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**Stories of Love and Becoming: Women's Experiences of Migration and Everyday
Life in Aotearoa**

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Abstract

Colonialism, patriarchy and neoliberalism intersect with race and gender to produce partial configurations of ethnic migrant women as vulnerable and deficient, which research then attends to, thus reproducing and reinforcing that migrant women are lacking. However, within the spaces of everyday life, migrant women's experiences, including my own, contested these dominant narratives. This represented a gap between research and practice, and raised questions about what could become known if we attended to the power relations that form the conditions of migrant women's everyday lives. The aim of my research was to share migrant women's stories, so that in and through their multiple and diverse locations, they could speak into the gap and tell about the meaning that difference makes in their everyday lives. To do difference differently, I conceptualised women's stories as gifts, which required me to respond in responsible ways. Hearing responsibly enabled me to hear the sticky moments and relationships of difference present in women's lives, and to reimagine experiences of migration and everyday life in ways that showed the vitalities and joys of difference. What is represented in this research is a rearticulation of the meaning(s) of difference(s) that I became enabled to hear through my conversations with eight ethnic migrant women. By hearing responsibly, women's differences became reimaged as resistances, new narratives of diversity, stories of potentials and stories of affirming love. Through my analysis, possibilities are opened for understanding migrant women's differences as expressed in their daily lives in celebratory and unbounded ways.

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Chapter 1: My Story

My story has multiple migrations. While I am Indian, I have never lived there. My parents were living in the United Arab Emirates when I was born and so that is where I grew up. And then before my seventeenth birthday, we decided to move as a family to Aotearoa New Zealand. I have been here ever since.

While I have never really thought of myself as an “ethnic migrant woman”, I have come to recognise that this is what mainstream society understands about me. For example, the Ministry for Ethnic Communities (2022) defines ethnic communities as including anyone who identifies their ethnicity as African, Asian, Continental European, Latin-American and Middle Eastern. Since I am categorised as “Asian”, I am recognised in Aotearoa as “ethnic”. Similarly, there is something about being brown skinned and having a different accent which provokes people to constantly question my belonging, “*where are you from*”, and which, in turn, requires me to justify who I am, where I am “*really*” from, and how I got here.

These experiences of difference flow in and through other stories of misrecognition. As an Indian migrant woman, the stories told about me seem to centre around whether I am proficient in English, whether I was or am to be “married off”, and whether I am culturally backward. A simple search of research in Aotearoa that focusses on Indian migrant women is dominated with stories of forced marriage and domestic violence. However, none of these stories represent me or my life. For me, while I am Indian, I have never lived there. I call the United Arab Emirates my former home. And I call Aotearoa home now. I am Catholic, University-educated with multiple degrees, single, childless and so on. The relational flows in and through my multiple locations mean I experience difference differently. And my understandings about what it means to be a migrant woman in Aotearoa do not fit within the dominant stories.

Over time, I came to realise that these dominant narratives were not something that were applied exclusively to me. Migrant women friends had similar stories and experiences about how other people understood them. Through these shared meanings, I began to recognise how our experience of location through the deficit representation of “ethnic migrant woman” was producing and reproducing us together as “other”. And yet, within the spaces of our everyday lives, our experiences contested these narratives. To me, this represented a gap in research and practice.

Subsequently, a hugely significant moment occurred when I was taking a postgraduate paper in psychology. In what was supposed to be a discussion about the clinical assessment of a white man, who was married to a Filipino woman, I encountered the comment that in marrying this woman, the man must like “submissive” women. This statement carried with it the understanding that within the knowledge economy, psychology was also located in the categorisation and measurement of sameness and difference, and by labelling the Filipino woman as “submissive”, it too was reproducing the dominant story about the deficits of difference. As the enactment of the “normalcy” of such knowledge flowed through my body as anger, I felt a responsibility to use my location as a psychology student to transform these western knowledge claims.

It is for these reasons that I chose to ask “ethnic migrant women” to share stories about their migrations, their everyday lives, and their experiences for my research. By sharing our stories, situated in and through our multiple and diverse locations, we can speak into the gap. We can tell about our understandings of difference in ways that not only resist dominant narratives, but also celebrate its possibilities. We can tell about the vitality of difference, and all the love and joy that it brings to us and our lives.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What We Know and How We Know About Migrant Women

When I thought about the assumptions that people make about me as an ethnic migrant woman, and about other ethnic migrant women, it made me want to understand what is known and what is told about ethnic migrant women in the literature. In this chapter, I set out how knowledge has produced configurations of migrant women as deficient and vulnerable. I then discuss some of the challenges that have been made to these dominant understandings. Finally, I outline some possibilities for changing how we know, and therefore what can become known, about migrant women and their potentials as expressed in their daily lives.

When I turned to the literature on ethnic migrant women, what emerged were representations of women who were traditional, inferior, backward or submissive. These configurations create a figure with a particular kind of vulnerability that the research then attended to, thus reproducing and reinforcing that migrant women are deficient. For instance, authors have written about domestic violence among Asian and Indian immigrant women (Choi & Byoun, 2014; Natarajan, 2007; Somasekhar et al., 2020), how migration trajectories for Chinese women can differ according to their social location (Lee et al., 2002), the gendered impact of women's immigration and adjustment (Yakushko & Morgan-Consoli, 2014), and how ethnic women struggle to fit within western organisations (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006).

Taking a different approach, Ålund (1988) argues that dominant stories of victimisation limit migrant women's potentials as expressed in their everyday lives. She talks about the Swedish pyramid and how immigrant ethnic women occupy the lowest and largest tier with the least power and resources on account of their "triple oppression" of gender, class and ethnicity. However, while Ålund (1988) recognises the multiple layers of oppression, she resists problematising these women. Her research recognises the relationality between women's oppressions, and how these can produce problem-centred ideologies and conceal potentials.

Ålund's (1988) research helped me to think about how all of us are situated within larger historical, cultural, and socio-political narratives so that the kinds of interactions and experiences we have depends on where we are socially located. Meanings and interpretations of experiences must be understood with respect to the systems of power

that are operating. In other words, knowledge is linked to power, and power is exercised through social relationships (Ålund, 1988; Dill & Kohlman, 2012). If we want to understand how explanations of migrant women have been produced, and continue to be reproduced, then we must first talk about power relations such as colonisation, gender and race.

In Aotearoa New Zealand, while colonisation has resulted in the loss of land, lives, language, culture and knowledge, and affected all Māori (Groot et al., 2018; Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019), it is the experiences of mana wāhine that illustrate how the multiple forces of colonialism, racism and sexism intersect and overlap to produce and reproduce deficit-based assumptions and stories about who Māori women are and what they represent (Connor, 1997; Mikaere, 1999; Waitere & Johnston, 2009). The processes of colonisation not only rendered white imagination as the norm, but brutally defended it so that in departing from this standard, all Māori were positioned as inferior, lacking and deficient when compared to Eurocentric norms (Groot et al., 2018; Waitoki, 2019). And as Māori women, mana wāhine were defined in and through their difference to men (Connor, 1997; Mikaere, 1999; Waitere & Johnston, 2009;).

Pre-colonisation, women's roles were determined by iwi, hapu and whānau, they owned land, and they had the support of their whānau in daily life (Mikaere, 1999). However, this was at odds with the Christian values of the colonisers, which positioned men as intellectually and morally superior, and confined women to the roles of “wife, mother and protector of moral values” (Connor, 1997, p. 64). As a result, various policies such as requirements for legal marriages and changes to land ownership were forcibly imposed by the colonisers. This was done in an effort to prescribe the autonomy of Māori women, and also pressure them into fulfilling their roles of housewife and mother within a nuclear family. The relationship between processes of colonisation and patriarchy produced the conditions of racialised and gendered subservience and dependence (Connor, 1997; Mikaere, 1999). Beliefs about the natural promiscuity of Māori women meant that they were also frequently constructed as “victims” trapped within a primitive society and in need of “saving”. Transformation was legitimated as only being possible through assimilation into settler colonial culture and Christianity within the colonisation process (Connor, 1997). Thus, Māori women were defined as “different” and “other” in relation to both Pākehā men and women, as well as Māori men, making their location particularly problematical (Mikaere, 1999; Waitere & Johnston, 2009).

Similar colonialist and Christian ideologies were inflicted on indigenous people in other parts of the world (Ciofalo et al., 2022). In a postcolonial context, the “coloniality of power” - the “being, knowing, and feeling” that maintains the difference between westerners as superior and indigenous peoples as primitive endures today (Ciofalo et al., 2022, p. 284). The engagement in the ongoing global and local legacy of subjugating indigenous people continues through Eurocentrism, where techniques of subjectification to dominant western ideologies of individualism, repeated through neoliberal forms of governmentality, is intimately connected to our specific places in postcolonialism (Coombes et al., 2016). As recently as 2021, the Waitangi Tribunal’s inquiry into Oranga Tamariki accepted that “epistemological racism” is what has driven the Crown’s policies of assimilation in Aotearoa New Zealand, and that in privileging Pākehā language and culture, Māori knowledge has been defined as “other”. Harmful practices are still being inflicted on and against Māori today (Waitangi Tribunal, 2021, p. 50).

These same power relationships of colonisation, globalisation and westernisation also influence understandings of ethnic migrants who immigrate to western countries (Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019; Rata, 2020; Thiruselvam, 2019). Thiruselvam (2019) argues that within narrative configurations of migrants, the figures of the “grateful refugee” or the “model minority” emerge and are circulated as the “right” kind of refugee to which migrants must strive to become in order to be deemed worthy. Migrants are expected to be grateful to their host nation, to exceed in the areas of education, family, and socioeconomic life, and to be upstanding civilians, but measured against colonialist, capitalist and patriarchal standards. And where there is failure to achieve good citizenship, neoliberalism intensifies colonisation through individual responsibility so that migrants become the “problem” (Rata, 2020). In other work, Cassim et al. (in press) and Waitoki (2019) have discussed the parallels between the processes of othering of Muslims and what Māori have experienced. Muslims disrupt the status quo because of their ethnicity, culture, appearance, clothing, religion and values. And because these differences depart from the standard of white culture, Muslims are marked as other and become imbued with deficits of barbarism and terrorism. Postcolonialism continues the relationships that normalise whiteness (Ciofalo et al., 2022).

Psychological knowledge production is not exempt from these relationships of sameness and difference. As a discipline, psychology subjects individuals to processes of categorisation and normalisation legitimated through neoliberal and Eurocentric

relationships, thereby reinforcing and reproducing what is “normal” and what should be aspired to, while simultaneously problematising those who are different (Coombes et al., 2016). By dislocating migrant women from their political, socio-cultural and everyday realities, they become fixed as objects of otherness, and through the “spectacle of the other”, configured as victims in need of saving (Coombes et al., 2016; Sanberg & Janssen, 2018). When these configurations assume legitimacy, through the “white imagination” of psychology, it can be understood as a form of “gaslighting” because it invalidates and pathologises the experiences of those who occupy the space of the other (Thiruselvam, 2019).

When thinking about what we know about migrant women and how we know about them, the literature demonstrates that knowledge is produced as a result of power relations and is not outside them. Colonialism, patriarchy and neoliberalism intersect with race and gender to produce partial configurations of migrant women as vulnerable and deficient, and becomes legitimated through western institutions, including psychology. This legitimation means that other ways of knowing are denied and invalidated. Through this process of understanding, I began to consider what could become known if we did pay attention to the relations of power that form the conditions of everyday life. And thinking with Ålund (1988), I argue that if we move towards a decolonised approach to knowledge, we may become enabled to see the potentials of migrant women as articulated in their everyday realities.

Challenges to Dominant Knowledge Production and Understandings

Indigenous psychologies provide some openings to challenge the Eurocentric production of knowledge about migrant women. Indigenous psychologies work to deconstruct and disassemble psychological theories, research and practices based on colonialist and western scientific paradigms by calling for pluriversal epistemologies, ontologies and knowledges that attend to everyday lives as textured by our geopolitical and social locations and relations (Cassim, 2018; Ciofalo et al., 2022; Coombes et al., 2016; Groot et al., 2018).

As an example, Cassim (2018) talks about using participatory and culturally appropriate research practices that are responsive to participants’ histories, cultures and world views. In doing research with Sri Lankan communities, she discusses how establishing a relationship with participants and having an understanding of their ways of being can

enable alternative perspectives about grief and loss to become known in ways that are contextually relevant, and more dynamic, opening spaces for potentials rather than western deficit-based frameworks. Similarly, Pe-Pua (2006) discusses using indigenous Filipino methods and concepts to produce a psychology that is more appropriate and relevant to Filipinos. She advocates for a production of psychological knowledge which both acknowledges the humanness of people and responds to their historical and socio-cultural realities. Her approach speaks to the locality and specificity of knowledge, that not only avoids critical misunderstandings, but also offers opportunities for other understandings of indigenous Filipinos. In Aotearoa, Waitere and Johnston (2009) call for institutions and practices that recognise, reinforce and support the “culturalness” (p. 28) of being *mana wāhine* because without taking into consideration the specificities of their political, social, historical and cultural contexts and values, any knowledge about *mana wāhine* will always be delimited and incomplete. Collectively, these authors demonstrate that by taking up a decolonising approach that attends to people’s lived realities and relational contexts through the perspectives of the other, there is emancipatory potential in what can become known through attending to difference.

If we can revel in difference, then perhaps here, intersectionality can also open space for us to examine the idea of categorisation as it attends to the multiple relationships that texture everyday lives. Intersectionality calls us to challenge the very idea of categories because women’s experiences can never be explained by reference to only one category, for example race, without also referencing other categories such as gender, class, ethnicity and so on – the implied “etc” highlighting the irrationality and impossibility of any attempt to capture all power relations that may be operating at any given time (Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Salem, 2018; Shields, 2008). Further, the mechanisms through which any particular category is measured, and the meanings that the differences make in material life, is unique because women can live in and through potentially infinite locations and interlocking relations, with multiple, diverse, conflicting, complementary and partial possibilities (Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012; Salem, 2018).

Intersectionality then has radical potential because it not only resists any catch-all approach to women’s experiences, but it invokes us to pay attention to the plurality, partiality and dynamism of women’s relations and experiences. It invites us to understand experiences from women’s situated perspectives with all its messiness and muddiness,

and opens up spaces to imagine other understandings of women in ways that resist boundaries and transform what we mean by difference (Salem, 2018; Shields, 2008; Waitere & Johnston, 2009).

In the movement toward understanding the situatedness of stories of migrant women, some research has begun to listen to women's stories of resistance to patriarchal and oppressive power relations as they engaged in work as a process of empowerment. For example, Al-Dajani and Marlow (2013) show how within an environment of patriarchy and social and political disadvantage, displaced Palestinian women operating home-based enterprises were able to forge a “feminised space” that enhanced their personal and economic status, and contributed to wider communal wellbeing. Erman et al. (2002) illustrates how, within the context of poverty and traditional cultural norms that place men as the “head” of the family, rural-to-urban Turkish migrant women’s engagement in money-earning activities resulted in them being able to contribute to and improve their household. Together this research highlights how women’s lived experiences of working and earning income, embedded within patriarchal and socio-cultural norms, generated feelings of empowerment. Similar research where migrant women engaged in different and subtle strategies to challenge the traditional roles of men and women to transform their lives while also navigating patriarchal, social and cultural pressures can be seen in research done by Çaro et al. (2012), Ehrkamp (2013) and Xhaho et al. (2021).

What is different is that these authors centre migrant women within the conditions of their everyday lives. This means that while the dominant stories might, from the outside, look like narratives of submission and victimisation, when understood from migrant women’s perspectives, they show how women improve their conditions and become enabled to resist oppression. These are examples of how when we decolonise western knowledge claims, and listen to the voices of the other, we open spaces to hear the meanings that differences make in migrant women’s lives.

Indigenous psychologies and intersectionality theory provide possibilities for doing difference differently. By attending to the social, cultural and material conditions of women’s everyday lives, and hearing women’s unique and situated standpoints, the partiality and multiplicity of women’s voices can produce new knowledges that can be told into the gaps. And this in turn has the potential to enable new configurations about migrant women to become known.

Changing the Narratives about Migrant Women

Changing the narratives that hold dominant representations of migrant women in place means changing how we know to enable possibilities for what can become known. This means changing our relationship with the other so that we interrogate taken-for-granted western assumptions and ways of doing research, and actively engage in the particularities of women's socio-cultural, political and historical realities to understand how they intersect and interact to produce meaning (Coombes et al., 2016; Dill & Kohlman, 2012; Salem, 2018; Waitere & Johnston, 2009). To change the narratives, we need to create spaces to enable the articulation of experiences through the knowledge of migrant women.

In their work, Pio and Essers (2014), attending to transnational and migrant histories, enables an understanding of how migrant women negotiate power relationships as sites of resistance. These authors draw on transnational feminist perspectives and used life story narratives to open up spaces for other interpretations of patriarchy that were less oppressive. In their research, they showed how migrant women strategically resisted and reinterpreted patriarchal norms so that it became a source of strength and security, which enabled them to be successful at work. In her research, Al Wazni (2015) interviewed Muslim women to gain their perspectives on their voluntary wearing of the hijab. These women challenged the dominant western story of the hijab as a symbol of patriarchy and oppression by articulating how practicing hijab enabled them to have control over their physical body within power relations that objectified, sexualised and exploited women. Through these understandings, wearing the hijab became transformed into an avenue for women's liberation and protection.

Collectively, these authors show that by creating spaces to hear migrant women's voices, we can change the narratives about migrant women. This is because through women's articulation of their understandings, we become enabled to see how women negotiate and resist social and political relations to create alternative meanings of their experiences. And as women move in and through multiple locations and shifting power relations, the partiality of their subjectivities mean that their understandings become dynamic, complex and pluralistic in ways that destabilise boundaries and generate new knowledges and possibilities.

In conclusion, after reviewing the literature, including the potentials for how other understandings of migrant women can become known, the aim of my project is to produce

counter narratives of women's experiences of migration and everyday life in Aotearoa. From women's diverse and situated standpoints, there is potential to generate multiple and different understandings of migrant women, because of the multiple and different relationships that migrant women live in and through, when negotiating the meanings of their experiences. By creating spaces for the articulation of women's knowledges, through attending to the conditions of their everyday lives, we can open up possibilities for understanding difference in ways that not only challenge dominant narratives, but also reimagine its meanings in more joyful and positive ways. In the next section, I will discuss my methodology.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Doing Difference Differently

Having worked through the literature, I began to re-imagine another way of doing difference differently. I thought of my own everyday relationships and how I relate to other migrant women, and how they relate to me. When women tell me about their lives and share their stories, I hold respect for them and for what they have to say. And having this respect for women means they trust me with whatever they wish to share because they know I will respond in ways that attend to them and their experiences - I will laugh with them, cry with them, care for them or be angry with them. And it is through these empathetic collaborations that we are able to figure out what particular experiences mean for them. These reflections moved me to think about how I could incorporate what I do in my everyday life into the research process so that I could become attuned not only to experiences of difference, but also the meaning it makes in women's everyday lives.

Borrowing from Hydén (2014), I begin with the premise that “human beings are constructed by stories and are storytellers by nature” (p. 798). We all live in and through stories to make meaning of ourselves and our lives, and who we are becoming (Clandinin, 2013; Woodiwiss, 2017). However, we tell different stories, at different times, to different people, and for different reasons (Woodiwiss, 2017). Thinking with stories then encourages us to think relationally; about why we tell different stories, about who we tell our stories to, and about what we tell in our stories (Clandinin, 2013; Clandinin et al., 2018; Woodiwiss, 2017). Relationality enables us to see the uniqueness and partiality of each migrant woman's experience as their stories are connected to the contexts, times and relationships within which their particular experiences are “constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted” (Clandinin et al., 2018, p. 17) and embodied personally. Storytelling opens up the possibilities of multiple stories of women's lives, resisting the idea of a singular story (Fine, 2017).

Storytelling also helps us attend to intersectionality. By focussing on how women's experiences are shaped by time and place, and by the personal and the social, there is a complexity of power relations that resists any neoliberal temptation to categorise and homogenise (Hesse-Bibber & Piatelli, 2012; Salem, 2018). By centring difference, storytelling opens up numerous possibilities for how and what women may know, experience, and therefore tell because power is exercised through social relationships,

and women's social locations can be multiple and infinite in their intersections (Salem, 2018). This creates a radical re-imagining of what can become known because it becomes impossible to generalise, reduce, confine or divide women's experiences.

As a process ontology to draw from, the multiplicity, relationality and partiality evoked by storytelling has the potential to dismantle boundaries. Importantly, it also encourages us to go beyond a "simplistic empathy with difference" (Coombes et al., 2016, p. 446) because it induces us to examine how within relationships of space and place, women negotiate the meanings of differences in their everyday life through their diversities. And so instead of holding on to both ends of the pole of sameness and difference, simultaneously or alternatively, storytelling helps us to climb by opening a new space for women to speak to, and through, their difference.

In characterising storytelling and stories as spaces which can open up multiple and different understandings about migrant women, I began to think about listening. As Waitere and Johnston (2009) have articulated in the context of Māori women, there is a distinction between listening and hearing. Listening can be considered a bodily process, "the amalgam of body fluid and tissue" to detect sound (Waitere & Johnston, 2009, p. 14). In this respect, we have already listened to migrant women's stories and documented a singular account of their lives. To *hear* migrant women, we must actively engage in the relational conditions through which they speak. This means negotiating through the spaces within which power relations operate to provoke a resonance or dissonance in the listener (Waitere & Johnston, 2009). So, thinking with Waitere and Johnston (2009), to enable the *hearing* of migrant women through storytelling, I need to move people to travel to migrant women's worlds and to come into relation with migrant women's lived experiences. *Hearing* becomes a responsible response that enables the possibilities for imagining the vitality of difference (Haraway, 1988).

To hear responsibly, I turned to Oakley (2016). Thinking with her, I conceptualise women's stories as gifts of their time and understandings. And by accepting women's gifts, I have to accept responsibility for my participation in the storytelling relationship, and for my participation in other relationships, including how I produce knowledge. I argue that the gift relationship is a human and responsible response to the other.

This notion of a gift relationship generates the intimacy that is required for participants to trust me with the stories of their lives. It means that I bring respect and an empathy

for whatever women wish to share with me and they trust that I will respond in dignified ways to their diversities as we try to make sense together of their experiences. Having a dignified response means to listen past the dominant narratives of cognitive capitalism so that there is a becoming that enables me to hear the “sticky” moments and relationships of difference present in migrant women’s lives. When I talk about “sticky” moments and relationships, I am referring to those stories that are “wonder-filled, and specifically affective” (Lee et al., 2021, p. 276) and which evoke us to feel and think and experience instances of empathetic significance. These may be moments in women’s everyday lives that stick with us in impactful ways because they awaken our curiosity, produce joy, cause us to cry or infuse us with love. And by being able to trace these “sticky” interactions as they become known through the gift relationship, we can open up the possibilities for hearing because our participation becomes an opportunity to rearticulate those experiences of migration and everyday life in ways which disrupt dominant stories, and which show the joy and potentials of diversity.

So my methodology is about the process of storytelling as an ethical encounter. Through the concept of the gift relationship, we can become enabled to hear the “sticky” moments and relationships of difference present in migrant women’s lives. And by tracing these moments and relationships, possibilities are opened to then reimagine the vitality of difference in more positive and potentialising ways. This is how we can move people to travel to migrant women’s worlds. This how we can ensure migrant women are *heard*.

In the next section, I discuss how my methodology has informed the method for my research.

Chapter 4: My Method for Being in Relationships with Women

Invitation to Participate

My project aimed to genuinely embrace, celebrate and highlight the meaning(s) of difference(s). To enable such an approach, I needed to reflect on my own lived experience as an “ethnic migrant woman”, no matter how troubling the reference, from my own politics of location. It also became important that the women who would benefit from participation in these aims, was the diverse and contested category of “ethnic migrant women”. For these reasons, when it came to participation, I chose to remain open to all ethnic backgrounds. This approach also reflects the diversity of migrant women present in my own everyday life.

To meet the aims of the research I invited migrant women who were over the age of eighteen, proficient in English, and located in Tāmaki Makaurau, to participate in my project. This project was considered “low risk” by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (Low Risk Notification – 4000025891) because of my conceptualisation of women’s stories as gifts, and my role as kaitiaki to both hear those stories responsibly, and to produce knowledge that shifted people’s understandings of migrant women in empathetic and positive ways. This process based and post human approach is engagement in humanness, and therefore an ethical response to the other (Coombes et al., 2016; Lee et al., 2021).

At the heart of my inquiry is the relational, so a key focus of my research involved attending to relationships. My own politics of location mean that I am entwined with the stories of migrant women, and it was in this space, between and among us, and through our “knowing” together, that the idea for my research emerged. Therefore, working in and through my relationships within my community, I invited those who I thought would be interested in my project. It is through these relationships and our connections with each other that opened the possibility for the sticky stories to emerge, and to be heard.

I made contact with a number of women in my friendship group to talk to them about participating in the research. Of course, because I know these women and talk to them all the time, they already had some idea about my research interests. However, in this conversation, we discussed the research broadly, and what participation would look

like. The women who showed an interest in participating were then emailed a copy of the invitation to participate (see Appendix).

Of the nine women I initially approached, eight women with multiple ethnicities and diverse migration stories, agreed that they would like to engage in the process. Not only was I personally surprised at how quickly these women took up my invitation to participate, but also how thrilled they were to be able to contribute to my research. This reminded me of what Verna Myers has previously said; “diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance” (Cho, 2016). My invitation went beyond the spectre of diversity because it was an opportunity for migrant women to speak about their lives and experiences in unrestricted ways, and which privileged, respected, celebrated and valued their differences. The thrill was in imagining what knowledge might become known through their participation. To be honest, these possibilities thrilled me too.

Conversations with Migrant Women

In preparing to have conversations with women, I remembered how the everyday practice of being in relationships with people could inform my approach to the research relationship. In my everyday relationships, I care for people, I respect them, and I am attentive to what they have to say as well as to their needs. This process of being and connecting with women in my everyday life is what enabled me to sit alongside women and hear what they had to share.

One way in which I enacted care was to let women choose when and where they wanted to meet with me for the formal aspect of the recorded conversation. Six women invited me into their home, as is ordinary in our everyday lives. I met one at a restaurant because it was the halfway point in terms of location for both of us and therefore more friendly. And I met one woman at her business because it offered her more privacy, and poignantly also represented in some ways how we reconnected by chance in our thirties.

In all instances, I brought food with me to share or as a gift, and I was responsible for the meal in the restaurant. It is not unusual to involve food when we talk together as we move through our everyday lives. And food practices are an important practice among many ethnic migrant women. Pe-Pua (2006) has written about the importance of sharing food that connects Filipino culture to the research process and Cassim (2017) also discusses the importance of gifts, particularly food as a customary practice of hospitality

in Sri Lankan culture. Relational ethics that enable connections in the practice of research open spaces for dignified research. I was also conscious that these women had very busy lives and were sparing me what precious free time they had. Sustaining them was therefore important, and also served as a small token of my gratitude. Connecting through gifts of food served as an acknowledgement that ours was more than just a research encounter and that the women and our respective relationships mattered. It was me practicing *manaakitanga*.

It is important to say that before we began any research conversation, we always started off with conversations about ourselves, our families, and what was going on in our lives. These connections are what move us to relate as human beings. Three of the women had children with them so conversations were often interrupted. To ensure mum and bub were happy or able to do what they had to, I paused recordings, offered breaks, played with or chatted to the children, and in some instances, carried on conversations with cartoon clips on in the background to occupy the kids! I saw all these actions as expressions of curiosity, attentiveness and care that I would normally engage in within my everyday relationships.

Having already had conversations with the participants about the research, and about the shared goal of telling our stories of migration and everyday life, I was also aware that telling stories for research purposes required express consent (see Appendix). Although my existing relationships with the women, and being a migrant woman myself, created the necessary trust and support to be able to have conversations, I was conscious that it is not often people choose to take part in qualitative research, and that there is always an element of nervousness and uncertainty. Through my own location as a migrant woman, I was also aware that stories of struggle and tension could be told through narratives of everyday life, and I was sensitive to those storylines within the relational space of narrative research (Hydén, 2014). While some participants shared some challenging stories, none of them wanted to change the course of the narrative process. As we do in our everyday relationships, I was present with them in that space, supporting them with empathetic and validating comments, or sharing in that knowing which often manifested itself in participant comments such as “you know”. And yes, I did know. And I said so.

Quite apart from the research objectives, confidentiality was especially important because I knew my participants personally and some of my participants knew each

other. While participants signed the “formal” consent forms that require confidentiality, these forms did not, and do not, reflect the “humanness” of the ethical relationships. For example, some participants have been open with each other about their participation but I have not disclosed who participated.

In prioritising the relational, I chose to have conversations with women rather than follow a particular interview format or ask any pre-set questions. By having conversations, women had a choice about what they wished to contribute or “gift” from the stories of their lives to my research that was meaningful to them (Oakley, 2016). Having conversations prevented me from turning to the inquiry first and extracting stories to make them fit, and instead made me value what could become known based on what women were willing to share.

I also used conversations rather than interviews because of the relationality of the process. The flexibility, openness and responsiveness of a conversation rather than pre-determined questions enables us to engage with difference through dialogue. In and through the process of the conversational interviews, we became involved in meaning making, together, opening spaces for dialogue where meanings are always multiple and embedded in wider social and cultural narratives. Conversations became a way to hear the differences differently.

I have had drummed into me how important it is to control the interview and only extract the “data” necessary for your research so that it complies with the reliability and validity required by positivist science. This emphasis on “hygienic” research (Oakley, 1981, p. 58), and perhaps my fear of getting it wrong, led me to carry a conversation guide (see Appendix) as a prompt. However, I did not once end up referring to it. Instead, I simply started by asking participants how they arrived in Aotearoa New Zealand. I asked this question even though I knew the answer because it made participants feel more comfortable telling about what they already knew, and it created connections and spaces of belonging because I too have a story about my arrival in Aotearoa New Zealand. Starting my research in this curious and open way was also an attempt to do the opposite of the interrogations we are normally put through, *where are you really from?*

By being responsive, curious, and asking open questions, other conversations then emerged about women’s lives and experiences. Even though there were no pre-set

questions, I still took responsibility for supporting the women in their telling. For instance, I would often seek clarification, ask more expansive questions, and pursue or respond to particular things that were said (and sometimes were not said). As in everyday dialogue, conversations involved stops, starts, half sentences or words, and even talking over each other, and that happened too. Ultimately, I had conversations in a way that acknowledged the “humanness” of my participants and the way we are in our everyday relationships.

All conversations were digitally recorded and ranged from just over an hour to about two hours and twenty minutes in duration. Not all the meaning making of course, was spoken. What was missing in the recordings were the non-verbal cues that add to the affective flow of feelings and memories and that influence the meaning making process. So I also made handwritten notes after my conversations, about how I felt during an interview, about stories which stuck out, and about those moments that resonated and moved me in some way. And in negotiating the meaning(s) of difference(s) together, there was a becoming in what I understood as the vitality of diversity.

Handling Stories with Care

I was careful with the stories that were gifted to me and to ensure that they honoured and respected women’s voices, I transcribed recordings personally and then sent each transcript to the respective participant for their review. Since the stories gave me intimate access to participants’ lives and experiences, I also checked that the women were comfortable with me using their stories in my project, and whether they were happy to use their real names or wished to use a pseudonym of their choosing. All eight women approved their transcripts for use in my project and signed and returned a release of transcript form (see Appendix). Two women wanted to use their real names. However, this was an ethical tension for me – institutional ethics require that pseudonyms be used to protect identities and relational ethics ask me to attend to the dignity of the participants’ voices, and their desire to be heard. As an empowering process, first names are used to honour the teller of the story for those two women.

Having received the gift of the women's stories, and responding with dignity, I took up the responsibility to hear as the potential to produce joy. The success of the ethical process to produce joy was reflected in the transcript return process when all of the women shared how much they enjoyed speaking with me. Their descriptions of the

experience ranged from describing our conversations as “hanging out” to a “therapy session” which I needed to come back and do again! In other words, the women loved being able to share their stories with someone who was open to hearing them, and who was wanting to make sense of their experiences in ways that not only respected and valued their differences but also recognised their potentials.

Analysis Process

My analysis began by being with women in conversations and then hearing them. My hearing continued as I made handwritten notes about what I felt and about which stories moved me, and these thoughts, feelings and reflections developed as I transcribed the conversations and reviewed the approved transcripts.

During this process, certain stories stood out because they were either contrary to the literature I had reviewed, or they highlighted alternative understandings of migrant women and their experiences as articulated by participants. Many stories personally resonated with me, moving me to focus and therefore reflect on them and their meaning(s), and some stories even surprised me because they revealed understandings that I had not appreciated or thought of before. I recognised that this was because I too am not exempt from currently circulating hegemonic frameworks and constraints, and that my different relationships vis-à-vis my participants is also connected to what stories I hear and which ones I do not (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012; Woodiwiss, 2017).

My constant review, reflection and reflexivity, along with discussions with my supervisors, led me to make connections between women’s stories, and the bigger stories these were situated in. I heard women’s diverse becomings, where they resisted the othering processes of racism, generated new narratives about their diversities, recognised the transformative potentials of their differences and negotiated the meanings of their sexualities and their relationships through affirmation of their differences. It became important to re-imagine what I heard - to analyse how particular stories could produce different configurations of migrant women in ways that not only resisted dominant narratives, but that could also move people in their understandings of, and relations with, migrant women. In the next section, I set out my re-imagined analysis of particular stories about migrant women.

Chapter 5: Analysis and Discussion

As I heard women's stories, I noticed how the fluidity of everyday life experiences, as embedded within shifting and multiple relationships, transformed the meanings of difference. In a similar way, my discussion of women's narratives follows these flows.

I begin with the burdens of difference, where women create spaces to resist racism as a power relation, and where through their diversities of speaking, they challenge the sameness and difference imposed by the English language.

My analysis then flows into women's processes of disidentification, where through the complex negotiation of their own histories and locations, women produce new narratives of diversities that move beyond dominant and homogenous categories. This then leads to a discussion about women's recognition of the meaning of their differences as transformative, where relational flows enable them to re-story their lives in positive ways, and in their becomings, to realise their potentials.

Finally, I become involved in intersectional relationality. I focus on stories that affirm difference, and through this affirmation, I open up possibilities for understanding how relational processes carry potentials for migrant women's sexualities, as well as for experiences of love through marriage, living with extended family, and through the practice of cooking.

Women's Resistances to Racism

"There's always going to be an asterisk behind your identity"

Migrant women's experiences of racism are connected to the history of colonisation, that is both global and local. The ideology of "white culture" as natural, ordinary and normal manifests itself in the postcolonial context through New Zealand's immigration policies, attitudes towards migrants, and through the dominant figuration of "the grateful refugee" and collectively, the "model minority" (Rata, 2020; Thiruselvam, 2019). Migrant women of colour are racialised and oppressed differentially, where difference from western norms becomes recognised as deficit (Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019; Rata, 2020).

It is the reification of sameness to white normalcy that configures the boundaries of who is "us" and who is "other", maintaining the power relations that marginalise difference (Coombes et al., 2016). And by failing to engage with power relations such as colonialism and neoliberalism and how they intersect with race and gender to affect the material conditions of women's lives, there is a flattening of difference so that the meaning of everyday experiences becomes fixed (Coombes et al., 2016; Salem, 2018). In the context of racism, this means knowledge about migrant women tends to centre only on their problems. What is not being heard is migrant women's resistances, strategies and negotiations as they move through encounters of racism.

In my conversations, stories of everyday racism emerged in the women's narratives. Cho spoke about how while she was fluent in English, her mother was not fully conversant. This led to people speaking to her mother as if she was stupid:

You know people would talk to me normally you know for example umm when I was younger and my friend's mum came to pick up my friend and at the door she was just talking normally and then she turned to my mum and her tone just completely changed like t-a-l-k-i-n-g v-e-r-y s-l-o-w-l-y...like talking as if she's umm a baby...Umm yah and things like that...yeh just infantilising my mum when I know she's so smart and capable...just because she doesn't speak English it doesn't mean she's stupid...

I remember when there was a bank employee who did that I got really angry. Umm and I made a formal complaint and I took it up to quite high... I just felt so angry like how dare you treat my mother like that, like she's stupid, because she's smarter than you...Umm you know if you have someone who doesn't speak the language, obviously

just out of courtesy, umm just slow down a little bit but you don't need to talk to them as if they're stupid...And you can hear it in the tone

In their research with Māori and Pacific students, Mayeda et al. (2014) discusses how patronising language and subtle verbal and non-verbal gestures, looks and tones are a form of racism because they serve to reify and reinforce the normality and superiority associated with the dominant, while denigrating and othering those who are different. In different work with Muslim women refugees and their experiences with health care, Cassim et al. (2022) refers to “passive discrimination” where because of the intangible delivery of the discrimination, the racism is difficult to articulate but unquestionably leaves the recipient feeling uncomfortable. These authors not only highlight how seemingly mundane and ambiguous acts and practices can render racism invisible, but also how such covertness allows those who engage in them to ignore or remain insensitive to its existence. And by dulling awareness of race as a dominant power relation, it becomes easier to disregard its human impacts.

Cho's story resists the power of racism. She recognised that her friend's mother and the bank employee were infantilising her mother, through acts of speaking slowly and using particular tones, and it made her angry. By articulating the knowing and the feeling of what it means to be othered, she has exposed how the structure of race operates in everyday life, and how it dehumanises by configuring people as “stupid”. This is not only a resistance to hegemonic attempts to conceal the power relations which are operating to construct and maintain difference, but through the flows of “knowing”, and feeling anger, Cho has also opened up a space to contest those relationships which she does by making a complaint.

In another incident, I heard how a flight attendant asked Cho where she was from despite Cho holding a New Zealand passport:

...we were boarding a flight, me with my family and umm we were boarding from Australia and we were holding our NZ passports. Umm and the flight attendant just stopped us and said oh where are you guys from?...And my sister hates this shit. She just said we're from NZ. And the flight attendant goes no, you know what I mean, where are you really from, are you from China, “ni hao!”

“Ni hao” is a Chinese greeting. Cho is ethnically Korean. Apart from this, Cho went on to describe that experience as a microaggression that “always remind[s] me that I am a migrant”. In her view, it was not the question itself, but the meaning behind it:

...it’s just the whole thought behind you’re an outsider, you know, because you’re not white, you’re not actually fully New Zealander. There’s always going to be an asterisk behind your identity

Subsequently, and as a result of the flight attendant’s behaviour, Cho complained to the airline:

Yah and umm, I actually complained about it because it was awful. Umm and the response I got was that whole standard line of oh, we’re really sorry, umm this person didn’t mean anything by it, she’s very friendly blah blah blah. Umm and I think it’s very difficult for big corporations to acknowledge yes that was racist

Here, we can hear how social power relations are enacted and embodied in Cho’s story to produce sameness and difference. Although officially you may be a New Zealander with a New Zealand passport, being “white-looking” and English speaking is what categorises and normalises you as a New Zealander. Conversely, difference places an asterisk against your identity. For Cho’s family, that meant having to legitimise and justify why they belonged.

The experience with the flight attendant prompted Cho to make a complaint to the airline. There is something defiant in how she uses the institutional processes of the airline itself, which privilege sameness and questions difference (through its employees), to resist the experience of “othering”. Cho also subsequently rejects the response of the airline which focussed only on the flight attendant and indirectly placed responsibility for the misunderstanding on Cho because there was no intentionality and only friendliness. Such a neoliberal response leaves racism as a system intact, and delegitimizes the experiences of what it means to be othered (Thiruselvam, 2019). However, by not accepting “the standard line” and drawing attention to how difficult it is for big corporations to acknowledge racism, Cho resists the idea that she and her complaint, or the individual flight attendant, are the problem, and instead she opens up a different space which provokes us to examine the social relations between people and institutions. This carries with it the possibility of social transformation because if we

can address bigger systems and how they position the “other” in power relationships, then there is potential to change the experiences and relations of migrant women.

In tracing how Cho resisted and revealed the boundaries of racism in her everyday life, I also noticed her feelings and movement through these experiences of racism:

Yah I mean I guess it depends on the situation and honestly sometimes I just don't have the energy for it because you can't fight every battle umm but you know when I do call it out, it does make me feel good because it sort of...because I think people do it with good intentions and what people need to realise is that your intentions are irrelevant because you end up still insulting this person and that's wrong. And you shouldn't treat people like that

Cho's reference to battle reminds me of the concept of “racial battle fatigue” (Mayeda et al., 2014), where ethnic communities tire from having to constantly deal with everyday racism. Similarly, Dillard (2019) references “racism fatigue” in her work on black women's struggles and she reminds us that for everyone who is tired of hearing about racism, imagine how much more tiring it is for those of us who have to constantly battle it. For Cho, racism becomes a space where you have to constantly decide whether to fight the battle and it is tiring. And as highlighted earlier, it also becomes a space for protecting your loved ones. So, when I hear Cho, I feel how she brings a kind of humanness to the impact of racism in a world which otherwise only produces dehumanised responses against migrants. Her movement through racist experiences carries the potential to move us, as it enables us to understand what racism is like for migrant women who experience it, and this opens up possibilities for engaging in how we can change things so this is not a battle Cho (or other migrant women) have to constantly fight.

Additionally, Cho speaks about how she feels good when she calls racism out. While dominant understandings produce and fix deficit through difference, in her encounters with racism, Cho refuses to be stuck in the role of victim. Since racism is a battle that demands having enough energy to fight it, there is a strength in calling racism out. And when Cho feels good calling it out, it becomes a realisation of self-worth in circumstances where racism defines ethnic women as unworthy. Cho's response to racism moves her from having limited power to empowering potential.

In another conversation, Kerry also spoke to me about racism. While she calls people out when they are “blatantly racist”, I also heard a different strategy:

...Yes there are some who are blatantly racist and then yes, I'll call them out on that...Umm but to me it was more like well, why? Why are you saying that? And then where is it coming from? Is it coming from a place of ignorance, is there something I can do to educate you on that...

Kerry's response to racism is another example of the enduring burden of responsibility placed on migrants to deal with other people's racism. However, it also made me think of Erel (2007) who explains that usually, it is migrant women who are often questioned in order to justify their presence and their entitlements. However here Kerry, as the migrant woman, is doing the questioning. She uses her difference to interrogate the (racist) knowledge which has assumed unquestionable legitimacy, and to negotiate and open up other possibilities and meanings. Kerry's process of questioning as an everyday response to the normalisation of racism becomes an “aesthetic experience” (Fine, 2017), with the potential to awaken people by disrupting habitual ways of thinking and acting, and to provoke them into seeing things differently when it comes to racist practices.

While the stories so far have focussed on outward dissent, Raya negotiates racism in more subtle but equally profound ways. In our conversation, she told me about what it was like to be with her husband's family and friends when they said racist things:

...like you know lot of like [husband's] like [husband's brother] and [husband's sister-in-law], like friends...they would say pretty racist stuff...I think it's just because, you know, it's [husband's] family and plus, their family's friends...And like I guess for [husband], it was more for him to keep, you know, it ok with his family and...Wanting things to keep going...I think, it's probably good that I didn't say anything because then that would have been probably the end of, well like the relationship for like [husband]...

...For me, they were just saying too many racist things like they used to make fun of the Chinese...family that lived next door and like just...Say every offensive stuff...And to me, I would think about my parents cause they are not like super Kiwi like...Like they have an accent, their English isn't great and stuff...So when they say stuff like that about another family...It's not the

same...Like race but it's the same situation...And yah, I guess they like, for ages I guess they really didn't know that I got offended by that kind of stuff cause I would always just be quiet...

Raya's encounters with racism come from intimate relationships embedded in her partner's family and social relationships. Through her relationship with her migrant parents, she recognises the racism normalised in her husband's family as they comment on the English of their Chinese neighbours, in their everyday talk where the standard of English configures them as the "other". However, unlike Cho who fights the battle or Kerry who calls racism out, Raya recognises and negotiates the multiple and intersecting relationships in the intimacy of her everyday life through a strategy of silence. Understanding silence as a strategy of resistance (Morgan & Coombes, 2001), Raya refuses to go along with racist and offensive comments. Silence as a form of resistance opens up spaces for refusal, and brings to life Waitere and Johnston's (2009) story of resistance to institutional power through the silent strategy of leaving the room. Through her refusal to engage with practices of racism, she resists the coercion of sameness and holds open a space for doing difference with dignity.

The silence also enables Raya to continue her everyday relationships within existing social power relations, and at the same time, she carries the burden of her difference; her relationship with her husband's family and friends, her husband's relationship with his family and friends, and her relationship with her husband. To challenge the unrelenting normalisation of racism, silence here can be understood as actually very noisy, because it speaks profoundly to Raya's strength to remain quiet in the face of racism, and to her sensitivity and love for her partner so that he is not put in a difficult position with his family.

Together, the stories of Cho, Kerry and Raya show us how the burden of difference creates spaces to contest racism. For Cho, difference becomes a space within which she becomes responsible for protecting her loved ones, and through this responsibility, she challenges the dehumanisation of racism as a power relation. Kerry uses her difference to interrogate racist practices, and by taking up this responsibility of questioning, she enables other ways of thinking and acting. Raya's difference is embedded in family relationships and through her silence, she both resists racism and holds important and

everyday relationships together. Difference here becomes a space for responsibilities that enable women to transform social relations.

“You want us to speak English all the time?”

In our history of colonisation, Māori were forced to speak English as a form of cultural genocide. In our current location, colonisation, extended through neoliberalism, reproduce the standards of sameness, where English language acquisition is commodified in the flow of migration in the postcolonial movement of people and cultures.

As I was reflecting on the notion of commodification of language in our contemporary struggles, there was a moral outcry when Whittakers, a New Zealand chocolate company, announced that it would be renaming a flavour in their range in te Reo Māori (Miraka Kirīmi) to celebrate Māori Language Week (Supermarket News, 2022). What emerged was a demonstration of social anxiety (fear of difference) in the increasingly responsive social movement toward te Reo Māori. It also demonstrated the insidious dominant narrative that locates non-English speaking migrants as pejorative through their difference.

No such proficiency is required in New Zealand’s other official languages, te Reo Māori or New Zealand Sign Language. The commodification of English as a criterion for good citizenship is so predominant that not only have I been repeatedly asked, “do you speak English” or alternatively, been met with surprise at how “good” my English is, but it transpired that most of my participants have had similar experiences:

Cho: ...I mean even I remember when we were walking down Ponsonby and this guy randomly stopped us cause [son] was prattling on about something and this guy randomly stopped us and said oh, he speaks such good English

Saman: ...cause the only thing I was judged for when I came here was how do I have good English

Kerry: Yes and people would be like oh, but you speak such good English...Yes but you know, oh you don’t have an accent...

Zoya: A lot of people would be like oh you’re Indian, you don’t have an accent

Together these experiences speak to an overwhelming dominance of the presence of practices of othering through the normalisation, not only of English, but also of accent free English. I am reminded of Thiruselvam's (2019) figuration of the "grateful refugee", where pressure to perform according to western standards of sameness strips migrant women of their own diverse postcolonial histories and movements. And this erasure of who we are means difference remains static and homogenous, because it becomes understood only ever as a failure to achieve Eurocentric standards. In my analysis, I wanted to look for spaces where women resisted the dominant stories of sameness and difference, and where difference enabled women to create or maintain connections in fluid and multiple ways within the flows of their everyday lives.

I will start with the story of Xin Yun. Xin Yun shared a very different story about her workplace, and how English was decentred in her everyday work life:

Because the whole workplace, they speak Mandarin, even the only, the non-Chinese one in the management office, they do feel a little bit like arghh but then again, what do you expect? You can't tell them oh guys, you're not allowed to speak Mandarin in this company...Well, 95% of our customers are PRC, Chinese...90% of our workforce is Chinese... You want us to speak English all the time?... It's, like I understand, I get it but at the same time, it doesn't rub off on the majority of the people cause if I know that you speak Mandarin... And you know that my English sucks, but you insist on speaking English to me, doesn't that come across as you trying to be superior?

What is surprising about this story is that despite New Zealand's insistence on English, there is a whole workplace that speaks Mandarin. And through this resistance, Xin Yun was able to recognise the discomfort of the English-speaking minority who experienced exclusion. Her recognition opens up possibilities for spaces where difference can perhaps be collectively experienced. And these shared moments have potential because they draw attention to shifting social locations, and through this process, the meaning that differences can make within everyday life (Hesse-Biber & Piatelli, 2012).

In another story of resistance, Cho told me how her parents deliberately chose not to teach her English when they migrated to New Zealand:

Me: So did you...were you speaking Korean and English before you came here?

Cho: No, no

Me: or just Korean

Cho: I didn't speak any English at all...My parents deliberately decided not to teach me English because they didn't want that stress on top of adjusting to a new country...it was basically just go to school, have fun, just adjust to your new environment and that was their main focus. Umm yah they deliberately didn't teach me English until I asked them

Cho's story made me think of Thiruselvam's (2019) "model minority", and how by not teaching Cho to speak English, her parents were resisting the performance of this narrative. However, Cho's parents can also be viewed as doing something more – they call our attention to what it means to be loving and caring parents, where the language of connection and belonging is privileged. Difference here, becomes a space of love, protection, sensitivity and caring. Instead of enacting a loss of language and connection, Cho's parents enabled her successful transition to school by making education fun and avoiding the coercive expectations of western superiority (Thiruselvam, 2019).

By placing their child's needs ahead of mainstream expectations of English, Cho's parents highlight how difference has potential because as Cho later said to me, "I don't remember being stressed...I really liked school...my parents made it easy for me". This also calls attention to social power relations because it raises questions about the pressure imposed on migrants to learn and speak English. The "abnormality" is not migrants being unable to speak English, but about the prioritising of English as a standard of the "worthiness" of the other at the expense of human wellbeing.

In my conversations with women, I also came across stories about how women used English in unique ways. Returning back to Xin Yun who worked in a pre-dominantly Mandarin-speaking workplace, she describes how meaning making happens together through a fluidity of languages and understandings with other staff:

Me:...what do you speak on the shop floor and stuff like that?

Xin Yun: I change, depends because my Mandarin is not great...I do interchange a little bit. And they are quite accepting of that

Me: So you move between English and Mandarin

Xin Yun: Yah, I tell them, it's like yah my Mandarin is pretty shit...Unless you want your ear drums to start bleeding, yah sure I'll continue

Me: How do you decide? Obviously for people who can't speak Mandarin, you speak English

Xin Yun: If I want to, if we are on a friendly term, and if I'm trying to be, like if we are on a social conversation...I'll use Mandarin but if it's like work-related and very formal, English...Cause that's how I can better express myself, English...Umm Mandarin, like yah for example, if I wanna be like joking with them or they're very friendly to me, then I'll use Mandarin, I'll try...But if they are pissing me off...like being a bitch, English

The movement between languages is related to the context. Among her work peers she uses Mandarin when it is a social conversation, but when it is formal and work-related, she uses the authority of English. When the western status quo demands and privileges English, use of another language like Mandarin in everyday conversation communicates the presence of a different culture, with its own customs and vocalisations, and has social meaning that enables connection in her everyday life. There was an understanding here, that it is the English language that is peculiar in as much as it is the language of western power that is used to prescribe and to regulate, and to chastise and discipline that keeps people distant. In this way, through her use of English, Xin Yun makes visible how the English language can be used as a weapon. And within the context of power relations, this reminds us of how English has been used in similar ways to dehumanise migrants by making them “other” and to constrain what they can and cannot do.

Hien also talked about the flexibility and fluidity of moving between English and Vietnamese languages in her everyday life:

...when I was little, I would think in English, when I finally managed to speak English. As I grew older, I started thinking in Vietnamese ...but then when I was like you know like 16 going on, I would be thinking inside my head, and I'd be thinking in Vietnamese. Now I just do a mix of both...

Aotearoa New Zealand (among other western nations) is so obsessed with the English language so that those who speak it are privileged and legitimatised, and those who do not are othered and discriminated against, again resonating with the idea of cognitive capitalism. Doggett (2018) writes about how when people are free to speak how they want to speak, there is individuality in language rather than the “whitewashed boringness” that everyone has to conform to. And so, Hien's story moves us to wonder beyond the

dichotomy of English / non-English speaking because she opens up possibilities of multiple ways of speaking and thinking.

Hien also shows a resistance to the idea that in taking up the English language, you must leave your mother tongue behind. Through her cultural flows and locations, she moves in and between Vietnamese and English. She enables us to hear not only the potentials for diversity, but also to see the constraints of dominant power relations that limit monolingual openness to difference. And in this sense making, we shared the pleasure of imagining the joys of moving in and through languages of connection in multiple ways.

The stories here show how resistance to the privileging of English opened up spaces that enabled women to create or maintain social connections. By not teaching Cho English, Cho's parents were prioritising connection and belonging so that Cho could enjoy school and not stress about the move to Aotearoa. While speaking Mandarin enabled Xin Yun to keep up social connections in her work-place, her recognition of the uneasiness of the English-speaking minority opens up possibilities for shared connections within experiences of difference. Hien's movement between Vietnamese and English shows us the connections between her mother tongue and her acquisition of English, reflecting the potentials for diversity.

These ideas of multiplicity and fluidity also extended to how participants started finding their place here in Aotearoa. Women engaged in a process of disidentification with stereotypes and through negotiations of their histories and locations, began to produce new narratives of their diversities. In the next section, I highlight stories of these negotiated diversities.

New Narratives of Women's Diversities

"I wasn't just any 'Indian'"

Migrant women's lived realities are an interaction of multiple locations within power relations, such as gender, ethnicity, race, culture, historical, social, religious and political influences that compete with each other in social relations through which we become embedded in affective flows. In Aotearoa's dominant narrative, migrant women are essentialised through broad homogenised ethnic categories of difference; Muslim, Asian and Indian for example, and these are applied to non-western migrant women, with no regard for the nuances between and within different cultural groups as we negotiate the multiple social and cultural situatedness of the experience of migration. This research challenges the notion of a fixed and stable cultural identity and sought to make sense of a shared experience of meaningful negotiation of diversity in our stories, in all our complexities, that involves our relationships between histories of location, people, and movement between borders that together produce new possibilities.

Xin Yun's narrative provides several examples of how she is Chinese, but also challenges the homogeneity of such categorisations. In this instance, she locates herself through her difference from her Chinese colleagues through her relationship with Matariki as culturally significant to being Chinese in Aotearoa and in so doing, challenges her Chinese colleagues to become relationally connected to their communities:

...I said to [colleague] it's like, isn't that a bit wrong that the first ever Matariki public holiday we are not doing something in the tea gather[ing] to acknowledge its existence...I have this VM Manager saying that it's like, well I don't believe in it because you know what, this is not really a Māori-driven company...our clientele is not exactly Māori so...we shouldn't even be bothered with that. I was like you live in New Zealand...It's the law of the land...And how does that come across?...I think differently from them, like I'm the one who thinks that the first Matariki we should celebrate it...

...If you are not eating at your desk, you're not working hard enough...Yah that's the kind of Chinese workplace...You have to skip lunch even though its unpaid just to make it look like you're working really hard...I have lunch with the staff in the staff room...if you don't eat at your desk, you're not working hard enough, you don't skip lunch, you're not working hard enough....They don't say it but they make you feel it...but um I secretly skip off outside for a walk...

...I want them to be exposed to a more diverse culture...That's why they stay in this job because it's their only safety net, safety place...They can't survive out there. Even like uh all the new people that joined our company go like nah these people cannot survive in a normal Kiwi company...

This story of difference is about the continuous movement in the flow of histories of migration, and Xin Yun's desire for other migrant communities to open up possibilities for wider cultural connections for their wellbeing. For her, working for a Chinese company where speaking together enables a sense of belonging, it also limits their experience of the relational process of migration. As a result, they have less mobility within the "Kiwi" (or western) workplace.

Understanding difference through her own locations both in and out of Chinese workplace practices, the meaning the difference makes draws attention to the relational flows in the processes of migration. Xin Yun's difference opens up the possibility of connections between Chinese and Māori, potentially creating a space of activism where they can both share the burdens of colonisation and work together to find solidarity (Rata & Al-Asaad, 2019; Shui, 2020). Through her difference, she also resists and challenges the norms of her workplace culture; she actually takes a lunch break, has lunch with the staff in the staffroom, and goes outside for a walk during lunch time. Xin Yun has managed to not just successfully navigate multiple cultural relationships, but also turn them into a cohesive force to open up spaces for new relationships.

Zoya too, recognised the multiple relationships that she negotiates through a process of migration that also resisted the story of homogeneity. In the process of migration, she recognised her history and her privilege for negotiating the immigration and visa requirements, and through her knowledge of western systems of meaning, the experiences of migration and coercive employment conditions that form the dominant representation of Indian women in media representations:

Yah and I knew my previous experience and like my life experience was of value...I wasn't just any 'Indian'...A lot of people would be like oh you're Indian, you don't have an accent...So I definitely knew I had some privileges...Which got me further to those jobs

...I knew very early on that I didn't want to work for any Indian early childhood centres owners because I had heard all the stories...And again, I wasn't going to be a normal Indian employee cause I know how, you know, I'd heard of stories like how they'll try to exploit you...And they're all the early childhood centres that make it to the news...Umm yah but like just to give you a little example like, sorting residency out...they're like oh we can hire you but like we'll bound you for 2 years and we'll help you with your residency and I was like I don't need your help with my residency, I can apply online myself...I tried to tell so many people that you don't need an immigration lawyer...but like people are scared or don't have the confidence...

The difference here, not “just any Indian”, is resistance to the dominant narrative. As she makes sense of her privileged location within western knowledge systems and her valued experience as an Indian woman, the meaning the difference makes shows how entangled the flows of migration are, and that they are not the same for all Indian women.

Zoya's understanding of her difference in the flows of relationships also tells a story of where the commodification of residency, that shifts and moves criteria depending on institutional demands, is embedded in relationships and histories of trust and social location. Recognition of her differences has enabled Zoya to build a relationship of trust within our immigration system, generating positive and less oppressive opportunities for work within Aotearoa New Zealand. I was also fascinated at how Zoya's story of difference unfolded as she negotiated relationships with Indian workplaces where the relationship between employment and residency has become normalised. And it is at this intersection between knowledge of western migrant requirements, and the practices of Indian workplaces, that her difference became contested.

Difference in Hien's story was understood through relationships of too much and not enough. As she became increasingly embedded in western culture through the school system, she began to question her family culture and experienced feeling that she was too western for them:

I think right from the get-go, because I would go to school, I would take on the New Zealand culture a lot more...and start to question a little bit more about why

we don't do this, why don't we do that... And so I could never fit in, all my theories and ideas were too wack...too out of the world and too Western for them [the family]...

...I wanted to do all the things that other kids were doing, join clubs...all the simple things you know, and hang out with friends in terms of like going to birthday parties and have playdates...we couldn't. Because my parents were so busy. So it wasn't, I dunno, I don't think it was a Vietnamese thing, I think it was a very, the "fam" thing because mum and dad is very busy. They wake up at 3am in the morning, don't get home until 6 o'clock. My sisters basically told me we cannot do anything to annoy mum and dad...so if I wanna play, it's just play indoor, play outdoor around the house and that's it...you know how our parents work hard or what a wannabe ...Oh you think umm because all your Western friends have all these playdates, oh yah she just wants to be like the Western kids...

At the same time as experiencing difference as too much, she also experienced not being Asian enough amongst her Asian friends because she did not fit the stereotype of doing subjects, maths and science, that are often associated with the notion of Asians as "human calculators", incapable of relational creativity (Shah, 2021). Challenging these limiting stereotypes, Hien was able to find her own place through literature and social sciences, and in a process of potential becoming, the possibilities of both too much and not enough:

...I didn't even know where I fit in because like at home, and within my Asian friends, I'm not Asian enough you know. I've got all these crazy Western ideas... and also like, back at school, at high school, all the Asian, they have an Asian group...and an Asian block and they'd go there...and they do subjects like Maths and sometimes Science...I didn't make it to the Asian group because I didn't do any of those subjects. I was more into the literature...The history and you know the social stuff, English...I was always never in the classes with all the Asians, I was more in the class with all the Western kids...I was always the Asian that was not Asian, you know...And so I was always...too Western in the family and not Asian enough out there amongst the Asian

The process of migration for Hien draws our attention to the tensions produced in the conditions of possibility for the future survival of migrant children. In her story, Hien told me her parents came here with nothing and three children and had to work all hours to provide for their children and to survive. Hien did not have the privilege of being able to

attend playdates and birthday parties because her parents worked long hours. This family narrative of survival is not about the stereotype of a traditional hard working Asian family in and of itself, but of the tensions that emerge in our family relationships as the next generation forms relationships within their new social locations. Here we can understand how differences are a product of interacting social relations rather than some internalised or racialised deficit. And by recognising our differences, the meaning that they make become open to new possibilities. For example, Hien brings attention to how she is always embedded in her cultural relationships through her everyday practices that celebrate her difference from western norms:

Me: Ok and why do you think you don't fit in with the Western, like what do you think is the bit different?

Hien: I think because I still have so much respect your elders...I still have a lot of the if I'm older than you, and you're younger than me...You need to give me some respect. I still celebrate all of the superstitious, like the praying, and the throwing rice...And umm I, I, there's certain superstitions that I follow, like you never give watches to people on their birthdays...Because it would, it's kind of like indicating their time is up...Or if we celebrate birthdays, we have to celebrate before, never after...Because after, it's like a death anniversary...Yah because you can be premature, you can be born before your due date but if it's after, it's bad...And so, or I would still do things like, umm I believe in the fact that there's an afterlife so you pray to your ancestors...And I, I still believe that children should be with you and should have respect and none of this too much freedom business you know...So like my kids still have to ask permission to do everything...I do not let them in their room close the door and allow to do whatever they want in there. They can go into their room but they're not allowed to lock the door or close the door...And I still umm believe that even if they are 16 or 17, 18 later on, they should still ask me whether they can go out with their friends...But I still, I still have that and that's how I want to parent...

I was fascinated by how this narrative connected the past and the present and into the future through a flow of cultural stories that together enabled me to really hear how she weaves her cultural knowledge and practices into her everyday family life. Hien's sharing of such knowledge is not only a telling of her ethnic cultural practices in Aotearoa, but also how there is continued enactment of her culture in everyday practices of parenting.

And the ongoing connection with her own cultural practices into parenting enables the continued wellbeing of her family.

Hien and I finished our conversation with her articulating her understanding of the need for a flow between her western and Vietnamese locations:

...It sounds very negative you know, umm my upbringing and a bit of my culture. But I seriously think that I, I am who I am because of it...I'm proud to have that aspects in my life but I'm also so thankful and proud that I have the New Zealand the Kiwi side too...Because just imagine if I didn't...That life would be very very hard for me but because I've got that, and I am in a country where I can actually put that to use...And like be free to feel and do that, that's why I am who I am now, a mix, a nice balance between the two...

There is a comfortable recognition in Hien's present understanding of the relational flows of difference as she embodies becoming both Kiwi and Vietnamese in new and multiple ways that celebrate difference, and the meaning that it makes as a force for producing new narratives about her diversities.

The stories of Xin Yun, Zoya and Hien together show a disidentification from the homogeneity of categorisations, and where through negotiations of their realities, women were able to tell new narratives of their diversities that embraced their differences, with all its complexities and possibilities. And this opened spaces for me to consider how women's recognition of the meanings of their differences have potential, which I discuss in the next section.

The Potentials of Women's Differences

"I wouldn't change a thing"

It is the multiple and particular stories and the vitality of the becomings in the stories that brings into view the processes of the potentials of migration that refuses the "hawking" of oppression stories (Fine, 2017, p. 109) where the meaning of our difference is pathologised. And as I thought about my narrative responsibilities, to situate these stories through the effects of our current political location, but to also move beyond their constraints, I began to listen for the relational processes of becoming in the narratives within our collective stories. What I heard was a collective narrative of resistance to the singular story, where difference becomes an opportunity and potential in our everyday lives.

Understanding her own location in the singular story, I became aware of an unexpected movement in Cho's story, toward embracing the meaning (of difference) of being a migrant:

I think it's just who I am and it's given me life experiences and umm thoughts that I wouldn't have had otherwise. Umm...it's hard to think of specific examples because it's just kind of my day to day thought processes but maybe...maybe when I umm encounter something that I don't agree with or understand, I think because I'm a migrant I have a bearability to say or to think umm well this is not how I do things but that's you know... there are other ways of doing it and...I don't think I would have had that so much if I wasn't a migrant

This is a story of resistance that identifies a process of recognising the burden of the embodied harms (pain) of difference, to becoming able to recognise the affective flows of the meaning of difference as affirmative – the bearability, the experience of affectivity and relationality, that moves us to an ethical encounter with the vitality of difference.

Cho also talked to me about what it was like growing up as a child of migrant parents:

I think umm being the eldest child of two migrant parents, it has forced me to become more independent...So my mum didn't really have the opportunity to learn English as much as she liked so I remember as a teenager attending my sisters' school interviews and translating for my mum. Umm my mum relied on me a lot growing up...just telling her what to say when she goes to a shop, making phone calls, umm I ended up doing a

lot more adult things than I think most other kids would have...I think it's very empowering when from a young age you are the one who's responsible for doing things and getting things done...So that was great and I wouldn't change that but then on the flip side umm it's also created a lot of pressure and I'd taken on responsibilities that were actually not my responsibility...

I think for me, I want them [children] to be responsible for their own life...Umm and I think a lot of that comes from just living as a migrant child and umm knowing that children are very capable...that experience of growing up independent, that was so valuable just for my level of self-confidence umm and its yah like I just want my kids to grow up feeling like they are capable, they can talk to people, they can make changes in their own lives...that they can talk to their landlords and negotiate rent...That they can you know umm walk to school on their own, and if they get lost, then they can find their own way back ...umm that they can earn and manage their own money...all those things, all those life skills, it's really important for me that they have that

Cho resists the stereotype of the vulnerable migrant woman in need of fixing because she is able to build a new narrative from the painful past story of being a migrant child, toward the empowering process of becoming a family with both resources that protect and promote the wellbeing of their children, and an openness to the creative processes of becoming "good" citizens.

To become a "good" citizen does not exclude our histories, and it is in the recognition of the pain as a relational flow that moves the story from the same old singular story to new possibilities as Raya shows:

It's almost like writing, like trying to write a story and then like kind of seeing a different...perspective cause like I always think oh I haven't done much or whatever but then you know, I've travelled like...you know, done a lot of things myself and like had experiences I've you know, I've flatted and all that kind of stuff like in terms of life experiences like I don't think I'm that lacking...Like culturally there's probably differences but I don't think I could be sad about it...I still have had a good life and like and really happy moments and stuff like so and it's like, it is a challenged life...I've done it a couple of times in my head to like, almost like, kind of write out ok this, this like kind of my, be my life kind of thing like...kind of tell a story to myself and it's like oh ok...

The burden of everyday racism is recognised in Raya's story, and she counters her feelings of lack through re-storying the meanings of the challenges in living a good life. And this movement from recognition of the power of the single story enables her to articulate alternative stories that recognise the relational flows of her becoming:

I don't really care, like you know all the feminists and stuff like, I dunno like, if you know you like certain things then we shouldn't be afraid to like them either...And like same with like, I think this, I felt really kind of weird, not because people were saying it but like me wanting to stay with [child], like in my head I was just like oh I shouldn't be doing this because you know like you're meant to go back to work after you have a kid and stuff...Like cause everyone's kinda, it feels like a lot of people are, like tend to, the norm of you know, you have a kid and you go back to work...I mean kinda, I felt really bad staying home but then I kind of don't want to, and I'm like, I feel like it should be ok and it's ok. For me, it's ok now like...I can't be bothered with the people that might not be ok with it...like my parents' expectations that I should be working, I'm like...oh my god, you quit, oh what a shame kind of thing and I'm like...I dunno, I'm kinda over a bit about caring too much about, or living for other people...But like, I guess I wanna, kinda, I'm consciously trying to make a decision to do things that like are for my life...

When retold through the relational flows, there is a recognition that the meaning of difference can be transformed away from western understandings of vulnerability (to passive femininity) and also away from the story of the hardworking migrant toward an understanding of the meaning that the difference makes; possibilities for everyday life where migrant women need not be constrained to what the world expects of them, and where they can craft and create their own hopes and expectations.

For Hien, the recognition of the meaning of her difference lay in growing up as an Asian child where hard work was expected, and praise was understood as being bad for one's character (arrogance):

They [parents] never interfered in any of my schooling, never checked homework, I come home with reports straight As or whatever. You don't get a 'great', you're 'doing great', you don't get any praises in my family. They believe that if you give

praise then the child will then get too arrogant...And stop performing...So we get told off but we never get praises...

However, the meaning of her difference became transformed when Hien recognised how the relational flows between past and present opens the potential for new stories of becoming:

I think I definitely let myself love myself more...So I stop putting myself down...Umm and I also give myself praises because...cause it's not, it's not normal in our family umm and with Asian parents...you don't, you don't praise yourself. And if you stand up and say wow! I'm good! Umm they will say tone that down...Don't be arrogant...And within my family, because I'm so competent, it's just the norm...When I was doing my law job, plus working at the bakery, it was just the norm. And if I complain about the fact that I'm tired, they say why are you tired? What have you done to be tired? You know umm never had that acknowledgement but lately I do realize, I acknowledge myself. I go back in time and give myself praises you know...I acknowledge that wow, for a 24 year old, I handled a lot. I just got out of Uni, I went into this law job, I was preparing to move out for the first time, I arranged my whole wedding myself and it was a lot...Yah and so I gave myself a pat on the back. And so I'm constantly going back now, giving myself acknowledgement and it's been really good...

For Kerry, the process of recognition of the constraints of difference occurred with her movement to Aotearoa, where she geographically distanced herself from the conditions that she felt limited her life to begin a new life that she envisioned for herself. In the affective flow, the loss became transformed into a story of becoming connected in and through new beginnings and possibilities:

I'm like yah, I'm like so happy, it's like yah, I wouldn't change a thing... because whatever's happened in my life, good and bad, has gotten me to this point...Where I'm married...I love my husband...Have two fur babies, got my business...Got a house...Friends who are family, got a job that pays me to support my lifestyle, I'm like, and yah.

...I am happy and I guess I am celebrating the fact that I have been able to become my person...Being here. I don't feel like coming here has stifled me. It's actually allowed me to...Grow so this move was great...umm that's

my story. It's like, New Zealand for me has just been, its aligned with who I envision myself being...

Here, Kerry's migration was not only emancipatory, but also empowering because she highlighted just how much New Zealand is aligned with who she envisions herself being. In other words, rather than perceiving her life as a migrant woman in negative ways, she is provoking us to see it as she does, as a life that is and has become promising.

Collectively, these women's narratives show a process of recognition, where women disentangle themselves from the singular story, and through their differences, open up possibilities for new becomings. And in my next section, I turn to stories of these becomings, and in particular, to how difference, embedded in women's intersectional relationality, carries potentialities for their sexualities and intimate relationships.

Bodies, Sex and Intimate Relationships

“Come to the wedding night, I freaked out”

We do not talk about sex. Perhaps this is because migrant women’s sexuality tends to be storied through western lens so that we are either seen as naive and subjugated, or when we resist or abandon our cultural norms, sexually liberated and agentic (Hawkey et al., 2019; Sanberg & Janssen, 2018; Ussher et al., 2017). Within this dichotomy, there is very little space for us to talk about other experiences of sex and sexuality.

These reflections are probably why participants and I initially steered clear of discussions relating to sexuality. All of my conversations started with women’s early lives and experiences of migration, but as our talking continued, my taken-up responsibility for hearing meant that women began to feel safe, and emboldened, to tell stories about their more intimate experiences of sex and sexuality. In our conversations, I heard how meanings and experiences of sexuality are embedded in the intersections of colonisation, migration, culture and religion. And how through these relational flows, the women came to negotiate their own sexual subjectivities. Sexuality became a site of significance because through the conditions and tensions of everyday life, I heard how women became enabled to speak into new spaces and imaginations about their bodies, sex and intimate relationships.

Stories about the intersectionality of sexual experiences emerged in my conversation with Hien when I asked her about how she learned about sex:

Growing up, my parents were always very strict...And they were so terrified of us getting pregnant and stuff like that...And so they always kind of like never talk about it, it’s a taboo...Nobody ever talk about it...And so for me, I shut it off...

What emerged in this story were the cultural expectations among Vietnamese migrants, where unmarried girls are expected to abstain from sexual activity, and parental silence about sex operates to protect women from premarital sex and its extension into the reputation of the family (Rawson & Liamputtong, 2010). Taboo here serves as a protective function within family relationships. For Hien, however, the layers of protection meant that she did not take the risk of even thinking about sex, and this silence flowed into the shock she encountered on her wedding night and well into her marriage:

Come to the wedding night, I freaked out...it was such a shock to the system and I have also never seen...The male body...I didn't want to look at it...And so on the wedding night, after like getting married and seeing the male parts...Everything clicks and then I got traumatised. I was like this cannot be happening...I don't want that in me, it's too scary

Women's sexuality has always been subject to surveillance and control. And while the re-scripting of narratives through neoliberal postfeminism positions women as agentic and free with respect to their sexuality, intersecting power relations such as patriarchy, heterosexism, gender, race and migration (among others) mean that different women negotiate different meanings of sexuality (Hawkey et al., 2019; Ussher et al., 2017). Hien's honest and raw description of her wedding night opens up a meaningful space for understanding cultural flows that move us from the singular story of western sexuality toward an affirmation of difference where our cultural legacies and our sexual subjectivities shape how we live in the world.

The idea that cultural or religious norms can impact women's knowledge and experience of sex is not new (Hawkey et al., 2019; Ussher et al., 2017). However, Hien's story moves us to think differently about women's sexual agency because she provokes us to imagine how she negotiates these relationships from a recognition of the cultural taboos and silence about sex to processes of enduring sex to have children:

Women are not allowed to have any desires...We're not allowed to think about it...And it's purely for the purpose of having a baby...And so, if we're not ready to have kids yet, this is not important...it was never for pleasing him or anything like that...it never happened until I wanted to have [first child]...And in my mind then, it was like an act must happen in order for me to have this baby...It was always very clinical...because I was trying to achieve a goal...I never really read up about the fact that there should be desire....and how [husband] was going on, whenever [husband] was going on about it before hand, I would look at him and say is that all you care about...I cannot believe our relationship is not as important as this one act...

This narrative shows movement from her cultural location where sex is taboo, to understandings of sex as technology to become a mother, and a resistance to the narrative of relationships as based on sex. These intersections of difference became potential, as it enabled Hien to renegotiate the meanings of intimacy and love with her

partner. She started to read romance novels to try and understand the talk about sex that she had shut away, and to learn the feelings that are attached to having a sexual relationship:

And I started like umm, listening to a lot of novels...And in the novels...They weren't innocent novels either...I could suddenly kinda understand the mindset of people, but in...to be more clear of [husband]...I understood...Why and I started letting myself understand more from his viewpoint and realising oh my god, and it was only then that I apologised to him...And I sat him down and I apologised to him for not giving him that honeymoon period...And I was so sorry and I said oh my god, I will do what is necessary to right this and so I started reading articles...But more articles about you know, why it's important for couple and the thing...the emotional side of things, the connection for the couple...not the scientific...I went from rejecting it all together to doing it to because I love [husband]...And now, very slowly, it's not getting anywhere yet, but very slowly about me, what I want and allowing myself to, to say it's ok to want this. I'm not quite there yet...

In this storying of movement, there is something rebellious and resourceful about Hien teaching herself about sex via romance novels and articles. But what we see here is also more than resistance to the cultural sex taboo because attending to the romantic novels was her attending to intimacy, and this enabled her to feel the connections of sex and love. Hien's story is about both her *and* her husband, and *their* relationship together. It is not so much about the discourse of sexual reciprocity, but about the intersections of knowledge, love and responsivity, and where Hien has moved from a position of rejecting sex to now "doing it" because she loves her husband. This idea that the negotiation of sex is, and can be, relational and a matter of love between a couple is something that is missing from the contemporary research narratives of migrant women's individual (vulnerable) sexual agency and subjectivity (see for example Hawkey et al., 2019 and Ussher et al., 2017).

Kerry's story is about the surveillance of patriarchal norms on bodies. And to understand her story, we must first understand her context. She is East Indian, and from a part of India that was for a time colonised by Portugal (Kumar, 2016; Lopez, 2021). Her social and cultural history is located not only in relation to the colonialism of the British, but also the colonialism of the Portuguese, who brought with them,

Catholicism. And in this respect, Kerry and I share some similarities because I am from Goa, which was also colonised by Portugal. Together, we share a Catholic history.

Unfortunately, East Indian history is not well-documented. So I draw from Bhattacharya (2019) who talks about the Portuguese colonisation of Goa, which brought a promotion of interracial marriages, advocacy of procreation, and mass conversion of natives to Catholicism. And with Catholicism, there came a strict regulation of the social roles and propriety of women, including ideas about “sinful carnality” (p. 13) and the need to monitor, suppress and shame the reality of women’s bodies and instincts. This is not unlike the colonisation of Aotearoa where Christianity rendered Māori women’s sexuality invisible and subservient to men (Mikaere, 1999).

Kerry’s parents’ comments and surveillance about her body and boys can potentially be viewed as part of this inherited patriarchal colonial past that is still operating today in the lives of Indian Catholics:

...my mum, was so negative all throughout the years even though when I look back at my pictures, I’m like...I was anorexic almost but still I was considered oh my god...thunder thighs...Ohh you gotta watch for those hips...

There was always this thing about my, like even when I hit like puberty and stuff, it was like oh, you know, boys, you are not allowed to have a boyfriend or whatever...if we are to dress up, it would be like ohh you’re wearing that, which boy are you going to be looking at so there was always this negative connotation...a lot of it came from my mum...she was obsessed...and yes I did have boyfriends and stuff, I never told her about them but again it was like, I mean, you’re kids, you’re experimenting...You have normal, I mean I never really had the sex talk with my mum...Like I liked the idea of having a boyfriend but no I don’t want to do anything with him...Like until I went to college, and it was only in my 2nd year of college that I had, like a serious-ish boyfriend...but again, no sex...There was no sex...It was like playful, second base sort of shit

Kerry's normalisation of social relationships with boys without having sex is a resistance to the surveillance of her parents while she was living in India. When she physically moved away from them and from their surveillance to Aotearoa, she rejected her parents' influence and began to negotiate western sexual freedoms:

...I think she [mum] was so scared that, like honestly, umm because, well that was my dad's biggest fear, that if I come here, I would get pregnant in my first year of being here...and I was like, fuck you!...I'm gonna go one year without a boyfriend and not get pregnant which I did!...And I wanted to prove a point so I was like fuck, I can do that and I did. And to be honest, I lost my virginity here in New Zealand...To my now husband...

From this narrative, we can see Kerry's resistance to her parents was still embedded within her cultural location. And as she negotiated her subjectivity, she was able to both resist and be responsible for avoiding the wider material consequences of being sexually active. The intersectionality of colonisation and migration, and explicit western sexualisation of women's bodily freedoms, enabled Kerry to then move through the process of dismantling the constraints of her history of surveillance, and into the affective flows of bodily integrity, to become liberated:

...and then I came here...where people don't fucking give a damn...And it's like you're celebrated...I was also like even on the street, like people would wear shit...And not care!...like I only started wearing a bikini to the beach and even now I have a bikini but I have short shorts...Cause I'm still, I still can't bring myself to go full bikini...That's a work in progress but it was so liberating to see like Kiwi girls, you know...not give a flying fuck what people thought...that to me was like sooo...Liberating...

...like being here...Was so much better for me because I learned to, like love my body, I loved me, to put myself first...the fact that I can pole...I can take my top off, I can go out in my shorts and no one fucking cares, because I'm hanging upside down

Through Kerry's feelings of liberation, we can see how migration has become potential, enabling her to embrace and embody her feminine sexuality. And how within this relationship between pole fitness for example, and its link to stripping, she enacts her resistance to her postcolonial East-Indian-Catholic body.

While Kerry negotiated the relationship with her family while avoiding some of the material consequences within her family, as a migrant she began to also contest the postcolonial narrative of sex and marriage for the purpose of procreation (Bhattacharya, 2019) rather than a relationship of intimacy and connection:

...And even when [partner] and I started living together, we never said we were living together so we, we knew that they [parents] probably knew...but it was never said...

...They [parents] couldn't accept...my dad was in the front seat and he's like, so you're never having children...I said no...Awkward silence. I'm like you have 2 cats as grandkids...

Kerry disentangles herself from the confines of her colonial past through a process of becoming empowered through her liberation by living with her partner before marriage, and through the decision to not have children. The relational flows between her parents and her becoming are enabled through their shared knowledge of the material effects of "not knowing" made possible through geographical distance.

Rather than only characterising Kerry as someone who has suffered through painful experiences and come out on the other side, her story is more complex and shows how migration has allowed her to navigate her own sexual subjectivity beyond the demands of *both* white, colonial, patriarchal and religious expectations as well as those of her own community (her parents' cultural location) to forge a different and positive perception of herself, her body and her life.

In Zoya's narrative, there was also an unspoken understanding of her contemporary location as a global citizen that did not seem to extend to sexual relationships:

Zoya: ...So this is really weird...It's really weird because it's never like raised one on one. Like they've [parents] never said to me...it's never been said that don't go to

[partner's] house...my mum actually thinks like we don't kiss or sleep...But they know we have this global travel too so...How do they think, do they actually think, cause I was like she [mum] knows I'm not religious, she knows like, she'll joke about it, she's like you don't know anything cause she's like quite religious...And, so, I feel like ok, I'm not religious, I'm not like, I'm not marrying anybody Indian whatsoever, I don't care about rituals per se, like she says all these things but how can she think like...

Me: ...So you go out for dinner and you're out and the next day, they, let's just say they call [sister] or they call you and they're like where are you. You're like no, I'm still at [partner's]

Zoya: No, no. So we will sync our stories, like I won't, I won't admit that I stayed at [partner's], you know what I mean...if like papa messages [sister] and he'll be like *Zoya ghar aagayi* [is Zoya home]...We always have to sync...

While Zoya did not talk with her parents about staying over with a boyfriend (sexual relationships), that silence enabled a sense of knowing the untellable that became empowering. Through her global location, she questioned the “unknown knowing” of her parents while also keeping her cultural sensibilities intact. And through the relational flow of cultural and parental sensibilities, silence became respectful of her relationship with her parents, where telling would enact emotional harm:

If I was like, I dunno like, you know there's those children that really don't get along with their parents, don't like them, I could see how that would be like a way you hurt your parents...Yah, guess what! I've had sex!...Gees. And lose sleep over...

...that's what I mean, like I don't want to tell my parents because they're going to ruin their present...Worrying about things that they don't need to worry about...

In other words, silence in this space has the potential for understanding difference as an act of love. The power of love enables an understanding of the space between sexual

freedoms and respect for the affective flow of cultural meanings. Anticipation of her parents' feelings and acting with sensitivity (silence) speaks to the centrality of family relationships in her life and is as important as her romantic relationship (and staying at her partner's). Zoya demonstrates that instead of acting towards one or the other, the relational can mean acting in a way that cares for your partner *and* your family. How she, and other migrant women do this in their everyday lives is something that is worthy of more attention because it opens up a space where personal happiness can be achieved with the potentials of our differences.

Together these narratives open up possibilities for understanding how the relational processes of silence carry potentials for migrant women's sexualities and intimate relationships. For Hien, silence was protective but meant that she shut herself off from sex leading to a freak out on her wedding night. This recognition of sex as restrictive enabled her to move through the process of enduring sex to have children, and then to beginning the process of becoming a sexually desiring woman. For Kerry, silence was made possible by the geographical distance of migration and maintained the familial flows between her and her parents so that she could move through the process of dismantling her postcolonial constraints and become liberated about her body and her sexual life. Finally, for Zoya, silence became enabling because it empowered her to question the "unknown knowing" of her parents and opened a space for her to negotiate those intersectional spaces that respect her parents' "not knowing" while keeping her cultural sensibilities intact.

"I've learnt what works for me and what doesn't"

Through recognising the limits of difference, what emerges through the women's narratives of becoming were the strong affective flows in the between spaces where the potential of difference is negotiated. Moving from women's sexualities, I wanted to then open up other understandings about how ethnic migrant women negotiate, challenge or create spaces through difference to produce meanings about relationships with romantic partners.

Talking to Zoya, we can see her agency in negotiating a subjectivity that is both Indian, and independent (western). To "know" her is clearly to be able to walk alongside those parts of her that are meaningfully different from her Pākehā partner:

And my initial one and only concern was that I was like I'm Indian...It's like, it's all well and good that it's exotic to date somebody of a different culture...But to want that for life is a very different thing...So, I explained to him in my ways how I think I am Indian and how I think I'm not Indian so I was honest about...Like I like some rituals, I like some traditions...

And instead it wasn't the what you can't do, but it was about, to me it was like ok well, what we will do is so like, I dunno, like little things like Diwali comes...And this and that you know, little things and rituals, and I said to him like, I give him examples of...But beyond that, when I want us to like share culture or whatever, I don't want to have to tell you, [partner] come, it's Diwali pooja time. Or [partner] come, it's blah blah blah blah. Yes of course, and you know like I said to him, yes of course you don't know all this cause...You haven't been submerged in it...But you should want to do it because you want to do it...I don't want you to because I nagged you into doing it...And yah he was really good about it like he said no, I want to do it. Like so he's very open-minded and wants to learn and wants to engage...he's learning Hindi on his own like, and I was like...Oh you are...and I think that obviously attracted me, like I knew, I knew, he had that skill but to...Yah to actually see it in practice in our relationship, like that was quite big...Yah so he's very open-minded and we joke about things and he understands I, as much as I joke about Indians and India, I still like a lot of Indian things...And I still say I'm Indian

What emerged in this story is a postcolonial subjectivity, that is neither one or the other, but affirmative of the relationship as it moves in the in-between spaces of possibility. Zoya has enacted this understanding of the potential of her difference by demanding connection with her subjectivity as an Indian woman living with the potentials of her culture. And through her articulation, there is an affirmation of difference as *her* partner

is required to proactively engage with *her* Indian culture. This is not only a contradiction of western ideas of migrant women's relationships, but the opening up of a space where Zoya can be an Indian woman and romantic partner on her own terms.

Zoya's narrative also resists the dominant location of the vulnerability of ethnic women. Here it is a relational demand to engage with her cultural connections as a condition of relating to who she is. It is her partner who is learning Hindi, a language that Zoya speaks. Difference here has inspired a Pākehā man to become involved with Indian culture because he is involved with a woman who embodies being "Indian". In Zoya's story, love has enabled a crossing of boundaries, challenging who is "us" and who is "other" and instead becoming a who "we" are together.

The relational flows between being Indian and being an Indian woman living a life of freedom in Aotearoa emerged as a tension in Kerry's relationship in its early days:

...There was actually a point in our relationship where he [partner] was like oh, I wanna go back to India...I was like right, you can do that but that will be the end of us...and again, like he'll deny this now...because obviously, obviously we made our life in New Zealand but you know... there was a point where you know he was like oh, maybe we should go back...it did get a bit like oh shit, I'm seeing this guy for a couple of years...Now he wants to go back and I'm like mm ok, you know, umm you can do that if you want but I'm not coming back, like that is my line in the sand...Like we weren't married or anything at that time...But I had been seeing him, we were very very serious, like we were living together by that time...But that would have been a deal breaker

Yah like I said I can compromise on a lot of things...Not that. I would not, I would not. And I guess it was also because it comes back to the fact that in my eyes, I worked so hard to get to where I am and I was always like an independent...like even my parents were like oh, she's always independent like and I guess that was almost made like a throwaway statement but I guess I realise now that because I was left alone, I had to be independent

Kerry resists her husband's desire to return to India with a fierce independence - if he returned, the relationship would end, resisting the dominant narrative of ethnic women's subservience. In her story of becoming, we begin to see a re-telling of migrant women's processes that open space for new flows of meaning. Through her own embodied memory of her history, we can find the conditions that led to the ferocity of her affirmation of resistance and toward independence, even if it might be culturally understood as selfish. Here, she lives her best life away from the constraints of her postcolonial East-Indian past.

Much later in the conversation, Kerry talks about putting herself first in her relationship:

Or I've not made dinner and he's like oh you know, will throw a tantrum and blah blah blah but I'm like yah, I do see how my actions can be construed as being selfish but you know what, I don't fucking care...Like I've had to look after...like you know put everyone else first...No I came here to look after me...So screw you...If you think I'm selfish, that's fine by me cause I'm doing things to make me happy now...

Her unapologetic desire for coming to Aotearoa New Zealand to look after "me", even at the cost of her relationship, goes against the western expectation of marriage as a characteristic of migrant women, particularly Indian migrant women (Natarajan, 2007). Kerry's story resonated with me because there have been numerous times when I have been asked whether I followed my husband here, or if I am married (remembering the enduring everyday negotiations of racism). Listening to the stories of resistance and hearing something of the desires of becoming ethnic women challenges the dominant stereotype of who we are, through western knowledge. What these stories do, is not just challenge the idea that ethnic women are victims of oppressive cultural norms, but rather, that we are capable of navigating multiple intersecting oppressions as experiences of living our best lives.

When migrant women are positioned as being either casualties of oppressive cultural norms or performers of brave acts of emancipation, it ignores the knowledge systems of meaning making that migrant women bring into their present and their futures. In the context of a difficult marriage, Rita talked to me about how astrology helps her make meaning of her situation:

...I got a tarot card reading done earlier in the week...And so I was doing some listening and it said, the way [husband]'s stars...with the way his stars are, his partner would have been his enemy in the past life...Umm and we've, I, I always, and I do believe, that whomever you meet in life, there's a purpose...And I'm also in that mindset, not just with him, but everyone...I just go, and because what I've read and learned and what I believe in is if you don't do it now, it'll keep coming back to you so I just go, no matter how hard, ugly, whatever it is, I just want to do it now and be done with it...so I shared it with the tarot card reader and I said one thing that also keeps me is if this is a karmic debt I have to go through, I just want to do it now...And so she said to me, you guys are together because you have a soul connection...Umm but she said I don't see any karmic debt left because you've come together, you've had [child] so it's done. And just her saying that lifted a weight off my shoulders. I was like fine...

Yah and uh so I consulted him [another scientific astrologer] and gosh, I really umm and he, his advice, oh my god, it's been so precious umm he started off with, he said, if you want to be happy for a day, go out and drink...But he said if you want to be happy for 3 days, go have pork, because apparently, you enjoy it in your tummy and your body feels good...If you want to be happy for a month, umm, gosh what did he say, something...No I think he said if you want to be happy for 3 months get married because that's your honeymoon period...And uh if you want to be happy for a lifetime, love nature. And he said Rita you've had your 3 months honeymoon period, that's over...Now...you need to move into the love nature and don't be hung over...He's like you've had, you've done that, you've had [child]...so you have a responsibility toward [child] now...

Astrology within Indian cultural history is a spiritual process of understanding that connects knowledge through interrelationships with people and the universe. And for Rita, it enables a connection to her spiritual location to make sense of what she needs to do in order to respond to the conditions of her everyday life. Once she recognises these connections, she is then able to make sense of her responsibilities, for example, to her child.

This narrative of the relational flow of other knowledges reminded me of Cassim's (2018) research that heard the potentials of culturally patterned practices of meaning making that helped to make sense of tragic events. So with this in mind, there is an opening for hearing the potentials of other culturally rooted meaning making systems to understand wellbeing. Rita's story shows how astrology enables social connections so that the family status is not ruptured, and at the same time, this process empowers her to become a woman with purpose, and who has the responsibility for holding these family connections together.

While Rita carries out her responsibility for keeping the family intact, she shows other resistances to her marriage:

Me: But it must be hard, I mean is it hard though, like, like I feel like when you come here, it's fine right... But then I feel like when you go back there [her marital home], you're like oh, I kind of feel...

Rita: It does, no it does, like it's not my space oh god...The funny thing is like, a month ago, [husband's] brother and sister-in-law were away...Mum was away, [husband] went away himself...And then for the 2 weeks, I was like back to being mentally myself...And I was like wow, I can be like this here [in the marital home] too you know

For me...going to work and meeting the people...you know, where I am, where it is my space...I mean it's my happy place, people I connect with...And resonate with...The funny thing is when we were in umm not even lockdown, umm when I was just doing a lot of work from home and not going to the office as much, even when I used to do daycare pick up for [child], it only used to take me 5 minutes...But just that 5 minute drive and listening to the radio and picking up [child] used to be a refreshing break...I know that 5 minute drive was so powerful...Umm so I guess I've learnt what works for me and what doesn't, like coming here for example

The "coming here" that Rita and I refer to is her home where she lived prior to getting married. Within this story, we can see how the responsibility for staying in her marriage is retold through her ability to move in other spaces outside her marriage home. She carries out her responsibilities by opening spaces to resist her marriage but which at the

same time, function to keep the family and wider relationships intact. And through this process, she also gains independence and emotional safety.

From the women's stories, the tracing of the key processes here together shows creative possibilities in the affirmation of difference. For Zoya, recognition of her difference as an independent woman who embodies being Indian enabled her to demand connection with her Indian culture as a condition of being in a romantic relationship with her. In my talk with Kerry, she shows how the relational flows between being Indian and being an Indian woman living in Aotearoa enable her to not only live her best life, but to defend it with a fierce independence. And finally, Rita shows us the between spaces, where the holding of social relationships in place affirms her difference and shapes her experience, and at the same time becomes safe through her negotiation of her own spaces.

In my final section, I wanted to celebrate and affirm difference through stories of love. This is because love is an important part of our everyday lives and has the potential to move and connect us in positive and hopeful ways. And so I focus on those stories, where through relational flows, women became enabled to experience love through their difference.

Stories of Love

“I was going in safe hands”

As we affirm difference, we begin to open spaces to hear counter-stories to the pejorative representation of ethnic women as oppressed through their cultural practices of marriage without any understanding of the relational processes of collective decision making (Pande, 2015). Given that seven participants were married, and the eighth is planning her marriage, it is no surprise that stories of the cultural flows in the process of becoming emerged in different ways. In particular, the cultural legacy of collective decision-making opened possibilities for stories of love.

Saman told me how her father had left her mother, and her and her siblings. She recognised the cultural meaning making of divorce that flowed through the family, and that as a daughter in a divorced family, it could affect marriage potentials. Her story counters the dominant western narrative of choiceless marriage through the process of care in the collective decision-making process:

And the first time my mother actually showed me [husband’s] photo...so it was me and my mother’s best friend...I was like oh, is this for [friend’s daughter], is it for her? She’s [mother] like oh yah yah, it’s for her, is he nice? Cause they didn’t give me the direct information. It was a few days later they actually said it’s for you. And I was like oh, he’s really nice

Me: ...Was that to just suss out what you thought without telling you

Saman: Yah, without me putting in a spot...

While the dominant narrative of being “married off” echoes some sort of cold and impersonal business transaction, the love and care that was being put into this process by Saman’s mother and her mother’s best friend acts as a counternarrative. Saman’s story enables us to hear the potentials of our difference as relationally, her community comes together to make a decision that protects the multiple cultural meanings of safety. This process of relational care continued in her marriage story:

...[he has a] nice family, and my mother’s friend was like very much for it...that fact was very reassuring for my mother cause we already knew this family cause my mother’s friend knew him already. And that

was really reassuring cause she knew I was going in safe hands so that was kind of one of the major things

The relational process of meaning making affirms the connections that function to ensure Saman would be cared for, and that the relationships formed in the connections would also hold her. And within the multiple relational connections, there was also space for Saman and her future husband to get to know each other and make a decision themselves:

...It was just like really easy...was not like we had to think too much or weigh our or think about our future and weigh if this is exactly what we want to do, it just happened so organically that yah, we thought about it and then we told our parents that we are ready and then they came together to decide the date...

As I listened to the affirmative flows of Saman's story of the many relationships put in place to support her marriage being a good choice, the marriage ceremony too was where you hear advice that we are in this together. The meaningfulness of the multiple relationships brings the community with them into their futures:

Because towards the end of our ceremony, everyone comes in and talks about...gives you advice...All the elders...It can be your brothers, your sisters, anyone who wants...they actually come up on the stage and they hold your hand with the husband's hand and they give advice or just say take care of my XYZ, my daughter or my sister so that...Yep and all good advice and just telling she's a nice girl so you know keep, keep her well and stuff like that...Because they are actually sending me away so...And [husband] is sitting there with mum and dad...

With their "village" behind them, and with the benefit of collective wisdom, I cannot think of a better foundation for marriage. And as I write this story, I want to say that Saman and her husband have recently celebrated their tenth wedding anniversary. Reflecting on Saman's story, I became moved by such a story of love - the enabling story of the relational flows (connections) of care has meant Saman was able to realise her marriage aspirations. She shows us how through multiple relationships of love, there is the possibility of creating your own love story.

An affirmation of both difference, and of becoming, is also shown in Zoya's story as she negotiates her own differences within a respectful understanding of her cultural legacies:

...just the basics you know very simple and clean, like oh we've just started seeing somebody, this is what he does, because that's very important to Indian parents... I think I only said like very basics and mum responded with like 4, 5 questions. She just was like oh where he's from, like where's his parents, where's his mum, does he have sisters, blah blah blah family... Like she was generally curious and then she said something like *saare Indian ladke margay the* like all the Indian guys had died... And like she said it in a joking way but I was like, in my mind I was like I knew it, I was like how can you go on without saying it... Yah she was like, it definitely pinched her a bit somewhere...

...And then I think, yah and then she was going on, like we ended the conversation and then I think my dad was curious so he had called my [sister] like half an hour later...and had asked a couple of more things so I was obviously like just here, listening on... Obviously she had good things to say and that was that

Zoya negotiates her difference differently, affirming her strategies for meeting and forming relationships independently away from the gaze of her family and at the same time, affirming her cultural legacy in and through her understanding of her mother's questions and their meaning. She knew what meaning her mother was making, and that it too was linked to the relational flows of care. And in the same way, when her dad made contact with her sister, Zoya understood this as a continuation of holding the cultural safety of being connected, even if geographically distanced.

Through her process of becoming, Zoya too protected her parents by ensuring her non-Indian partner was also prepared for the differences that flow through her cultural relationships into the present:

...Ok so I didn't tell my parents very early on and I told him, I'm not telling my parents yet...But he got that. And I just said look, I have no qualms telling her [mother], except you need to be ready for the floodgates that are gonna open and it's going to be like when are you getting married so, and then he gets it...And we made him watch like all these Bollywood movies...and he gets it, he gets it. Like Indian parents, Indian guys...You go from 0 to a 100. There's like nothing in between...And so he got it like, and then like I took my time and obviously I did tell my parents...

...So I didn't tell them about the guy I was dating before...Rightfully so because did this guy know what he wanted? No...So was I prepared for like the build up of...I was like no, like I didn't need that, and yah so. Whereas with [partner], I knew very early on and I knew that he could handle it

This was an understanding of the relational flows of culture as they too travel into Zoya's new relationship, and as the couple navigate their future together. And as I listened, another story of love emerged as Zoya returned home to India and respectfully prepared her family for the western process of engagement and marriage:

They were just like when is the *shadi* [marriage].... That is, that is all they want. And I said to [partner]...before I left I said to him...We need to sit and talk because I'm gonna be asked and I need to give some sort of a plan...we'd spoken and I said to them [parents] like hypothetically, I kind of explained...Umm meet him and then we'll see but, and then I had to explain to her [mother], look, what's gonna happen next, I had to put it up for her...Like [partner] will probably give me a ring at some point...But before that, he may ask you for permission...The families don't necessarily meet and like decide everything...you know like, I just kinda gave them, broadly this is what may happen...And then...I was like once that happens, then we will start planning when the wedding is...

Saman's and Zoya's stories affirm the relational processes of meaning making through counter-stories that emerge as stories of love. For Saman, the relational meaning making affirmed the connections that ensured she would be looked after and held safely in her marriage, and it also opened a space for creating her own love story with her husband. In Zoya's story, she negotiated her own difference through affirmation of her cultural legacies, in and through her understanding of her parents' questioning, and as she prepared her partner for the flow of these cultural relationships into their present and future as a couple. And as I heard the affective flows in my talk with women, counter-stories of love continued to emerge through extended family relationships that women gained when they got married.

“And they are more parents to me than they are to [husband]”

Continuing with the relational flows that counter dominant narratives, I brought together more stories of love that opened spaces for new understandings of women's becomings, particularly through the extension of the multiple connections of collective love.

In our stories of becoming, it is important to tell the stories of profound love by listening to the way the connections are made in the relational flows between geographical and migrant spaces that affirm difference. This can be seen in Saman's story, where migration to Aotearoa followed her wedding to her husband in India. When she moved here to be with him, she was also moving in to live with his parents. And as she reflected on being married to her husband for ten years, which was the same amount of time she had been living with her in-laws, Saman went on to say:

And they are more parents to me than they are to [husband]. I literally feel that cause I take care of them, and they have the same umm feelings, it's very mutual...

...I've never heard mum saying “I love you” to [husband]...

Saman's story is a counternarrative to the dominant story of mother and daughter-in-law relationships being abusive (see for example Allendorf, 2006). The multiple relationships and connections of getting married and moving into an extended family simultaneously show a travelling of the relationships of care and safety. And the cultural legacy of the extended family is heard through understanding how the processes

of respect and reciprocity of care flow into, and are held, through constant negotiations of meaning making together.

Stories of love continued to surprise me in Rita's narrative. I was moved earlier by Rita's story of finding space for herself away from the family as a function of the relational flows in her extended family. I also heard very strongly, that this too is a story of love - she became enabled by the relationships that hold her family together to respect the importance of the support and joy that extended family brought:

Cause I really want, I know because I grew up with a lot of joint family and I know how much joy, I mean yes it can be difficult but a lot of the joy and support...And things and I'm like, I really want [child] to have that

...I count my blessings too. Like 1) umm it's not easy to find a joint setting, like we all stay together right...I mean yes it has its ups and downs but uh it's not easy to find something like that, like the security you get you know... Umm even with [child], umm I see that aspect as well. Umm like if things run really well and we all gel together, which we do, the growth you can see...is massive...

Through the relational flows of her extended family, Rita experienced belonging and connection, which enabled her to live safely as she was able to create spaces away from them but also to be together with them. Her story counters the idea that to achieve safety you need to leave extended family because here, the solution is held within family, and extended family relationships hold her in community.

As I began hearing the stories of the affirmation of difference, I began to become increasingly aware of the affective flows in the process as stories of love. Saman, who acknowledged that her relationships with her extended family was a process that became more responsive over time, continued to tell stories about living with her extended family. Through the trust of her relationships with her extended family, and in her process of becoming as a migrant, it was her father-in-law who provided the care for her children so she could return to work:

And dad's been amazing especially because I've gone back, started working, and umm I took word from him...that if he's going to fill in my absence, its only when I'm going to venture out and work because I don't want my kids to suffer...

...So I'm ever grateful. I keep, I keep reiterating and telling him that how grateful I am...For what he's doing for us so...cause I can go...I can get peace at work knowing that my kids are in good hands

Again, we have a narrative of love that affirms difference. The counternarrative produced here is the relational flows in the process of becoming that are also moving - responding to the needs of the wider family through their collective resources.

And in a counternarrative to the dominant story of abusive mothers-in-law, Saman understood the demands of her mother-in-law through her cultural legacy:

She's [mother-in-law] unfiltered, like not political correctness...like not politically phrase her sentences...It's just out there. Which is also good because what's in her heart is out of her mouth. So she's not sugar coating things. So it was really hard going through that phase...

Her intention is not like negative or...You know what Indian mother in laws are portrayed as. She's not, totally not, she's really cool and fun once you figure it out, how to be around her. It's like cakewalk...

So yah, like how I told you, like just being appreciated was like the key thing for me. For me, validation is so important...here I cook a table full of food, the house is pristine and I'm like...you just move on with your life. Or I do a major change, I've changed something downstairs, I've put something completely new and made the lounge completely different so that used to not be appreciated...so and I think mum's kind of realised that, that I need that kind of validation, she's come around quite a bit so she still, if she likes something she'll straight away say it, oh that's nice or you've done a good job or this looks pretty...or you know this tastes nice...

Saman's narrative tells a story of mutual understanding as she and her mother-in-law negotiate the meaning in the spaces of living together over time. This counter-story also tells us how the process of building relationships and connections is part of the affirmative flow of "knowing" within the multiple relationships that hold the collective in place as relationships move and change with the times.

“Everything revolved around food”

The process of migration is sometimes confronting, especially western notions of the gendered division of labour (Williams, 2014). I wondered about women's experiences of domestic labour, and what emerged in the women's stories, is that kitchens too are relationally meaningful spaces.

Xin Yun negotiates her refusal to cook based on how she related to the meaningfulness of the dish *and* the relational space of the kitchen when she lived in Dubai:

Me: ...is it [husband] who does the cooking

Xin Yun: Yep, that's it. I don't cook. Not that on purpose, but in Dubai I used to cook a lot...Anything and everything...Look in Dubai I do cook because you know I have access to groceries around the world and its good fun and I used to cook a lot...Yah like for myself, and then for [husband], like lobster, spaghetti...I'm inspired by the kitchen...But back in the days, back in the days like yah...

Me: You should give it a crack

Xin Yun: No I'm not inspired...I don't have down time but wayyy before I have kids...And married...I'd go to the gym, go shopping, uh find inspiration...but now inspiration is hard to come by...Coz I'm always tired

For Xin Yun, kitchens are relational spaces where the movements in and through her leisure time involved being inspired to cook. Since marrying, migrating to Aotearoa and having a child, the relational space of the kitchen has become a place in which she negotiates her new responsibilities in life. Through not cooking, Xin Yun becomes enabled to carry out other relational responsibilities related to marriage and motherhood, and this in turn opened up a space for shifting responsibilities and for her husband to take on the cooking.

Contrary to the dominant story that positions ethnic women as expected to cook, Rita remembers a childhood where there were no expectations to cook, reflecting on her first journey into cooking:

And now I reflect back, I'm like I don't even know what recipes I, but I know I'd cooked curries and I gave everyone at home...Umm and I know it was all edible...because we survived...I just go, I don't even know how I made those

curries. I mean I know that I would ask mum ok, what to put in etc Uh and the thing was, it was almost like I used to do it and it's flushed out because I'm not doing it again right...

However, through her marriage, and the birth of her daughter, she understood the relationship between cooking and caring through a process of relational meaning making:

Rita: ...I've been a horrible cook umm I guess now I put in more effort because of [husband], because he's a foodie...And I've got a daughter who's literally as fussy as [husband] and a foodie, my god!...

Me: ...In your wildest dreams, before that, you would never think you would be making

Rita: Spend so much time in the kitchen full stop...

In this narrative, cooking has taken on a different meaning. The counter-story produced here is that through her difference, the kitchen became an intentional relational space. The kitchen enabled a meaningful connection through which she could nurture, feed and care for her husband and her daughter in her everyday life.

Understanding the kitchen as relational also emerged in Saman's story, and is understood as contributing to the well-being of the family:

...so I used to be very good at cooking and I used to kind of be around the house...umm while she [mother] was like trying to figure her life out in terms of just her own personal...how to earn money and stuff so she used to run a boutique so I used to literally take the...take the leash in hand and take care of the house when she was not around...Yah, yah so I was behind the scenes trying to take care of the house because I didn't want her to feel like...Less of a mum by doing what she's doing cause yah so I made sure, kind of gave her an assuery that I can take care of [sister]...

This is a mana enhancing story of love, where I can recognise the pain, and hear the affective flow of the embodied connection that cooking brings into the relationship of care. And it was this recognition of the relational flow of cooking that helped Saman

transition to being both married and a migrant. She understood the affective flow of cooking and that she could become relational through the pleasure of cooking:

I was so domesticated and I was like into it, and I find pleasure in cooking and cleaning so I like it, it was not a chore...

For me, everything revolved around food right cause that was the only thing I used to do when I was back at home not working. The only thing to look forward to is cooking and getting the table ready for dinner and stuff so that was priority

As I was hearing love stories, I understood the story of affirmation of difference through the relational space of the kitchen - it affirmed her place in the relational flows of family life. And as she moved into other spaces and places, she continued to hold her space in the relational flows of the family, and developed systems that enabled her to maintain her meaningful relationships:

So I cook another pot of meal and I put it away in the fridge and I have to like tag everything, write down notes- this is dinner, what goes with that...I put a post-it on it...and what happens if it's a bake, it needs to go in the oven, I write all this on the foil...Every step...and then I have to make special, separate stuff for [second child's] dinner coz he'll not eat the spicy stuff...

...I make sure there's something to eat, either if we are going away for dinner for example...I make sure they [in-laws] have something to eat...I either cook or if they say nah don't worry, take a break, I'll make sure I've ordered something for them or they go out, make sure their meal is sorted, I'm just not gonna like take my bags and just walk out

Cooking was the important stuff of the relational kitchen because it is a story of bringing to the table love, care, attentiveness and support to each and every member of the family. And if Saman did not cook, that continuity of love and care was maintained through organising meals in a range of ways, like parcels of love.

Collectively, these stories about the relational processes of marriage, living with extended family and cooking for loved ones are affirming love stories. Saman and Zoya show us how the cultural legacy of collective communities opens up a space for connections that

are protective and caring, enabling them to be looked after, cared for and happy in their future spousal relationships. These multiple connections continue and flow into extended family relationships. For Saman, there was a travelling of care and safety that flowed into negotiations of meaning making within her relationships as daughter-in-law and migrant. Rita's story shows how extended family relationships enabled her to have both joy and safety as she negotiated spaces within and outside her family. Women's stories also show how cooking is an intentional relational space. Through not cooking in her kitchen, Xin Yun became enabled to carry out her relational responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. For Saman and Rita, cooking is a meaningful practice because it enabled connections of love and care through the food they put on the table.

Chapter 6: An Ending and a Beginning

I started this thesis with stories about experiences of difference, and how our social locations as “ethnic migrant women” flowed into dominant narratives that produced and reproduced us as deficient and other. These configurations of us as vulnerable women prompted me to question how we understand diversity and difference.

While we talk about diversity in an effort to include people from different contexts, in practice diversity is still viewed through categories of sameness and difference, limiting us and our possibilities. I wanted to do difference differently; to move beyond the pole of sameness and difference in ways that truly accounted for women’s diversities. I wanted to celebrate the vitality of women’s differences and their potentials.

To do difference differently, I had to actively come into relation with migrant women’s worlds and their lived experiences through a process of hearing responsibly. To hear responsibly, I conceptualised women’s stories as gifts, which required me to respond in dignified ways. Through this process, I became enabled to hear the sticky moments and relationships of difference flowing in and through women’s lives. And as these affective flows became known through the gift relationship, I took up my responsibility for hearing by reimagining women’s experiences of migration and everyday life in ways that showed the vitalities and joys of difference.

As I sat alongside women, and heard what they had to say, I became moved to notice the meaning of difference. Differences became resistances as women created spaces to challenge racism, and practices of othering through the normalisation of English. Differences became innovative as women negotiated their own (postcolonial) histories and locations to produce new and unbounded narratives of their diversities. Differences became transformative as through their relational flows, women became enabled to re-story their lives in positive and potentialising ways. Most importantly, differences became affirming because it opened possibilities for experiences of love, and this is not only crucial for wellbeing, but it is what can move all of us to ethical encounters with the vitality of difference.

And from affirmation of differences through stories of love, I have come to recognise that this thesis has become my act of love - for the women who chose to participate, and perhaps for migrant women everywhere. So, for my conclusion, I write thank you notes to each of my participants. I write to each woman to tell them what I heard and what I

felt, how their stories moved me to have a greater love and appreciation for them and for their diversities, and how there is potential in our differences.

To Cho

Dear Cho, racism is, and can be, so painful. And this makes me grateful that you shared your stories with me, including how racist practices made your mother feel stupid and how they always make you feel like you have an asterisk behind your identity. It is tiring having to fight the racism battle and yet in some instances you have fought back. I want you to know that I admire you for your courage and for your strength because I hear how often you have to carry the responsibility for challenging (or deciding whether to challenge) racism, not only for you, but also for those you love. And when I think of love, I heard how much your parents love you because despite the overwhelming pressure on migrants to learn and speak English in New Zealand, they did not want that stress for you. I know that you had other challenges as a migrant child and yet I love how you would not have it any other way because it has taught you how to be open to other ways of doing things, and it has given you learnings to pass on to your own children. Thank you for reminding me to take pride in being a migrant woman, and for reinforcing that we carry with us skills, knowledges and potentials because of our experiences.

To Xin Yun

Dear Xin Yun, your work stories surprised me because they ousted the priority given to the English language in this country. And it was such a reversal to hear about how English speakers felt like the minority. I love how you move between Mandarin and English on the shop floor, depending on whether you are trying to keep up social connections or chastise those who piss you off! Through your stories, I heard the complexities that are involved when you are a Chinese woman living in Aotearoa. You move in and out of complicated relationships, promoting Mataraki among your Chinese employees and at the same time rebelling against Chinese workplace norms. You somehow make all these cultural relationships work, and by doing this, you have made a space of your own. Thank you for highlighting how complicated migrant women's

worlds are, and also how we frequently and successfully negotiate these in our everyday lives.

To Raya

Dear Raya, I heard how racism for you comes from intimate family relationships, and I felt what it must be like for you to be married into a family that speaks about migrants in the same way you know people speak about your migrant parents. When you spoke about how you remain silent in the face of these comments, I heard your revolt loud and clear. More importantly, I know what your silence means; by not saying anything, you keep all the family relationships together, and this tells me how much you love your husband. I also wanted to say how I felt so hopeful when I heard about your aspirations to live a life that is yours, instead of caring about, or trying to live, for other people's expectations. Thank you for reminding me that I do not have to be constrained to what the world expects of me. I can create and have my very own hopes and dreams.

To Kerry

Dear Kerry, I love your no-nonsense approach to blatant racism. But I also think it is very brave and very patient of you to actively question racist comments. By doing this, I hear how you take on the responsibility for unpacking racism so that a racist encounter becomes a space of education, carrying with it the hope that you can provoke people to think and act differently. I admire you because I do not know if I could use such awful experiences as opportunities like you do. I also know that your migration journey has not been an easy one and yet I heard about how happy you are being here in Aotearoa. I loved hearing about how moving here has enabled you to live your best life, and particularly how it gave you the opportunity to negotiate your own meanings about your body and your relationships. Thank you for showing me that we can

say “fuck you” to the patriarchy while still honouring our religious and cultural beliefs. And for reminding me of all the amazing possibilities because we are here in Aotearoa.

To Rita

Dear Rita, I found our conversation comforting. In the current culture that looks to blame individuals for all sorts of things, your stories showed me a completely different way to look at things. Your turn to spirituality for understanding and guidance gave me a fresh perspective; experiences in our lives are not always about us but about the bigger picture and wider relationships. And then this idea of a wider universe made sense to me when you talked about your extended family because I heard how these relationships give you joy, but also let you have a space to feel safe. Listening to how you stay in a difficult relationship while also creating your own spaces to be happy while staying in that relationship opened my mind to new possibilities. And then I remembered our talk about cooking and it was wonderful to hear how you moved from just making things that were edible to now being able to cook in your sleep! You even said that in your wildest dreams you did not think you would spend so much time in the kitchen but I think that just shows how much you love and care for your family. Thank you for opening up my mind to other possibilities - that we can turn to spiritual connections for help and that we have the ability to create our own unique solutions to suit us and our lives.

To Zoya

Dear Zoya, hearing your stories about your differences reiterated to me that we each have our own experiences and backgrounds. We may be Indian but we are not all the same. And sometimes, we have to navigate not just what mainstream expects of us. Sometimes, we have to navigate our other worlds like how you have

had to navigate what it means to work for Indian child care centres. And this reminds me of how you negotiate your intimate relationships. I heard the importance that you placed on your Pākehā partner understanding what it means to be Indian, and it was actually very inspiring to hear how you articulated your need for him to engage with your Indian connections. At the same time, I also felt the love you have for your parents. You not telling them about overnight stays with your partner and ensuring that he could handle your parents and their questions before you told them about him, showed me how much you care for them. Thank you for showing me that I can have romantic relationships on my own terms and also that I can do this in ways which honour my parents. You show me that it is possible to prioritise and love your family and your partner.

To Hien

Dear Hien, I started out wanting to highlight how migrant women's worth is unjustly measured depending on their competency in English, and then you told me about your extraordinary ability to speak and think in English and Vietnamese in your everyday life. Your diversity of speaking made me appreciate how you can learn English without leaving your mother tongue behind. And frankly, it is simply cool that you can move between, and think in, multiple languages! When you told me about how you felt too western for the family and not Asian enough for the Asians, I saw how you created your own diversity and simply embraced the meanings of being Kiwi and Vietnamese. And I saw a continuation of this amazing fluidity when you were looking back on your life to acknowledge how far you have come and this made me hopeful because even when there are hardships, there are opportunities for movement and for who we can become. But the story that moved me the most was your talk about sexuality. You opened up spaces that we never talk about and it was beautiful to hear you tell about the changing meanings of sexuality within your

life. Thank you for admitting me into such an intimate part of your life, and for illustrating so wonderfully that sexuality is a matter that can be negotiated and understood together as a couple.

To Saman

Dear Saman, your stories involved many stories of love. I heard love when your family was helping you to find a prospective partner and how these family relationships worked to ensure that you were going to be cared for. You made me appreciate how the process of marriage is embedded in multiple relationships of love, and through these multiple relationships, there is the possibility of having your own love story. I saw how these relationships of love and care travelled with you in your migration so that you were able to negotiate your own relationships with mum and dad. You calling your in-laws “mum” and “dad” actually moved me to expand my own ideas about love. Stories of love also emerged through your cooking and food, and I heard and felt how you express and declare your love in your everyday life for each and every member of your family. Thank you for showing me the different possibilities of love. You have truly expanded my ideas of what it means to have and to be and to become in relationships of love.

Reflecting on my thank you notes, I appreciate that women told me many awesome stories, and that my thesis inevitably only highlights some of these. Nevertheless, my hope is that by showing how we can do difference differently, and by rearticulating some of the joys and potentials of difference and its meanings, I have opened the door for future possibilities – where we no longer look at difference in categorical and limited ways, but where through the relational flows of women’s histories and locations, the meanings of difference become known in new, affirming and celebratory ways. In the spirit of “aesthetic” encounters (Fine, 2017), I invite you to imagine the possibilities of what can become known through hearing difference.

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Appendices

Women's experiences of migration and everyday life in Aotearoa

INFORMATION SHEET

Invitation To You

Hello! I hope you are well and that you are having a nice day!

Thank you for being interested in my project. As I mentioned to you previously, my project is focusing on what it means to live as a migrant woman in New Zealand. I am asking women like yourself to share your stories, thoughts and feelings about everyday life in Aotearoa, and in particular, about your experiences of joy and resistance.

The reason I have asked you to participate in my project is because you and I know each other, and we have already shared many stories about our daily lives as migrant women. I think that your experiences and what you have to say will not only be a valuable contribution to my project, but that it can also change what people know and say about migrant women.

This information sheet (3 pages) sets out some more details about how I am going to carry out my project and what will happen if you decide to participate. If you have any other questions or need clarification about any aspect of this project, I will of course be happy to answer these.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my invitation to participate in this project 😊

Who Will I Be Speaking With

I am reaching out to migrant women that I already know and asking if they would like to participate in my project. This is because I am a migrant woman myself, and I have already had discussions with these women about our everyday lives in New Zealand. While women might know each other within my network, I will not be disclosing who has chosen to participate unless I have permission to do so.

Women also need to be over the age of 18, proficient in English, and located in the Auckland area. Since I am looking for diversity within our stories and experiences, it does not matter what ethnic background women are, what age they may have migrated to New Zealand or whether they are currently New Zealand citizens or not.

So that I can focus on the experiences of migrant women in detail, I am aiming to have conversations with up to 8 women for this project.

What Happens If You Choose to Participate

If you decide to take part in my project, I will come and meet with you. Before we start with the "official" part of the project, I will go over the project details and answer any questions that you may have. I will also ask you to sign a consent form to acknowledge that you are happy to participate, and that you understand the project and what is involved.

The “official” part of the project will involve us talking about your stories and experiences of everyday life as a migrant woman. It will be just like when you and I hang out and talk socially, except that our discussion will center around the project. Some key themes which we may talk about are:

- Your stories and experiences of migration to New Zealand
- Your stories and experiences of living in New Zealand
- Your stories and experiences of happiness or joy
- Your stories and experiences of resistances or overcoming challenges
- Any other stories or experiences that you would like to share for this project relating to what it is like to be a migrant woman living in New Zealand

While I may ask you some open-ended and broad questions related to the above themes, I anticipate that your stories and experiences will guide what we talk about and where the conversation will take us. I expect that we will speak for approximately 1-2 hours but I will be available if you would like to talk to me for longer.

Conversations will take place where you will be most comfortable so maybe at your home or another location of your choosing. I know that some of the greatest stories we have shared have been over food so I will bring refreshments for us. It will also be one way for me to thank you for your time and for your stories.

To help me remember and review what we have talked about, I would like to also digitally sound record our conversation. If you do not want me to sound record you, then I will just take notes during our discussion. Any recordings will be uploaded to a password protected cloud drive and only I will be able to listen to them (or see the notes taken during our discussion if you do not wish to be sound recorded).

As conversations about being a migrant woman can bring up challenging experiences or feelings, we can take breaks or stop our discussion at any time if you need this. At the end of our conversation, I will also ensure that there is time for us to consider what we have spoken about and to discuss any concerns or feelings you may have about what you have shared with me. I will stay with you for as long as you need me to, and I will help you contact appropriate support people or organizations if you need further support.

How I Will Look After Your Stories

I will be personally transcribing all recorded discussions myself (or typing up any notes from our conversation if you do not wish to be digitally recorded). Unless you give me permission, your name and any identifying details will not be transferred to the transcript and a pseudonym will be used. If you like, you are welcome to choose your own pseudonym (fun!). After transcription (or typing up my notes from our conversation if you do not wish to be recorded), I will destroy digital recordings (or notes). Therefore, only the transcripts of our conversation will remain.

I am required to keep your signed consent forms and transcripts of our conversation for a minimum of 5 years. These will be stored separately from each other by my supervisor in a locked location in her office in the School of Psychology. If I make any separate notes for my project based on the transcripts, I will store these in a password protected cloud drive until the thesis has been graded.

Analysis of the transcript of our conversation will be undertaken by me, with the help of my supervisors. However, my supervisors will only be seeing the pseudonymized version

of the transcripts so they will not know who you are unless you have given me permission to disclose this.

Before I begin analysis of the transcripts, I will provide you with a copy of your individual transcript. This is so that you can review your transcript, and if necessary, request any changes. If you are satisfied with your transcript and consent to me using them in my project, I will ask you to sign an authority for the release of the transcript. You will be able to withdraw from the project at any time up until you sign this authority.

When the research has been completed, I will contact you confidentially to discuss my findings and give you feedback on the project.

Your Rights ✓

You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Decline to answer any particular question;
- Withdraw from the study at any time up until you sign the authority for release of your transcript;
- Ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- Provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give me permission;
- 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 our conversation.

Researchers' Contact Details

If you would like to participate, please contact me, Bianca. My contact details are:

Bianca Saldanha Ph: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

I am conducting this research as the thesis component of my Master of Arts in Psychology degree, under the supervision of Dr Leigh Coombes and Dr Shemana Cassim, Massey University, Manawatū. Their details are below:

Dr Leigh Coombes: Ph: 06 951 8075 Email: L.Coombes@massey.ac.nz

Dr Shemana Cassim Ph: 06 951 7966 Email: S.Cassim@massey.ac.nz

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researchers named in this document are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you want to raise with someone other than the researchers, please contact Professor Craig Johnson, Director - Ethics, telephone 06 356 9099 ext 85271, email humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Women's experiences of migration and everyday life in Aotearoa

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I have read, or have had read to me in my first language, and I understand, the Information Sheet attached as Appendix I.

I have had the details of the study explained to me, any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I have been given sufficient time to consider whether to participate in this study and I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the study at any time up until I sign the Authority for the Release of Transcripts attached as Appendix II.

1. I agree / do not agree to the conversation being sound recorded.
2. I understand that sound recordings of my conversation (or notes taken during my conversation if I do not agree to be recorded) will be destroyed after transcription and will not be given to me.
3. I understand that I will have the opportunity to make changes to my transcript if I wish to do so.
4. I understand that I will be given a summary of the findings when the research is completed.
5. 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.

[print full name]

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

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AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview(s) conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature:

Date:

.....

Full Name - printed

.....

Women's experiences of migration and everyday life in Aotearoa

CONVERSATION GUIDE

- Can you tell me about how you came to live in New Zealand?
- What are some experiences or stories you would like to share about your life in New Zealand?
- Can you share some experiences or stories of joy or happiness in your life while living in New Zealand?
- Can you recall any experiences while living in New Zealand where things were challenging and how you dealt with this?
- Are there any other stories or experiences you wish to share about what daily life is like for you in New Zealand?