.....

.....

..... (Title of Project).

Jag kommer inte att behålla eller kopiera någon information gällande projektet, och jag kommer inte att delge någon information som lämnats av deltagarna i projektet.

Underskrift: _____ **Datum:** _____

Te Kunenga
ki Pūrehuroa

Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office
Private Bag 11222, Palmerston North 4442, New Zealand. T +64 6 356 9099
www.massey.ac.nz

Appendix 7: Interview guide for language teachers

Additional questions will be based on answers given in the narrative frames and the context of the teachers.[6]

1. Background

- Can you describe in more detail what classes you teach?
- Is there a particular level you engage more with?
- What motivated you to choose this job?
- What is the best thing about this job?
- What is the most frustrating thing?

2. Teaching strategies

- How do you determine what your learners need to learn?
- How does this affect how you plan your lessons?
- How do you ensure that what you teach is anchored in real life needs and experiences?
- To what extent do you have support to communicate with the learners in their first language (e.g. interpreters etc.)?
- How is it different teaching students with no previous literacy compared to those with literacy and schooling in their own language?
- How do you know that your student(s) are progressing?

3. Refugee background learners

- Are there differences between teaching refugee students and teaching non-refugee students?
- Is there a different emotional dimension to teaching refugee students? If so, can you tell me about this?
- Have you ever had a lesson that was impacted by the trauma/stress one of the students were carrying?

[6] Narrative frames were not used for all language teachers. See section 2.3.6.

- How do you know if conflicts or difficult situations are caused by a traumatic past or can be attributed to other factors?
- Do you get any sense of how much of their stress is due to the refugee past, how much is due to events in their home country, and how much is due to the settlement process?

4. Engagement in society

- What are your long term hopes for your learner(s)
- How do you promote independence/self-sufficiency?
- Do you get a sense of how easy it is for your students to access the services they need in society? Is that something you help students with?
- Are there other things that you do to help learners understand how things work here?
- Do you get any sense that your students experience racism? Is this something you feel comfortable addressing?
- Do they generally have a strong connection to their own ethnic community? Do you think that helps or hinders in terms of feeling at home here?
- Do they generally have a strong connection to family or community back home? Do you think that helps or hinders in terms of feeling at home here?

5. Using language

- Do you know much about their language practices outside of class, what languages they use and when?
- Do you know much about to what extent your students use English/Swedish outside the classroom? Is this a frustration for you?
- What are some of the main problems your students face in terms of practical language use (for example needing to speak to a doctor)? What strategies do they have to deal with these? How would you like them to deal with them?

6. Final questions

- What advice would you give a brand-new teacher who was taking on a role like yours?

- If you had a platform where you could address society and government institutions in New Zealand/Sweden, what are some things you would like them to understand about your learners and the work you do with them? [7]

[7]For Swedish language teachers, additional questions were added to discuss the political climate in Sweden as many of the interviews occurred soon after the Swedish elections.

Appendix 8: Interview guide for settlement support workers

The schedule will be adapted to fit situations and participants and refined throughout the process.

1. **General**
    a. Can you tell me about refugee settlement in [area]?
        i. How does it work?
        ii. How many settle here?
        iii. Who are the main people involved in settlement?

2. **Social cohesion**
    a. Can you tell me about how you would describe [area] as a community? (Close-knit/open/diverse…)
    b. In your opinion, what is the impact on the community of refugees settling here?
    c. What are the main steps the community can take in order to make the process of settlement work well for everyone?
    d. What is the role of your group/agency in this process?
    e. Are there initiatives that have been particularly successful? Why?
    f. Are there things that could be done better? Why?

3. **Belonging**
    a. What do you think is required to ensure that refugees feel like they belong and "fit in" in the community?
    b. Whose responsibility is it to make sure this happens?
    c. How would you know that someone feels a sense of belonging or a sense of being at home here? What are the signs?

4. **Language**
    a. What would you say is the role of language in the settlement process?
    b. How important is it to speak English/Swedish well in order to fit in?
    c. What level of English/Swedish do you think a newcomer needs to gain in order to settle well?
    d. Whose responsibility is this?

e. Are you aware of many languages other than English/Swedish spoken in the community?

5. Conclusion

a. Is there anything that you would like to add?

b. *Thank participant for their time, and ensure that they have my contact details in case they have things that they would like to add.*

Appendix 9: Interview guide for refugee-background participants

1. **Settlement journey**
    a. How long have you been in New Zealand/Sweden?
    b. Where were you born?
    c. Can you tell me your story about how you left your country and then came to New Zealand/Sweden?
        i. Why did you leave your country of birth?
        ii. Did you choose which country to settle in? Why did you choose it?
        iii. Did you arrive by yourself? Who arrived with you?
    d. Can you tell me about when you arrived in New Zealand/Sweden?
        i. How did you feel?
    e. What were the biggest difficulties when you first came?
        i. How did you overcome these?
        ii. Who helped you?
    f. What were some things that made you feel at home when you first came?

2. **Belonging**
    a. Can you tell me what other countries you have lived in?
        i. How do feel about that country/those countries?
    b. If I ask you what your home country is, what would your answer be?
        i. Do you think this may change?
    c. So, if we look at New Zealand/Sweden (current country), do you feel that you belong?
        i. Why?
        ii. Are there things that make you feel that you belong?
        iii. Are there things that make you feel that you don't belong?
    d. What things have you done to make this feel like your home?
    e. Was there a particular moment when you began to feel like you belonged or when New Zealand/Sweden started feeling like home?
        i. When?
        ii. What happened?

iii. What did you do?

f. Can you describe New Zealand/Swedish society to me?
    i. Is it a society that is easy to "fit into"?
    ii. What are some things that make it difficult to belong?
    iii. What are the attitudes towards newcomers like?
    iv. Do you think there is discrimination or racism?
        1. How much does this affect your daily life?
    v. Do you think it is a society that accepts differences?

3. Family ties

a. Can you tell me about your family? What family do you have here, and where are other family members?
b. How did you end up in different places?
c. How you keep connected as a family?
d. Do you have plans for meeting/reuniting?
e. What language(s) do you use when you talk as a family?
f. Do you think Covid has affected your chance of seeing your family or how you feel about being away from them?

4. Language learning

a. What languages did you speak when you first arrived?
b. Did you speak English/Swedish at all?
c. Can you tell me about learning the language?
    i. Can you describe the learning context?
    ii. How long did it take/how long have you been studying?
    iii. Do you feel happy about the level you have achieved now?
d. What is the greatest difficulty with learning English/Swedish?
e. To what extent/in which contexts do you use English/Swedish?
f. To what extent do you still use you other language(s)? What do you use them for?
g. What do you do when you need to speak to someone and you don't have enough English/Swedish? (e.g. doctor, agencies)

5. Education and employment (fill in any gaps in knowledge – some will have been addressed already)

a. What was your educational background before you arrived?
b. Have you done any study other than language study in New Zealand/Sweden?

c. Are you planning on doing any (more)?
d. What jobs did you have before coming here?
e. What jobs have you done since arriving?
f. What are your dreams for the future?

6. Advice

a. What do you think is the most important things for refugees coming to New Zealand/Sweden to know?
b. What are some things that you wish people in New Zealand/Sweden could understand?
c. I am going to write about refugees settling in New Zealand/Sweden. What do you think is important for me to write about?[8]

7. Conclusion

a. Is there anything that you would like to add?
b. *Thank participant for their time, and ensure that they have my contact details in case they have things that they would like to add.*

[8] Additional questions were asked of refugee-background participants in Sweden regarding the election. This included if they had voted/if they could vote and how they felt about the success of the nationalist party.

Appendix 10: Narrative frames

Narrative frames

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Below are four "narrative frames", each frame dealing with a different issue or situation. Please complete the narrative frames as well as you can. The narrative frames include sentence starters which are intended to act as prompts to help you write a series of short narratives about your practices, beliefs and opinions. Please extend the answers as far as possible and add details as needed. If the sentence starters do not seem compatible with your practice or thoughts, please provide an alternative explanation. All responses will of course be treated confidentially.

You can use an electronic copy and fill in the frames, or write on a separate piece of paper.

Background and context

Before starting the narrative frames, please write a few sentences to explain what level you teach, what kind of institution, who your student(s) is/are, how long you have been teaching and what training you have.

Narrative frame 1: Teaching refugee background students

The greatest challenge with teaching refugee background students is… *because…*

I remember one challenging day when…

I think this happened because…

I decided to… *because…*

Afterwards I felt…

Narrative frame 2: Our community

Overall I think/I don't think my students find our community to be a welcoming and inclusive place.

As an example, one student had the following experience:

On this particular day, the student….

The student felt… *and responded by….*

I think this event happened because….

When the student told me, I felt… *and I chose to…*

Narrative frame 3: Language learning

The greatest challenge my students face in terms of language learning is… *because…*

As a teacher, I try to address this by…

During one lesson, for example, we… *Then we….*

I felt that this was effective because…

Overall I feel that the teaching they receive from us is sufficient/insufficient for their needs because…

Narrative frame 4: Feeling at home

I often/sometimes try to assist students feel more at home in New Zealand/Sweden.

I do this by…

One good example of this is a lesson we did on…

During the lesson, we…

This seemed beneficial/not beneficial for students because…

In my opinion, for students to feel at home in New Zealand/Sweden, it is important that…

Further comments

If you have any further comments related to any of the above, please feel free to write here, unrestricted by sentence starters:

Appendix 11: Contribution statements

This appendix contains copies of the contribution statements for the published chapters (Chapters 3-9).

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.

Name of candidate:	Hanna Lena Katrin Svensson
Name/title of Primary Supervisor:	Professor Cynthia White
In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 3

Please select one of the following three options:

(●) The manuscript/published work is published or in press

- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2024). Language dynamics and agency in multilingual research interviews. International Journal of Applied Linguistics, 34(3), 1058–1073. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijal.12555 Accepted: 16 February 2024.

( ) The manuscript is currently under review for publication – please indicate:

- The name of the journal:

- The percentage of the manuscript/published work that was contributed by the candidate: 100.00

- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the manuscript/published work:

The candidate conceptualised the study, carried out the fieldwork, analysed results and wrote the article. Supervisors provided advice and guidance.

( ) It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal

Candidate's Signature:	c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Digitally signed by c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Date: 2024.08.09 15:33:50 +12'00'
Date:	09-Aug-2024
Primary Supervisor's Signature:	Professor Cynthia White Digitally signed by Professor Cynthia White DN: cn=Professor Cynthia White, c=NZ, o=Massey University, ou=Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office, College of Humanities & Social Sciences, email=c.j.white@massey.ac.nz Date: 2024.08.12 13:06:04 +12'00'
Date:	12-Aug-2024

This form should appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as a manuscript/ publication or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis.

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UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

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STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the *Statement of Originality*.

Name of candidate:	Hanna Lena Katrin Svensson
Name/title of Primary Supervisor:	Professor Cynthia White
In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 4

Please select one of the following three options:

(●) The manuscript/published work is published or in press

- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2023). "We Kiss Everyone's Hands to Get a Permanent Job, but Where Is It?": The Failure of the Social Inclusion Narrative for Refugees. Social Inclusion, 11(4), 13-23. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v11i4.6944. Accepted: 7 June 2023

( ) The manuscript is currently under review for publication – please indicate:

- The name of the journal:

- The percentage of the manuscript/published work that was contributed by the candidate: 100.00

- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the manuscript/published work:

The candidate conceptualised the study, carried out the fieldwork, analysed results and wrote the article. Supervisors provided advice and guidance.

( ) It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal

Candidate's Signature:	c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Digitally signed by c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Date: 2024.07.14 20:10:28 +12'00'
Date:	14-Jul-2024
Primary Supervisor's Signature:	Professor Cynthia White Digitally signed by Professor Cynthia White DN: cn=Professor Cynthia White, c=NZ, o=Massey University, ou=Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office: College of Humanities & Social Sciences, email=c.j.white@massey.ac.nz Date: 2024.07.15 09:46:55 +12'00'
Date:	15-Jul-2024

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MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.

Name of candidate:	Hanna Lena Katrin Svensson
Name/title of Primary Supervisor:	Professor Cynthia White
In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 5

Please select one of the following three options:

(●) The manuscript/published work is published or in press

- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2024). Language learning, gender and education: Understanding the agency and affordances of refugee-background women with emergent literacy. Linguistics and Education, 81, 1-11. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.linged.2024.101309. Accepted: 15 May 2024

( ) The manuscript is currently under review for publication – please indicate:

- The name of the journal:

- The percentage of the manuscript/published work that was contributed by the candidate: 100.00

- Describe the contribution that the candidate has made to the manuscript/published work:

The candidate conceptualised the study, carried out the fieldwork, analysed results and wrote the article. Supervisors provided advice and guidance.

( ) It is intended that the manuscript will be published, but it has not yet been submitted to a journal

Candidate's Signature:	c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Digitally signed by c6788c1e-5a63-460f-9f10-6f8f2a15f853 Date: 2024.07.14 20:14:37 +12'00'
Date:	14-Jul-2024
Primary Supervisor's Signature:	Professor Cynthia White Digitally signed by Professor Cynthia White DN: cn=Professor Cynthia White, c=NZ, o=Massey University, ou=Pro Vice-Chancellor's Office, College of Humanities & Social Sciences, email=c.j.white@massey.ac.nz Date: 2024.07.15 09:47:24 +12'00'
Date:	15-Jul-2024

This form should appear at the end of each thesis chapter/section/appendix submitted as a manuscript/ publication or collected as an appendix at the end of the thesis.

MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

GRADUATE RESEARCH SCHOOL

STATEMENT OF CONTRIBUTION
DOCTORATE WITH PUBLICATIONS/MANUSCRIPTS

We, the candidate and the candidate's Primary Supervisor, certify that all co-authors have consented to their work being included in the thesis and they have accepted the candidate's contribution as indicated below in the Statement of Originality.

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In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 6

Please select one of the following three options:

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- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2023). Language dimensions of social cohesion: the significance of linguistic inequalities in the context of refugee settlement. Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development, 1-14. https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2023.2251945. Accepted: 21 August 2023.

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In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 7

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- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2024). Contested belonging in an election year: The case of refugees living in Sweden. Journal of Intercultural Studies, 45(4), 706–721. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2024.2325955. Accepted: 6 February 2024.

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In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 8

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- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2024). Chronotopes of home and dislocation: recognising the lived experiences of refugees. Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2403549

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In which chapter is the manuscript /published work:	Chapter 9

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- Please provide the full reference of the Research Output:

Svensson, H. (2024). Transnational belonging and disrupted care relationships. Journal of refugee studies. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/feae070 Accepted: 30 August 2024

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