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Creating enclaves of care among Muslim migrant women in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Nuke Martiarini

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Abstract

Muslim migration to Western nations has increased in recent decades, with women facing unique challenges in resettling within secular societies such as Aotearoa New Zealand. While previous research has acknowledged challenges including skills transfer, trauma recovery, prejudice, and discrimination, this thesis foregrounds the strengths, resilience, and agency of Muslim women as they support one another and their wider communities. I explore how Muslim migrant women create supportive networks that foster confidence, independence, and empowerment. The study focuses on two Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland-based women's groups: the Annisa Trust and the Azura Trust. The Annisa Trust, a volunteer collective of women from diverse ethnic and generational backgrounds, provides a prosocial enclave of care for vulnerable and newly arrived Muslim women and their families, while the Azura Trust emphasises economic empowerment and develops programmes to enhance financial independence through the efforts of both volunteers and paid staff. Adopting a narrative orientation within an auto-ethnographic, case-based approach, I immersed myself in the projects and practices of both groups during 2 years of fieldwork. Field notes and interviews documented shared activities and participants' migration experiences. The analysis has drawn on migration concepts such as acculturation, cultural hybridity, hyphenated identities, and cultural articulation, alongside Islamic concepts of *hijrah*, *madrassa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*. *Hijrah* frames migration as both relocation and making a positive contribution to the host society; a *madrassa* is understood as a community learning space; *da'wah* highlights collective efforts to bridge cultural and faith divides; and *barakah* refers to the blessings generated through communal care and empowerment. The findings have important theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, the research develops an Islam-informed analytical framework that enriches discussions on migration and resettlement by foregrounding cultural and spiritual resources. Practically, it highlights the effectiveness of self-organised women's groups in fostering inclusion, resilience, and mutual aid. The study affirms the essential role of community-based support systems and cultural resources in promoting successful migration and integration experiences. Finally, I argue that the resettlement experiences of Muslim migrant women are dynamic and positive, highlighting their ability to adapt and contribute prosocially to the new society.

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List of Abbreviations

Assimilation, Integration, Marginalisation, and Separation	AIMS
Coronavirus Disease 2019	COVID-19
District Health Board.....	DHB
Focus Group Discussions	FGD
Member of the Aotearoa NZ Order of Merit.....	MNZM
Ministry of Social Development	MSD
Peace Be Upon Him.....	PBUH
Self-Help Group	SHG
Strategies with Kids: Information for Parents	SKIP
Women’s Self-Help Group.....	WSHG

Glossary

Agency

The capacity of individuals or groups to act independently, make choices, and shape their social environments; in this study, reflected in Muslim women's active roles in community-building, mentorship, and adaptation.

Acculturation

The process through which migrants adapt to a new cultural environment while maintaining aspects of their culture of origin, often involving negotiation between continuity and change.

Annisa Trust (Group 1)

A community-based organisation composed entirely of volunteers, primarily focused on social support and community-building activities for Muslim migrant women in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Azura Trust (Group 2)

A women-led community organisation combining voluntary and paid roles, providing culturally affirming programmes, education, and social services that support migrant integration, empowerment, and well-being.

Barakah

An Islamic concept referring to spiritual blessing or divine grace, often experienced through acts of care, reciprocity, and community engagement, and understood by participants as shaping life opportunities, resilience, and social contribution.

Case-Based Approach

A methodological strategy that examines specific groups or contexts as "cases" to develop in-depth, situated understandings of social phenomena.

Collectivist Integration

An approach to migrant integration that emphasises shared responsibility, mutual support, and community-based adaptation, in contrast to individualistic models of acculturation.

Community Madrasa (Madrasa-like Space)

Informal, community-based spaces of shared learning, care, cultural preservation, and ethical development, where knowledge is exchanged across generations and social roles.

Culturally Affirming Space

A social environment in which individuals' cultural, religious, and linguistic identities are recognised, valued, and supported as part of everyday participation and belonging.

Cultural Articulation

The process through which cultural meanings, identities, and practices are expressed, negotiated, and adapted within new sociocultural contexts.

Cultural Hybridity

The coexistence and blending of multiple cultural identities and practices, often experienced by migrants navigating between cultures of origin and host societies.

Da'wah

An Islamic practice of invitation, expressed through everyday ethical conduct, care, and community engagement rather than formal proselytising, fostering understanding and bridge-building across communities.

Empowerment (Community-based)

A process through which individuals gain confidence, skills, and agency through participation in supportive community environments, often transitioning into leadership or mentoring roles.

Fieldwork

The process of collecting data through direct engagement with participants in their natural settings, including observation, participation, and interaction.

Focus Group Discussion (FGD)

A qualitative research method involving guided group conversations used to explore shared experiences, meanings, and group dynamics.

Go-along Interview

A qualitative method in which the researcher accompanies participants in their everyday environments to generate context-rich, experiential insights.

Hadith

Collections of sayings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), used to interpret Islamic teachings in everyday life and guide practices of faith, mentorship, and community engagement.

Hijrah

An Islamic concept of migration encompassing both physical relocation and spiritual transformation, guiding ethical adaptation, identity negotiation, and social contribution in new contexts.

Hyphenated Identity

A form of identity that combines multiple cultural, national, or religious affiliations (e.g., Muslim-Somali-Kiwi), reflecting complex and situated belonging.

Insider Perspective

A research position in which the researcher shares cultural, religious, or social characteristics with participants, enabling deeper relational understanding.

Islam-Informed Analytical Framework

An approach that incorporates Islamic concepts (e.g., hijrah, madrasa, da'wah, barakah) as interpretive lenses to understand lived experiences of migration and community life.

Kaupapa Māori

A Māori term referring to a set of guiding principles, philosophies, or frameworks that underpin practices, actions, or research approaches, often grounded in cultural values and community priorities.

Madrasa (Madrasa-like Space)

Traditionally a place of formal Islamic learning; in this study, also refers to community-based spaces for knowledge exchange, mentoring, and personal development.

Manaaki

A Māori concept referring to care, hospitality, and support for others, often expressed through generosity, nurturing relationships, and the uplifting of individuals or communities.

Mentorship (Community-based)

A relational process within the group whereby more experienced members guide and support others, fostering leadership, confidence, and practical application of shared values.

Modesty (Islamic Concept)

A broader ethical principle guiding behaviour and appearance in Islam, extending beyond dress to include conduct, interactions, and self-presentation.

Muslim

A follower of Islam, who identifies with its beliefs, practices, and ethical principles; in this study, often used to describe women actively participating in faith-informed community engagement.

Prosocial Activities

Actions intended to benefit others, including volunteering, mutual aid, teaching, and community service.

Qur'an

The central religious text of Islam, regarded as the literal word of Allah as revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), providing ethical, spiritual, and moral guidance.

Reciprocity (Community Context)

A mutual exchange of care, support, and knowledge, often reflected in “paying forward” assistance received during resettlement.

Relational Ethics

An ethical framework emphasising trust, mutual respect, dialogue, and ongoing relationships throughout the research process.

Self-Help Groups (SHG)

Community-based, often grassroots initiatives formed by individuals with shared experiences to provide mutual support, resources, and collective empowerment.

Social Cohesion

The process of fostering inclusive, cooperative, and harmonious relationships across diverse social, cultural, and faith groups.

Social Practices

Routine, shared activities through which individuals enact and reproduce cultural meanings, relationships, and community life.

Tāmaki Makaurau / Kirikiriroa

Māori names for Auckland and Hamilton, respectively, recognising the bicultural context of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Ummah

A global community of Muslims bound by shared faith, often understood as transcending ethnic, national, and cultural differences, and enacted through practices of mutual care and solidarity.

Whanaungatanga

A Māori concept describing positive relational networks, kinship ties, and a sense of connectedness, emphasising collective responsibility, belonging, and mutual support.

Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHG)

Community-based groups formed by women to provide mutual support, enhance skills, and foster empowerment across social, economic, and personal domains.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Migration is a global phenomenon that has shaped human history for millennia. Evidence of early human movement dates to at least 4000 BCE, when ancient seafarers from Asian countries undertook maritime journeys for trade, leading to the resettlement of populations on offshore islands (McNeill, 1984). Over time, scholars have documented the changing patterns and motivations of migration (Fisher, 2013; Harris, 2003; Kleinschmidt, 2017; McNeill, 1984; Park, 1928; Rystad, 1992; Schrover, 2022). Often, migration has been driven by economic and environmental factors, as individuals and communities sought more habitable, often warmer and safer, regions conducive to trade and survival (Beine & Jeusette, 2021; de Haas, 2021; Ghosh & Orchiston, 2022; Giménez-Gómez et al., 2019; Mitterbacher, 2024).

Following World War II, migration from Asia to Western nations intensified, driven by population growth and socioeconomic transformations. Between 1960 and 2019, the number of international migrants quadrupled, reaching 272 million, or roughly 3.5% of the global population. While the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily disrupted global mobility in 2020, migration continues to be a major force influencing demographic trends (Martin & Bergmann, 2021). In recent decades, the scale and nature of migration have changed considerably (Castles et al., 2014). Today, international migration is occurring at an unprecedented rate, with millions of people crossing borders and many more expressing a desire to migrate (Esipova et al., 2018). Migration now plays a pivotal role in shaping global economies, public policy, social dynamics, and both international cooperation and conflict (Chamie, 2020).

By the early 20th century, large-scale displacement had become increasingly visible, particularly through the forced migration of enslaved peoples and the movement of populations due to war and political upheaval (Inikori, 2022; Martin, 2023; Müller-Funk & Natter, 2023; Wagner, 2022). These historical shifts often led to the relocation of entire communities into unfamiliar territories. Poverty and inequality emerged as enduring drivers of migration, compelling individuals to seek improved living conditions elsewhere (De Haan, 1999). While earlier forms of migration were primarily collective and survival-driven, contemporary migration is often shaped by individual aspirations, including economic opportunity, education, safety, and an improved quality of life (de Haas, 2021; McNeill, 1984; Wiedemann, 2020). Nonetheless, migration continues to be fundamentally linked to survival, security, and opportunity. The continuous movement of people across borders has contributed significantly to cultural dynamism and global interconnectedness (Faist, 2000; Tsagarousianou & Retis, 2019).

To recap, transnational migration has existed for hundreds of years. It expanded significantly in the 19th and 20th centuries, accelerated by population growth, industrialisation and globalisation (Castles, 2000; Donato & Massey, 2016). Today, migration is classified according to five key drivers: economic, social, political, environmental, and personal (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022; Kuhnt, 2019; Kwilinski et al., 2022; Warner et al., 2010). Economic motivations remain the most prevalent, with many seeking improved employment opportunities, higher wages, and better access to healthcare and education (Shier et al., 2011; Trlifajová & Hurrell, 2018). Remittances sent by migrants often support families in their countries of origin. Social drivers, such as family reunification and marriage, also play a significant role. Educational aspirations have become increasingly influential as students pursue academic advancement abroad (Salisbury et al., 2009; Yang et al., 2018). Political instability, armed conflict, and persecution continue to displace populations, while environmental challenges, such as climate change; natural disasters and resource scarcity, further contribute to forced migration (Ghosh & Orchiston, 2022; Hammar & Tamas, 2021). Some people migrate simply in pursuit of personal growth or enhanced well-being (Benson & O'Reilly, 2009; Diener & Seligman, 2004; Özyurt, 2023). Ultimately, migration is shaped by a complex interplay of necessity and aspiration.

According to Chamie (2020), approximately 60% of global migrants now reside in developed regions, with Europe hosting 30%, North America over 20%, and Oceania around 3%. Asia accounts for nearly one-third of the world's migrant population, while Africa and Latin America (including the Caribbean) represent 10% and 4%, respectively. Movements from emerging economies to Western societies are primarily driven by the pursuit of economic, social, political, and educational opportunities (Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022; Kuhnt, 2019; Kwilinski et al., 2022; Shier et al., 2011; Trlifajová & Hurrell, 2018; Warner et al., 2010). This is driving significant demographic change in receiving societies (Boghean, 2016) and fuelling tensions associated with migrant adaptation and social inclusion (Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020; Cicognani et al., 2018).

Scholars have noted that throughout human history people have migrated to different places for a range of reasons, sparking various intergroup interactions, conflicts, and collisions and the cross-fertilisation of cultures and traditions (Park, 1928; Manning & Trimmer, 2020; McNeill, 1984; Schlebusch & Jakobsson, 2018). Many migrants choose when and where to move. Many also have no such choice and become refugees¹ on the move. Factors such as

¹ Refugee refers to a person who is forced to move from one place to another, often to escape war and persecution.

natural disasters, population increases, poverty, underemployment, political conflicts, and ecological concerns are often the driving factors that encourage people to start their migration journeys (Hammar & Tamas, 2021). Regardless of the reasons for voluntary or forced migration, groups who move often band together to navigate the various complexities that come with leaving, transiting, arriving, and resettling somewhere new (Erdal & Oeppen, 2020). This is because these journeys do not end when migrants² and refugees arrive somewhere new. Adaptation to new countries and cultures can be an ongoing and multigenerational process that requires migrants to adapt to new ecological conditions and cultural practices, often preserving aspects of their cultures of origin whilst also learning new ways for conducting their everyday lives somewhere new (Hodgetts et al., 2020). Adding further complexity, for some, migration is not a one-way journey. For example, for those who have been forced to flee conflict or ecological disaster, the desire to return home or at least remaining involved at a distance is also a key feature of their migration experiences (Crawley & Jones, 2021; Ghosn et al., 2021; Mitchell & Pizzi, 2021).

Both voluntary and forced migrants, particularly adherents of Islam from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, continue to make their way to Western countries (United Nations High Commission for Refugees [UNHCR], 2020). such as Aotearoa New Zealand (Aotearoa NZ), the location of this research This has had a significant impact on the Muslim population in this country which has experienced rapid growth, increasing from 1.3% of the total population in 2018 to 1.5% in 2023 (Stats NZ, 2023). For these newcomers, transitions to life in this country can be abrupt and affronting (Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020). The shock of arriving in what can be experienced as a strange or unfamiliar country requires adaptive responses to navigate everyday life in Aotearoa NZ. This requires these newcomers to also reflect on the cultural practices they take for granted, their ways of being, and their very senses of self (Cicognani et al., 2018).

These processes of adaptation can prove stressful, particularly for refugees who arrive with minimal resources and supports. Reception requires planning and resource allocation on the part of the receiving country. For example, soon after refugees arrive in Aotearoa NZ, they are accommodated for 6 weeks in government-funded resettlement facilities and are supported by a range of professionals. Working alongside the government, refugee-focused service providers, many staffed by former refugees and migrants, offer services related to acculturation across age, gender, and family dynamics to address some of the complexities

² Migrant refers to a person who moves voluntarily from one place to another for various reasons, including education and work.

and stressors of displacement, trauma, and marginalisation that many newcomers bring with them from their countries of origin (Marlowe et al., 2014; McIntosh & Cockburn-Wooten, 2018; Mitchell & Kamenarac, 2022).

After completing this residency programme, refugees are relocated to various cities (Stat NZ, 2019), often involving but not always receiving ongoing transition support from government and community agencies (Khan-Janif & Mohammed, 2021). In terms of ethno-religious minorities, such as Muslim refugees, many also benefit from self-help or organic community supports that have been established by earlier migrants and refugees who understand what it is like to move to Aotearoa NZ and build a life here. Groups such as the two that are central to the present research assist newcomers with ongoing adjustments to life in this new host country to facilitate more seamless transitions, while also enabling newcomers to maintain a sense of connection with their home countries. These supportive and welcoming initiatives are particularly important for Muslims, who are often portrayed in a negative light in Western news media as terrorists and actual or potential threats to society. These negative portrayals contribute to tensions between some Muslims and non-Muslims in countries such as Aotearoa NZ (Akbarzadeh, 2016; Ali & Sonn, 2017; Kabir & Bourk, 2012; Kabir & Hamid, 2015; Spier, 2020; Varisco, 2009). It is important to emphasise that Muslim newcomers are not always treated with suspicion by all receiving communities and citizens and are often assisted by more established members of society. In Aotearoa NZ, these include non-Muslim Pākehā and Māori, who extend a sense of inclusion, belonging, and solidarity towards Muslim newcomers (Cassim, Khan-Janif, & Martiarini, 2023). Many more established migrant groups also render assistance.

Central to these processes of resettlement and to my research are two Muslim migrant and refugee women's groups that actively work to facilitate the process of resettlement for newcomers. As I document, these faith-based self-help groups (SHG) encompass women (many of whom have lived in Aotearoa NZ for decades) who assist each other and more recent newcomers in adjusting to the new sociocultural and religious environment. A central purpose of these groups is to support the women's Islamic sense of self and place within a new societal ecosystem that also features various levels of stigma towards Muslim women which can function as barriers to successful resettlement, adaptation, and social integration (Ferrero, 2018; Pearce et al., 2017). These groups encompass women of various ethnicities and education levels and involve cross-cultural collaborations between members from different ethnic groups who are also sisters within the Islamic faith. In this thesis, I approach the two participating groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland as supportive self-help enclaves that foster

mutual care and support through dialogue and shared participation in practical acts of care, community service, and commerce (Ali et al., 2017).

By way of further background, Group 1 in this research, the Annisa Trust, is the longest standing collective of Muslim women engaged in community care in this country, and it has been used as a model in the subsequent development of other groups throughout Aotearoa NZ. Group 2, the Azura Trust, is an offshoot of the first group that has focused more on commerce. Chapter 2 offers a more detailed overview of both these groups through which I explore the experiences of participating Muslim migrant and refugee women. I document how the groups facilitate the resettlement of refugee and migrant women and their families and promote inter-ethnic solidarities and mutual support. Also explored is how these groups engage in a range of prosocial and commercial activities by arranging and leading various practical programmes to assist other women with their resettlement journeys and benefit the broader community (encompassing Muslims and non-Muslims) in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. More specifically, central to this research are participant accounts of where they migrated from, why they came to Aotearoa, their resettlement journeys, how they became involved in these groups, and the function of these groups within the broader contexts of their own lives and in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. I also document how the participating women work from within these two enclaves of care to support other community members as a way of expressing core Islamic values and associated duties of care towards others. As such, my research is designed to contribute to the study of gender in migration research and the intersectional articulations of gender as performance in the context of migration that can both preserve and reshape women's gendered roles both in domestic settings and in civic life somewhere new (Amelina & Lutz, 2018; Buijs, 2024).

The remainder of this chapter offers further contextual information on previous migration research in general, Muslim migration to Westernised nations such as Aotearoa NZ, and the challenges faced by Muslim women. Also outlined is my conceptual framework for exploring Muslim women's migration, the role of self-help groups (SHG), and the everyday conduct of Muslim women's lives in a secular society like Aotearoa NZ. The chapter is completed with an overview of the thesis structure and a summary of subsequent chapters.

Muslim Migration to Western Societies, Including Aotearoa New Zealand

As noted above, throughout history, human beings have moved between their places of origin and new towns, districts, nations, and regions, and in doing so come to engage in dynamic processes of migration (Bell et al., 2015; Fisher, 2013; McKeown, 2004; McAuliffe & Ruhs, 2018). Correspondingly, interest in migration also dates back into early recorded

history and features a focus on what happens when different groups of people move and come into increased contact with others from diverse backgrounds (Belabas & DeJong, 2024; Leuner, 2008; Mayblin et al., 2024; Siim & Kraus, 2015). The resulting dynamics of difference ideally offer opportunities for groups to learn from and cooperate with each other to increase the quality of life for all. However, situations often do not work out that way. Previous research suggests that migration is also accompanied by intergroup conflicts, prejudice, and discrimination (Ellermann, 2020, Ruysen & Salomone, 2018). These issues are particularly pertinent to countries such as Aotearoa NZ that are multicultural migrant nations. Correspondingly, this country is producing a growing body of research, often with the intent to facilitate the integration of newcomers and to promote social solidarity so that citizens and residents can build more harmonious lives together in this place (Terruhn & Cassim, 2023). This thesis contributes to a substantive and growing canon that seeks to extend current knowledge of migrant experiences and efforts to integrate into this society and contribute to communal life in this place.

The following section is divided into two interrelated subsections. The first considers the existing literature regarding Muslim migration to Western countries and then narrows with a focus on migration to Aotearoa NZ. The second narrows the focus further to document existing knowledge regarding the challenges and adaptation practices of Muslim women, including the development of women's groups both internationally and in this country.

Muslim Migration to Western Countries

Previous research has documented the migration of millions of people from emerging economies or nation states, where they may have been part of the majority, to Western OECD countries, where they may be in the minority, in search of safer and more prosperous lives and more opportunities for themselves and their families (Ralph & Staeheli, 2011; Salamońska & Czeranowska, 2021; Schwarz, 2020). For many people, these moves are made due to unstable situations in their countries of origin, due to war and conflicts, natural disasters, economic recessions, and hardship (Brezis, 2016; Czaika & Reinprecht, 2022; Davin, 1999; de Haas, 2012). Many also move to rejoin family who have already moved and to access new business and educational opportunities (Findlay et al., 2017; Khanna, 2021; Salzmann, Edmonston & Raymer, 2010; Sirkeci, 2005; Zlotnik, 1998). While retaining a general focus on migration patterns and the experiences of a range of different groups, over the past decade, researchers from various academic fields, including sociology, economics, human geography, migration and labour studies, urban studies, media studies, politics, and psychology have been paying increasing attention to Muslim experiences of migration to

Western countries (Abdulaev, 2019; L. Ali & Sonn, 2017; Brodard, 2019; Estrada et al., 2019; Loftsdóttir, 2018; Randeria & Karagianis, 2020).

Researchers have focused on both Muslim voluntary migrants and involuntary refugees and asylum seekers (Baranik, 2021; Črnič, 2020; Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2012). These scholars have noted that the different migration pathways for Muslim voluntary migrants, who relocate in pursuit of opportunities such as education, employment, or family reunification, and involuntary migrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, who are forced to leave their home countries due to conflict, persecution, or environmental crises, shape different processes for integration and identity formation, and access to social, economic, and also cultural resources in the host societies.

A growing body of evidence suggests that Muslim migration to Western nations is often accompanied by various problems, many of which are also common to migrants and refugees in general. These problems include the complexities of adapting to new societal systems, local processes, and language differences, and for many, barriers to employment and inclusion within the socioeconomic systems of the new host countries (Collins, 2020; Fritzsche & Nelson, 2020; Siddiq et al., 2023). For Muslim migrants, particularly in Western contexts, these difficulties are compounded by securitisation and suspicion, amplified in the post-9/11 era (Ahmad et al., 2024; Ali, 2020; Barkdull et al., 2011; Bleich, 2009; Ghaffar-Kucher et al., 2022). Recent years have seen increasing emphasis on the integration of Muslims into Western societies. The main issue has been on facilitating the capacity of newcomers to engage effectively in society (Gest, 2012; Norris & Inglehart, 2012; Peucker & Ceylan, 2017). Dominant narratives tend to frame Muslim migrants as culturally incompatible with Western culture or as resistant to integration, fuelling public anxieties and arguably warranting structural exclusions to employment and acceptance by members of the host society (Cheikh et al., 2023; Latif, 2024; Saleem et al., 2022). While much of the previous literature has focused on key barriers to Muslim migrant inclusion within Western nations, a growing body of literature from countries such as Belgium (Miri et al., 2021) suggests that migrant women, especially Muslim migrant women, do not simply adopt the dominant views of citizenship, motherhood, or success as defined by integration programmes. Instead, they draw on their existing cultural and affective resources, especially in caregiving, to negotiate their place in society. This study suggests that host countries should be more structurally supportive and culturally sensitive, rather than narrowly focused on assimilation or individual independence. Such research suggests that it is important to establish encounter spaces in which migrants and members of the new host society can establish trusting relationships and

get to know each other and each groups' respective needs (Ahmed, 2021).

Research on migrants remains dominated by Western worldviews. Relatedly, studies to date of migration to Western nations have primarily been conducted in accord with the theories of these host nations, whereby the understandings and perspectives of migrant Muslims are embraced as exemplars within broader processes of settlement and reintegration (Ajrouch, 2007; Liebert et al., 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2012). Such research documents how Muslims, as migrants, navigate the process of adapting to a new culture, often informed by their own cultural values and the cultural perspectives and practices they bring with them. Most of this research (Ajrouch, 2007; Liebert et al., 2020; Norris & Inglehart, 2012) documents how Muslims in countries such as France, the Netherlands, the United States and Canada have gradually renegotiated their values and perspectives to better fit with the norms of the host society, whilst also preserving aspects of their own cultural and faith-based values. Muslim migrants also expressed a sense of acceptance within wider societies when renegotiating their own perspectives to fit in with these local norms.

Muslim Migration to Aotearoa NZ

Research in Aotearoa NZ has also illustrated how Muslim women actively navigate the complexities of everyday life by balancing their religious commitments with the expectations of a predominantly secular and liberal society. However, in their study of Muslim women living in urban settings in Aotearoa NZ, Jasperse et al. (2012) found that visible expressions of religiosity, such as wearing the hijab (headscarf), were positively associated with psychological well-being, including higher life satisfaction and lower levels of distress. This suggests that maintaining a public religious identity can serve as a source of resilience in a context where Muslims represent a small and often misunderstood minority. Building on this, Dobson (2012) demonstrated that faith plays a central role in these women's lives, not as a rigid framework, but as a dynamic and adaptable source of meaning. Religious beliefs interact with the local Aotearoa NZ environment, allowing women to reinterpret and apply their faith in ways that are relevant to their new circumstances. Through this process, faith becomes a flexible and practical part of their identity, helping them navigate the challenges of migration, cultural adjustment, discrimination, and family expectations, and questions of belonging. More recently, Raissi and Kappmeier (2025) found that young Muslim immigrants across Aotearoa NZ continue to draw on their faith as a source of connection and identity, not only within Muslim communities but also as part of their broader sense of belonging in Aotearoa NZ society. Together, these studies demonstrate that in the unique cultural landscape of Aotearoa NZ, with its emphasis on multiculturalism but limited exposure to Islam, Muslim women are

using their faith not as a defence, but as a meaningful and adaptive resource in their resettlement journeys.

Research also suggests that despite concerted efforts to integrate into a new society and culture to build a life somewhere new, cultural tensions can remain. These tensions can emerge in everyday social interactions between migrants and members of the host society. Research employing such frameworks is useful for understanding aspects of migration, including the extent of adjustment and key dilemmas faced by migrants, core barriers to resettlement, and what makes an effective support initiative (Hansen, 2019; Taran, 2000). However, relying solely on the frameworks of the host society or Western theorising can obscure the lived experiences of non-Western migrants as well as cultural nuances in their experiences of migration. This is not to say that previous research in Aotearoa NZ has not considered such issues of cultural difference in perspective (Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020; Sonn et al., 2017). This thesis builds on this previous research to extend present understandings of Muslim migration motivations and experiences of adapting to a new context and contributing to the society of destination.

Islam itself provides resources for understanding the experiences of adherents and the multifaceted complexities of migration. Within Islamic teachings, texts, and traditions, and in the principles of Islam (as recorded in the Qur'an³, Hadith⁴, and Islamic scholarship), there are tools, concepts, and frameworks that provide guidance on how to make sense of certain issues. Recently, migration scholars have begun to delve into ways of conducting research from perspectives that incorporate aspects of Islam (Ahmed, 2021; Akbarzadeh, 2010; Ali & Sonn, 2017; Elmadmad, 2008; Karpat, 1996; Mrahorović, 2017). This is important because Muslim migration, known as and understood through the concept of *hijrah*, has significant roots in Islamic history which gives a spiritual dimension to broader understandings of migration for the adherents. Here, migration is understood as more than a physical movement from one place to another, but also as a spiritual journey, a journey that holds Islam as a core value and replicates it as a way of life in a new place, potentially leading to the acceptance of new challenges.

Further, writing about *hijrah* within a secular country, as a Muslim woman and sojourner in Aotearoa NZ for the purposes of education, I also recognise the value of extending

³ The Qur'an, the holy book of Islam, serves as the primary source of guidance in Muslim life (Saeed, 2008)

⁴ The Hadith, the recorded sayings, actions, sanctions, and prohibitions of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) explain and provide context to teachings in the Qur'an on how to implement Islamic teachings in everyday life (Ali, 1995)

knowledge on the meaning, purpose, experiences, and dynamics of Muslim migration. Relevant to developing this knowledge are core Islamic values related to human movement and resettlement into new places for the purpose of achieving safety and access to a better life. Historically, *hijrah* has been associated with efforts to escape warfare and access new opportunities for trade and commerce (Dawson & Amarasingam, 2017; Demichelis, 2019; Ifraq, 2024).

Today, *hijrah* is also relevant to intentions towards personal growth and learning that can be enhanced by moves to more stable and safer places outside Muslim countries and in more secular societies where Muslims and Islamic adherents can practice their Islamic faith (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2019). I have started with the concept of *hijrah* (migration) because it was introduced by the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon Him [PBUH]) and his companions in relation to their move from Mecca to Medina (Yathrib) in 622AD, to share their humanity and faith-based values of compassion and commitment to the welfare and security of self and others (Ahmed, 2021; Karpat, 1996). Corresponding to contemporary understandings of *hijrah*, since the 1990s, significant numbers of Muslim migrants have relocated peacefully throughout Western societies (Gest, 2012; Karpat, 1996; Mrahorović, 2017), relocating either as voluntary migrants for education and economic reasons or as forced asylum seekers escaping conflicts, political oppression, and disasters. Many move to realise *aman*⁵ or situations for living in safety (Elmadmad, 2008; Mrahorović, 2017). In Aotearoa NZ, the history of *hijrah* among Islamic adherents began in 1769 with a small number of Muslim Indian men, followed by the migration of a Muslim Indian family in the 1850s as servants for a wealthy British family in Ōtautahi Christchurch (Bandyopadhyay & Buckingham, 2018; Drury, 2015; Nisa & Saenong, 2019). From the 1950s onwards, the majority of Muslim migrants to this country have come from Middle Eastern and Asia-Pacific countries (Foroutan, 2017; Kolig, 2009).

Much of the previous research on Muslim migrants has focused on issues of discrimination related to their presence in the West as a minority group. The literature suggests that dramatic events, including the 9/11 attack in the United States in 2001 have been associated with the intensification of Islamophobia, (Gowayed, 2020; Healy, 2017; Magan, 2020; Paz & Kook, 2020) and anti-Muslim discrimination (Ferrero, 2018; Huertas Bailén, 2018; Jones-Gailani, 2019; Keddie, 2017; Moufakkir, 2020; Paz & Kook, 2020). Rising tensions between Muslim migrants and non-Muslim host communities have been linked to

⁵Aman refers to seeking refuge or asylum to be able to live according to Islamic ways of life (Elmadmad, 2008)

news media coverage that regularly associates Islam with terrorism and characterises Muslim people as “the other,” and actual and/or potential threats to Western society (Kabir & Bourk, 2012). Muslims have often been portrayed as “unwanted” deviants in terms of Western “liberal” values (Randeria & Karagiannis, 2020). These mundane forms of symbolic discrimination are also associated with material acts of discrimination targeting Muslim people who are identifiable in terms of appearance, as non-White men with beards wearing particular clothing, and as women wearing headscarves (Casimiro et al., 2007). A study conducted in Aotearoa NZ by Hopner et al. (2023) showed that similarly to many other Western societies, Muslims in Aotearoa NZ are depicted in news media in discriminatory ways that feature negative stereotypes, including references to terrorism. These representations can pose challenges for Muslims as they attempt to integrate into this society. Despite these challenges, Hopner et al (2023) also demonstrated the existence of inclusive relationships, in which Muslims are engaging in positive and cooperative relationships with local communities and members of various other faith-based and ethnic groups. Furthermore, by actively engaging with other groups, Muslims demonstrate their participation in the broader society of Aotearoa NZ, indicating their efforts to integrate into the host country.

To be clear, I am not arguing that media simply cause prejudice or discrimination against Muslim people and wish to avoid the fundamental attribution error that is prevalent in psychological research of attributing cause to media effects (Hodgetts et al., 2020). Rather, media often refract and intensify existing social anxieties towards Muslims among some sectors of non-Muslim populations and, in doing so, perpetuate Islamophobia in communities through negative depictions and characterisations (Varisco, 2009). Rather than initiating or causing prejudice and discrimination, the media, and the people who produce influential representations are often entangled within intergroup relations, providing ways of seeing for disparate groups and influencing how different communities come to understand themselves in relation to others (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Sulaiman-Hill et al., 2011). As such, legacy news channels and social media platforms offer avenues for processes of symbolic power, and hold the power to name and define the characteristics of particular groups through particular representational practices that contribute to public deliberations in which the diversity of Muslim identities and the complexities and humanity of Islam are often ignored (Ali & Sonn, 2017).

While acknowledging the role of media and the discriminatory representational practices that have been highlighted in previous international research cited above, Schlueter et al. (2020) have also noted that media depictions of Muslim people reflect varying levels of

acceptance in societies such as Aotearoa NZ. It is also important to note that the levels of symbolic discrimination, as evident in news media characterisations of Muslim migrants and refugees, likely vary across nation-states. For example, a recent news media analysis by Hopner et al (2023) found that locally produced stories in Aotearoa NZ were more sympathetic and positive towards Muslim newcomers than republished stories imported from countries such as Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. These findings also correspond with research into the politics of migration, in which some Aotearoa NZ governments were found to have engaged in scaremongering against new migrants, whilst others have been more orientated towards celebrating the positive contributions made by migrants and refugees to this society (Corrigan et al., 2005; Sulaiman-Hill et al., 2011). The Pew Research Center (2019) has also proposed that the New Zealand government and citizens exhibit high levels of tolerance for religious diversity, as indicated by the country's low levels of government restrictions on religion, as reflected in its low scores on the Government Restrictions Index (GRI; Pew Research Center, 2024) and the Social Hostilities Index (in relation to religion; Pew Research Center, 2021).

Despite such indicators of tolerance, Aotearoa NZ is not exempt from discrimination and violence towards Muslims. For example, one of Aotearoa NZ's most horrific terrorist acts was committed recently when a lone gunman entered two mosques in Ōtautahi Christchurch (March 15, 2019) and live-streamed his systematic murder of unarmed Friday worshippers. This incident shocked the nation and offers one dramatic example of the consequences of global Islamophobia (Spier, 2020). It reflects how countries such as Aotearoa NZ that espouse social inclusion and the value of cultural and ethnic diversity can also be impacted by racism, negative stereotypes and violence towards Muslims (Ward et al., 2019; Yogeeswaran et al., 2019).

The rise of Islamophobic sentiments and prejudicial views against Muslims that has contributed to the marginalisation of Muslim people has been found to be continuing to produce social distance between migrant and host communities in the West (Akbarzadeh, 2016). Associated issues faced by Muslim migrants are not limited to dramatic terrorist events that impact the nature of relations between host and new settler groups. Exclusionary and discriminatory acts usually manifest in more mundane forms within everyday life within workplaces, schools, government agencies, and public spaces (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020; Brigham et al., 2018; Casimiro et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2019). More mundane forms of prejudice and discrimination have also been found to function as barriers to successful integration into society and disrupt social cohesion and harmony between diverse population

groups within Western countries (Zorlu & Frijters, 2019).

Like other minority groups, Muslims in Aotearoa NZ have often struggled for their place in Aotearoa NZ society. Many incidents of abuse and discrimination against Muslims, particularly women wearing headscarves, have been documented (Rahman, 2019). Studies show that many Aotearoa NZ Muslims face everyday discrimination (Rahman, 2020), more so than other religious communities such as Christians, Jews, Buddhists, and Hindus (Ward et al., 2019). This prejudice and discrimination toward Muslims, especially in Aotearoa NZ, has been shown to impact emotional and mental well-being (Junaid et al., 2024). Internalising feelings of exclusion or being targeting for unfair treatment can lead to feelings of rejection. These feelings can compound over time, leading to more detrimental consequences for emotional, psychological, and social well-being including declines in self-worth or persistent stress that require further intervention (Alsaïdi et al., 2023; Tineo et al., 2021).

In Aotearoa NZ, Muslim communities still retain significant responsibilities as the primary supports assisting Muslim people with integrating into the new society, whilst also preserving their own cultural and religious identities (Keddie, 2017; Ward et al., 2019). These efforts are not always restricted to Muslim new arrivals and often include second, third, and subsequent generations of Muslim migrants. Research suggests that many Muslim people residing in Western nations continue to report prejudice and discrimination relating to basic issues such as securing housing (Casimiro et al, 2007; Maestri, 2019) and employment (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020; Vickers et al., 2019). Regardless of educational qualifications, Muslim migrants have been found to be disproportionately concentrated in precarious and low-paid work situations (Vickers et al., 2019). These trends have been associated with perceptions by some members of dominant host communities who see Muslim job applicants as culturally incompatible with their enterprises and/or as potential terrorists (Deshingkar, 2019; Estrada et al., 2019; Randeria & Karagiannis, 2020).

These concerns are not uniformly held across the diversity of Muslim communities. Studies in the United Kingdom, Australia, and Aotearoa NZ have shown that African and Indian Muslim refugees (particularly women) are more likely to be unemployed or underemployed than Muslims from different ethnic backgrounds (Hebbani, 2014; Jelle et al., 2006; Khattab & Hussein, 2018; Omar, 2013). Such discrimination has been found to be particularly intense for Black Muslim people who are more likely to report being positioned as “unwanted” migrants and confronted with both overt and more subtle forms of racism (Hebbani, 2014; Loftsdóttir, 2018; Magan, 2020). These issues are often acute early in the resettlement process but can persist for decades (Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2012).

As noted in the opening of this chapter, Muslim refugees are also burdened with the legacies of premigration trauma and postmigration problems that impact their well-being (d'Abreu et al., 2019; Hynie, 2018; Silove et al., 2017; Slobodin & de Jong, 2015), and which are often exacerbated by the culture shock that can accompany migration (Hodgetts et al., 2020). Related issues of culture shock and adaptation are central to the seminal work on acculturation by Berry (1992). Briefly, adjusting to new ways of doing things, languages, and norms through migration can lead to stress, feelings of isolation, unemployment, and struggles to access adequate housing which places many refugees at the lowest end of the social gradient (Allen et al., 2014; Berry, 1992; Hynie, 2018; Shedlin et al., 2014). Again, for people in these situations, social and material supports have been found to be particularly important aids to successful resettlement and reducing acculturative stress (d'Abreu et al., 2019; Eruyar et al., 2018). Correspondingly, a growing body of literature is focusing on community strengths and the role of organic community support in helping people resettle and recover from displacement and trauma (Hynie, 2018; Slobodin & de Jong, 2015). Understanding Muslim migration from an Islamic worldview and in relation to concepts such as *hijrah* is invaluable in extending our understanding of how communities can work collectively in response to the needs of newcomers to support their successful integration into society.

For now, it is also important to note that researchers exploring trauma among refugee and migrant groups have also considered initiatives to counter prejudice and discrimination against Muslim people in school, workplace, and in everyday life (Sekerka & Yacobian, 2018; Volkan, 2017; Walker & Zuberi, 2020). Research with young Muslim migrants, for instance, has documented instances of exclusion and discrimination in schools in countries such as Russia and Tatarstan, with the situation worsening for girls in countries like Australia and the UK. In response, many teachers have embraced multicultural training to address such issues and to aid them in facilitating the inclusion of all students in school life (Gromova & Hayrutdinova, 2017; Kamalova & Zakirova, 2017; Keddie, 2017). Further, in particular areas in Canada with high numbers of Muslim students from refugee backgrounds, schools have provided circles of support to help migrants to adjust and build resilience (Pearce et al., 2017). A study in Aotearoa NZ has also showed that fostering positive intergroup interactions and relations between Muslim and non-Muslim youth can promote better integration and reduce the incidence of symptoms of psychological distress among newcomers (Ward et al., 2019). Briefly, such research suggests that support from peer groups can help Muslim migrants resettle successfully and develop productive lives in new host countries in the West. In this thesis, I consider the roles of two Muslim women's groups in these processes.

In many respects, the two groups featured in my research were set up so that Muslim migrants and refugees could share their experiences and develop skills for dealing with negative instances of racism and religious prejudice (Jones-Gailani, 2019; Killian, 2007). These groups are led by and for Muslim women and their families but, as I show, also feature sustained engagements with local allies from a range of faith-based and ethnic groups. Research also suggests that such collaborations spanning communities can facilitate social integration, increase acceptance of inter-faith differences, and extend inter-cultural understandings (Raqib, 2020; Shaw et al., 2019). Before exploring these two groups and their support activities in more detail, it is useful to briefly consider previous research into the migration experiences and challenges faced by Muslim women and the ways that many of us organise in response.

Muslim Migrant Women's Challenges and Adaptations and the Development of Group Responses

As noted above, issues of discrimination and racism have been particularly pertinent to research on Muslim migration (Foroutan, 2011; Triandafyllidou, 2022). Migrating to secular countries presents complex cultural, social, and religious challenges. This is evident particularly for Muslim women who often adopt various strategies to assert their agency, preserve their faith, and establish a sense of belonging in the face of prejudice and discrimination (Ghumman & Ryan, 2013; Jasperse et al., 2012; Khattab et al., 2019). These strategies include confronting discrimination, negotiating cultural identities, establishing community spaces, adapting to new environments, and contributing to their host societies, all in efforts to thrive both socially and religiously.

Discrimination is a particularly important feature of Muslim women's resettlement experiences. In the United States and Canada, Muslim women report higher rates of discrimination than Muslim men (Droogsma, 2007; Litchmore & Safdar, 2015). This finding is particularly apparent for women who wear *hijab*, which suggests a cultural clash in perceptions; many North Americans associate the headscarf with the oppression of women, while conversely, Muslim women report wearing *hijab* as a positive sign of their identity and chosen way of life as Muslim women. Similar findings have also been observed in Germany regarding outgroup perceptions of Muslim women as oppressed and passive victims of patriarchy in contrast to the women's own perceptions of themselves and their situations in life (Paz & Kook, 2020). The stereotypes of Muslim women as passive strangers held by non-Muslim members of receiving societies in the West have also been explained as transgressions of Western notions of gendered liberty and equity (Cainkar, 2009).

While Muslim migrant women sometimes report navigating complex and occasionally hostile social environments, especially in the context of recent events and heightened public scrutiny, it is important to note that these instances are somewhat exceptional (Ahmed, 2021; Ali, 2020; Fleury, 2016). The challenges they face, particularly in employment, education, and civic participation, are often compounded by visible religious markers like the *hijab*, which have been politicised in many contexts, reinforcing Orientalist and patriarchal stereotypes that either victimise or vilify these women (Hossain, 2025; Joosub & Ebrahim, 2020; F. Khan, 2022). Such stereotypical portrayals often obscure the leadership, agency and prosocial contributions to society made by Muslim women (Nisa, 2021; Samier & EIKaleh, 2021). Ultimately, engaging further with the experiences and prosocial contributions of Muslim women through an intersectional lens can enable more accurate and empathetic understandings of Muslim migrant women's experiences and contributions to building a more inclusive and equitable host society (see Chapters 3 and 4).

As with Christianity, in most cases, adherents to the Islamic faith do not encourage the oppression of women. The Qur'an (Verses 4:123; 16:19) clearly states that "women shall have rights similar to those of men". Further, teachings by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) urges men to respect women's rights (Sultana & Nair, 2011). It is important to assert here that the display of Islamic-faith-based identities, including the wearing of modest attire, and in many cases the covering of one's head by wearing *hijab*, and, for some, *niqab* (face covering) is a personal choice (cf., Willis, 2010). As I document in this research, in the face of such stereotypes of Muslim women regarding our ways of being and dressing as sisters in the faith, migrant women develop shared, mutually supportive, and agentic responses that aid in the resettlement and integration processes.

A key pillar of the present study is, as mentioned above, that previous research on Muslim migration to Western nations suggests that the cultivation of strong community relationships within ethnic groups is foundational for supporting migrant resettlement processes (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020, Jelle et al., 2006; Paz & Kook, 2020). Further, research cited here documents how three different Western countries developed quite different responses to the negative stereotyping of women who wear *hijab* in efforts to reduce discrimination. For example, France passed laws forbidding all forms of religious expression, including the wearing of the *hijab* (Choudhury, 2007). Over time, this rule has led to a decrease in negative stereotyping of Muslims across various domains, including the workplace and education. This is a positive outcome but, from my perspective, the law is primarily focused on reducing fear towards Muslims and other religious adherents in the general public and

undermines religious freedom. Such policies often fall short in creating inclusive and safe environments in schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods, particularly for Muslim women who choose to express their religious identity by wearing the *hijab* (Pio & Syed, 2018; Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2024). In many Western contexts, policies that are framed as promoting “neutrality” or “secularity” can, in practice, marginalise visible religious expression. For example, regulations that restrict religious symbols in public institutions may disproportionately affect Muslim women, leading to exclusion from employment or educational opportunities. These policies, rather than fostering integration, can reinforce societal prejudices and push religious minorities to the margins.

In contrast, Germany has, in some regions and contexts, adopted a different approach that emphasises dialogue and public education over restriction (Paz & Kook, 2020). Rather than banning religious symbols such as the *hijab*, some German initiatives have focused on addressing the root causes of discrimination, specifically, the stereotypes and misinformation surrounding Muslim women. These efforts include community education programmes, public campaigns to counter Islamophobia, and institutional training to build cultural competence. By centring the conversation on how Muslim women are perceived, rather than on how they dress, this model seeks to shift public attitudes and reduce discrimination at its source. This proactive and inclusive approach is often more effective in fostering social cohesion and allowing Muslim women to participate fully and confidently in public life.

Another finding has emerging from research in Aotearoa NZ by Jelle et al. (2006) focused on the employment experiences of Somali Muslim migrant women, particularly those who wear the *hijab*. While the study acknowledged the existence of barriers linked to the visible expression of religious identity, it primarily illuminated the nuanced and contextually embedded strategies these women employed to engage with the labour market. Participants generally perceived Aotearoa NZ as a relatively inclusive and respectful sociocultural environment, especially in comparison to other Western nations. Notably, the research identified points of cultural convergence between Somali and Aotearoa NZ societies, most prominently in their shared priorities of family, which contributed to a heightened sense of social cohesion and belonging among participants. Although instances of tension occasionally surfaced between the women’s cultural and religious identities and the normative expectations of workplace environments, such challenges were frequently addressed through culturally responsive practices and with sensitivity by employers. In line with comparable studies conducted in France and Germany, Jelle et al. (2006) underscored the imperative to cultivate a deeper understanding of the lived experiences of Muslim migrant women as a critical

foundation for the development of inclusive and contextually attuned support structures.

Community supports have been found to play vital roles for Muslim women in coping with harmful stigma and discrimination and in helping migrants and refugees adjust to and thrive in their new homelands (Jozaghi et al., 2016). Participating in community activities and practices with other women have been found to strengthen women's resilience (Huertas-Bailén, 2018; Moufakkir, 2020) in facing new challenges in what are often, at least initially, unfamiliar environments (Ward et al., 2019). The formation and participation in such groups often aids women in responding effectively to and coping with discrimination and exclusionary practices (Ferrero, 2018; Miled, 2020), managing associated stress (Shaw et al., 2019), and facilitating positive adaptation practices which shift them from outgroup to ingroup through shared identity (Ray et al., 2008).

More specifically, women's groups have been found to provide members with a circle of support (Pearce et al., 2017) in which they can share experiences, feelings, and worries, and develop strategies for adjusting to life in a new country (Brigham et al., 2018; Holt, 2013). The opportunities to share experiences with other group members from the same country of origin, or other countries and cultures who share one's religious faith more broadly, provides a sense of continuity of being, belonging, and connection for participants (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Longhurst et al., 2009). This communing can enable members to feel safer and more supported and secure. This is essential for social bonding and the cultivation of a sense of inclusion somewhere new (Spencer, 2006). For those forced to leave their own countries as refugees and asylum seekers, establishing such communal ties plays a vital role in adaptation (Shaw et al., 2019). Further, for those who have experienced traumas that require healing, community groups featuring humanistic Islamic values have been found to be particularly helpful in resettlement processes (Zoellner et al., 2018).

It is important to note that the operations of mutual support groups for Muslim migrant women can differ across ethnic groups. This is because in many respects, the lives and routines Muslim migrants are shaped not only by Islam, but also by ethnicity-based cultural traditions and the conduct of everyday life by specific ethnic groups and in the new host country (Hodgetts et al., 2020). Researchers have only paid sporadic attention to the ways in which Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds collaborate and actively encourage each other to participate more in their host countries. For example, there is only limited research that highlights the significance of comprehending Muslim women as coming from diverse cultural backgrounds. Focusing on a narrow issue, Afrouz et al. (2020) have highlighted the significance of collaboration for Muslim migrant women from diverse

cultures who have experienced domestic violence. Here, the women took opportunities to share different cultural values while maintaining commonalities as Islamic adherents. Another study noted that when discussing strategies for navigating life in secular countries, Muslim women from different cultural backgrounds need to communicate and share different perspectives (Schenk et al., 2022).

Although they share a range of commonalities related to their shared identities as sisters within Islam, the women participating in the groups explored in this study also navigate various cultural differences. As I document in this research, their various ethnic backgrounds create synergies and differences that, as Hartono (2012) has described, surface at the interfaces of secular and religious matters, in the conduct of everyday life in public and private domains, and in navigating the complexities of *halal* and *haram* considerations (Hartono, 2012).

Muslims believe that rules and practices associated with *halal* and *haram* are fundamental to what it means to be Muslim. More specifically, the Arabic term *halal* can be translated as referring to what is permissible or lawful within Islam, while *haram* relates to what is considered unlawful or forbidden (Dahlan, 1996). These constructs do not merely relate to food, as is often assumed. They also relate to broader everyday practices in terms of issues of benefit (*halal*) and harm (*haram*) based on two main Islamic texts (the Qur'an and the Hadith). However, under certain circumstances, including emergency conditions, the rules for individual conduct are flexible and open to interpretation by Islamic jurists (*ulama*) with reference to *Fiqh* or Islamic jurisprudence principles (Al-Ghazali, 1993).

Further, as explored in the present research, ways of being Muslim women or enacting the Islamic faith in secular countries (e.g., Aotearoa NZ) continue to evolve agentively and creatively within and across different community settings, groups, and everyday interactions. These dynamic processes add further complexities to the resettlement process for different group members from different backgrounds who are striving to work out how to be good Muslims with others within Western settings (Di Puppò & Schmoller, 2020). As such, my research is designed to add further insights to a burgeoning literature on how Muslim women in Western countries build mutually supportive relationships (in sisterhood) and groups not only within their respective ethnic communities, but also across intercultural spaces that extend beyond Islam to interfaith groups. These interfaith groupings have also grown in prominence in the aftermath of the Ōtautahi Christchurch Mosque attacks on March 15, 2019. Muslims, along with Christians, Jews, and other religions and cultures, have come together to support each other (Kolig, 2024). Such interethnic relational efforts towards cultivating broader

connections are likely to be central to the positive integration of new Muslim refugees and migrants into society. These efforts reflect the emphasis within Islam on unity and the importance assigned to the cultivation of a sense of shared humanity with others (Qur'an, 49:10) that can span cultural and faith-based differences (Haghnava, 2013).

More specifically with regards to sisterhood, within Islam, women are encouraged to support each other in everyday life and in prosocial service to society. As such, Muslim women's groups have been in operation for millennia as spaces for spiritual learning (*halaqah*) as well as for more secular learning. In these enclaves of mutual care and support, students and teachers spend time together in flexible circles of teacher-led and dialogic/student-led collaborative learning and dialogue (Ahmed, 2012, 2014). Further, such groups are credited with enhancing personal growth, empowerment, the cultivation of social justice agendas, and the sharing and development of Islamic intellectual heritage relating to the sciences, arts, and spiritualism (Zaimeche, 2002). Within these groups, women do not merely discuss the Qur'an and Hadith; they also engage in education more broadly and efforts to realise themselves as good people who contribute positively to humanity and society (Ahmed, 2014).

In the late 20th century, a Muslim women's movement emerged re-thinking issues around "home and work" (Ahmed, 2014; Curtis et al., 2019). Sertkaya (2025) and Ahmed (2014) found that those involved were able to unleash their personal potential within both familial and societal contexts. Such research also suggests that familial roles and employment beyond the home were not seen as incompatible. This is at least in part because women and mothers are recognised within Islam as the "first *madrasa*" or place for children to learn. This means that we are obligated to educate children and each other, to listen to, and to attend to their needs whilst also developing ourselves (Al-Jayyousi & Myers-Bowman, 2019). Moreover, the Qur'an states that education is a fundamental right for everyone and seeking and sharing knowledge is mandatory (Qur'an, 19: 1–5). I raise this example to illustrate how the Muslim women's movement emphasises the importance of education for women as contributing to the development of future generations and the intellectual vibrancy of our familial networks and communities. The sisterhood of learning represented by the two groups participating in this research is central to Muslim community life and the functioning of Muslim women's groups. Women participate in these groups, which I approach as enclaves of shared learning and mutual care, not only to learn about the Qur'an and the Hadith, but also to engage in broader educative activities, many of which are invaluable for refugees and migrants in enabling them to make sense of and adjust to everyday life in Aotearoa NZ.

In expressing the importance of fellowship and mutual support, regardless of ethnic differences, the Qur'an simply states, "all Muslims are family" (Qur'an, 49:11). Relatedly, Muslims usually call women "sister" and men "brother" as a reflection of this core belief that is implicit in the formation of the two women's groups that are central to my doctoral research.

To recap, of particular interest in the present research is how groups consisting of Muslim refugee and migrant women from different countries and ethnicities work together to support each other. Here, enactments of sisterhood in terms of helping each other with resettlement processes and supporting access to education and skills learning are central concerns. Of core interest are the experiences of migrants (both voluntary and forced) as women working together to maintain the Muslim and ethnic identities, they bring with them while resettling in Aotearoa NZ. As I document, these women's groups often work independently within Muslim communities and collaborate with government agencies to ensure that community programmes align, where possible, with government policy. For example, the relational work of these groups is often facilitated through life skills programmes (Abdi, 2014) and opportunities to share in serious discussions about creating employment and operating businesses that embody Islamic values. In this research, I look at how participating women can encourage each other to move forward in various fields, including the development of young women to be confident in themselves in settings beyond the group, such as schools, whilst preserving their Islamic values (Ferrero, 2018; Huertas Bailén, 2018; Jones-Gailani, 2019; Miled, 2020; Ward et al., 2019).

The studies cited here have consistently shown that Muslim women strive to maintain their faith-based identities through various means, with the *hijab* serving as one such expression. They have become creative in reinterpreting the *hijab* as a dynamic expression of identity that can be adapted to different social contexts. For some, this involves experimenting with various styles, colours, or forms of modest dress that align with both personal faith and the cultural expectations of their host society. In cases where women feel compelled to remove the *hijab*, due to professional, social, or safety pressures, they often continue to uphold the underlying principle of modesty through clothing that is neither form-fitting nor revealing. This adaptive approach reflects an ongoing negotiation between personal religious commitment and external societal pressures. Furthermore, this research encourages a deeper exploration of how Islam is reproduced and lived in everyday life. In the context of these two groups, such engagements offer valuable insights into the evolving nature of Muslim identities in multicultural settings.

Initiatives engaged in by these groups in this research to empower members also resonate with the findings in the literature on women's self-help groups (WSHG) in general. Previous research suggests that such groups have positive effects in relation to a range of economic, social, and political issues, especially for vulnerable women (Badejo et al., 2017; Brody et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2019; Were, 2017). Through these groups, women gain experience in handling problems independently and decision-making, build solidarity and social networks, and generate mutual respect between community members (Brody et al., 2017). The members of the two women's groups at the centre of this research have come from various countries, ethnicities, and educational backgrounds (see Chapter 2 for further details). However, as I show, they share a desire for mutual support and self-empowerment (Ghosh et al., 2015) and stand together as Muslim *ummah* (community and nation) in mutual aid (Kolig & Shepard, 2006).

Reflecting their aims towards facilitating resettlement and integration into society, the two participating groups are not insular in orientation. Members are encouraged to develop ties with people from different faiths and ethnic backgrounds as means of further supporting their adaptation to life in Aotearoa NZ. This is evident in collaborations between Muslim and non-Muslim women's groups, which include Māori and other ethnicities. One of the group leaders reported that Māori women often helped her in running programmes for new arrivals and this has led her to recognise similarities between groups regarding collectivist values and the duty to care for and *manaaki* others that is foundational to community work. By connecting with non-Muslim groups, members of these Muslim groups are able to develop a sense of inclusion and place in Aotearoa NZ (Johnson & Miles, 2014).

Briefly, these two women's groups offer spaces for cultivating mutual support, linking in with government initiatives and accessing resources, and simply building friendships somewhere new. They are also sites for promoting interdependence and creating programmes to help sisters-in-faith who face barriers to integrate into Aotearoa NZ society. Drawing insights about the importance of peer support groups for Muslim women from the previous research into self-help and peer support groups referred to above (Badejo et al., 2017; Brody et al., 2017; Nawaz, 2017), I document how these groups work to enable women to adapt well to a Westernised yet multicultural context whilst also maintaining and rearticulating the traditions and Islamic values they bring with them to this country (Badejo et al., 2017). It is important to note that, like participants in seminal research such as that of Werbner (1996), the women participating in the present study come together as community-in-the-making to create spaces for fun and leisure, and to experience camaraderie. This

highlights that the women involved are not just passive members of a group, but active participants in the formation of a social community that enables access to social, emotional, informational, and practical support; leisure; and respite. Ultimately, these groups help Muslim women create a sense of home and belonging that extends beyond the domestic sphere by offering support and opportunities for personal and social growth within a broader community.

Listening to migrant voices is essential for understanding movement patterns and gaining insight into who migrants are, how they live, and how they are perceived by more established members of receiving societies (Çaglar & Glick Schiller, 2018; Crawley & Jones, 2021; Dawson & Rapport, 2021). Such migration research provides a critical lens through which to examine the experiences of Muslim migrant women whose stories are frequently overlooked or misrepresented in hegemonic public deliberations in host societies (Fleury, 2016). Although women migrate for a range of reasons, including conflict, education, employment, family reunification, and gender-based violence (Akhtar, 2014; Bucci, 2012; Chantler et al., 2018), research has revealed that public discussions often reduce Muslim women to binary characterisations, portraying us as either oppressed victims or threats to Western values, especially when we wear visible symbols of faith such as the *hijab* (Joosub & Ebrahim, 2020; Khokhar, 2022; Mirza, 2013). Researchers have also called for further challenges to these reductive representations by unpacking how media, policy, and political discourse construct Muslim women as “others” (Ahmed & Matthes, 2016; Mansouri, 2020; Samie & Sehlkoglu, 2014). The persistent framing of Muslim women through simplistic tropes erases the diversity of our experiences and silences our contributions to various communities within host societies (Khokhar, 2022). A more sophisticated understanding is required, one that interrogates the intersecting forces of gender, race, religion, and migration (Ahmed, 2021). This is where research such as mine becomes important in revealing broader characterisations of Muslim women migrants as productive community members, educators, and entrepreneurs (see Chapters 3 and 4).

Migration scholarship regarding Muslim women’s experiences has been informed primarily by Western feminist and postcolonial lenses and has documented links between country of origin, faith, and ethnicity in articulations of marginalisation, discrimination, and exclusions from employment (Fleury, 2016; Hossain, 202). These intersecting markers of difference impact their migration journeys, hinder integration, and sense of belonging within the new host society. Such research has also documented how, despite these challenges, Muslim migrant women demonstrate considerable resilience and agency, often playing vital roles in community building, mutual support, and cultural preservation (Fleury, 2016).

Institutional structures in host societies, such as legal frameworks, integration policies, and access to social services, further shape the experiences of migrant women. Understanding how these systems operate through a gendered and intersectional lens is crucial for fostering inclusive societies. Migration research allows for a critical examination of these structures, revealing how they may perpetuate inequality or support empowerment. Crucially, this scholarship shifts the focus away from stereotypes, recognising Muslim migrant women as complex, dynamic individuals embedded in broader networks of power and identity (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014).

Conceptual Considerations for the Present Research into Islamic Women's Enclaves of Care

As highlighted above, migrating to start a new life in a new place is often challenging and involves processes of adjustment and adaptation in terms of one's sense of self and place. As well as practical concerns around finding places to live and work, immigrants often experience complexities regarding the renegotiation of their identities, learning to function within strange societies and across different nuanced cultural systems (Hodgetts et al., 2020). In the development of theory and research in this area, scholars have focused primarily on the disruptions to cultural traditions and everyday ways of being that can occur when people try to adjust to making a home and fitting in with the values and practices of the new society (Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020; Christou & Janta, 2018; Kyeremeh et al., 2021, Salnikova & D'Arcus, 2019). Scholarship in this area has explored the experiences, perceptions, and practices of not only migrants themselves, but also established members of host societies (Ward et al., 2019). To varying degrees, migrants are often viewed as problems by members of their new host societies (Castles, 2010).

Below, I offer an extension of my conceptual engagement with the literature on migration and resettlement processes from scholars in psychology and related disciplines, with a particular emphasis on prominent theories such as acculturation (Anderson & Johnson, 2020; Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020; Hodgetts et al., 2010; Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019; White, 2016). I also consider further Islamic concepts regarding migration in addition to the discussion of *hijrah* which is offered above to give voice to a specific Islamic perspective on Muslim migration. This is followed by a discussion of the scholarship relating to WSHG as this is central to the present study, as well as material on resettlement and adaptation processes for women. This conceptual engagement extends to contemporary notions of hyphenated Muslim migrant identities and interconnected selves that encompass the combination of two or more identities into a hybridised sense of self (Cassim, Stolte, &

Hodgetts, 2020; Fine & Sirin (2007) that also underpin the present research.

I pay particular attention to the dynamics of women's groups that often span different ethnicities and geographical backgrounds alongside research evidence for how differences are managed, and how Islamic values manifest in the operations of these encounter groups. As attested to in the seminal work in psychology by Allport (1954), bringing people from different groups together with one another in positive ways is crucial for reducing prejudice and discrimination between groups. In many respects, the two groups participating in this research, and those participating in previous research (e.g., Ali & Sonn, 2017; Kolig, 2015; Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019) work from a similar understanding in reaching out beyond their own shared spaces to participate in settings such as workplaces, schools, and neighbourhoods, whilst preserving their own identities as Muslim women with related everyday practices. Here, the relational bonds forged by such groups function as a form of self-help or group therapy that offers opportunities for personal growth as the members come together to share their thoughts, feelings, and experiences in a safe, supportive, and often unstructured environment. The goal is to promote self-awareness, emotional expression, and authentic interpersonal connections, and a form of solidarity that provides a basis for further prosocial interactions with other community groups and governmental and commercial organisations.

A useful way of conceptualising the two group spaces for Muslim migrant and refugee women that are the subject of this research is as enclaves of care and mutual support. Such community spaces for ethnic minority migrants have been discussed in Western countries (e.g., the United States) as "urban enclaves", which include "China Town", "Little Korea", and "Little India". These areas or neighbourhoods are often associated with certain cuisine, music, arts, religious practices, and educative traditions (Anderson & Johnson, 2020; Chang, 2000; McAuliffe et al., 2019; White, 2016). I use the term "enclave" slightly differently to refer to smaller scale spaces used by inter-ethnic groups of Muslim women who encounter each other as sisters and help each other through their respective resettlement journeys. In this sense, these enclaves are not explicitly labelled as "Muslim Town", but seen as spaces of mutual support, inclusion, and care (Bowlby, 2012; Conradson, 2003; Kuehl et al., 2023; Singh, et al., 2023; Tanaka & Davidson, 2017) from which group members can venture out to meet with different groups and navigate other community and work spaces in the area of Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. These two enclaves serve as physical and social environments where participating Muslim women can interact, connect, share religious and cultural values, and support each other in navigating the complexities of their daily lives. In these spaces

where individuals come together and feel supported, valued, and respected, people experience a sense of belonging, safety, and mutual support.

Cultural Hybridity, Hyphenated Selves, and Processes of Acculturation

To conceptualise migration from a psychological perspective, researchers have focused on issues of cultural adaptation. This relates to how migrants work to establish sustainable living situations and a place in local communities within new host societies, whilst also maintaining their cultural traditions and identities, values, and the social practices of their cultures of origin (Carling & Schewel, 2018; Deshingkar, 2019). In considering the processes involved in migration, scholars in fields including psychology (Cassim, Stolte, & Hodgetts, 2020), sociology (Kim, 2018), and anthropology (Crawford & Campbell, 2012) have focused on a range of complexities for immigrants relating to ethnic diversity (Carling & Schewel, 2018), precarious working and living conditions (Vickers et al., 2019), and the effects of different migration policies (de Haas et al., 2019).

To conceptualise migrant journeys, Berger (2004) identified three key phases: departure, transition, and resettlement. First, departure is ideally related to decision-making about where to migrate to considering both push and pull factors (Berry et al., 1987). Central are push factors related to the reasons people leave their countries of origin, such as persecution, economic difficulties, political conflict, war, or disaster, while pull factors are the attractions of the host nation, such as personal growth, education, and obtaining a sustainable livelihood somewhere safe (Berger, 2004). Second, the transition phase involves the actual journey from the country of origin to the host nation. For displaced people (refugees and asylum seekers) specifically, this transitional context may include years of instability, uncertainty and ambiguity spent in limbo in refugee camps before eventually arriving in the host country (Berger, 2004). The length of time spent in refugee camps in living conditions that are often associated with uncertainty and insecurity can contribute to significant precarity and health concerns in this state of “pre-resettlement” (Fee, 2021). Third, the resettlement phase refers to migrants’ experiences in their eventual destination. A key challenge for migrants and refugees in this phase is adjusting to their new surroundings, often having to combine their identities from their countries of origin with commitments to the new nation state and, if settling well, developing a new hybrid sense of self and place (Hodgetts et al., 2020; S. Zhang et al., 2018). As such, migration includes psychological processes of resettlement and integration that affect one’s very being and often result in hyphenated identities and hybridised cultural enclaves (Cassim et al., 2019), such as those being cultivated collectively by the two participating women’s groups, as described below.

Such legacy models of migration can be useful for making sense of the general processes of migration. It is also important to note that migration is often not experienced as a linear staged process involving being uprooted from one's culture of origin and leaving the home country behind to face various challenges in settling within a new sociocultural context (Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019). Often, migration is experienced as a cyclic process whereby migrants and refugees embark on lifelong and complex journeys of change, adaptation, and growth. Many maintain active involvement with family and friends in their countries of origin and in many respects live between their original and new host societies (Andersson, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2020). This often results in these persons being functional in and functioning across two or more cultures and societies.

Processes of migration open spaces for cultural hybridity (Acheraiou, 2011; Hall, 1992) whereby aspects of the various qualities, understandings, and practices from the cultures of origin are maintained by migrants and refugees and rearticulated, adapted, and combined with other aspects of the receiving societal cultures into new cultural formations that incorporate aspects of multiple cultures and societies (Cassim et al., 2019; Graham et al., 2016). The incorporation of Muslim women from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds within the two groups participating in this research creates opportunities for members to learn from each other, to share diverse cultural backgrounds, and encourage mutual understandings (Boland, 2020). Muslims around the world may share similar religious practices; nonetheless, their cultural practices and traditions differ (Dunne et al., 2020). As I document, in both cases, group members are very aware of this diversity within Islam. Correspondingly, both groups facilitate cross-ethnic interactions and dialogues to enhance their understanding of each other, and the cultures different group members carry with them as they migrate to Aotearoa NZ. These mutual understandings become important as group members attempt to integrate into these groups and the host society more generally. I would add here that such processes of cultural dialogue and adaptation have featured in various societies throughout human history and are foundational to the processes of migration, human movement, and integration (Acheraiou, 2011; Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 1992).

Cultural hybridity is a feature in the shared construction of the two women's groups as encounter spaces for women from different geographical and cultural contexts within Islam to come together in their shared faith to assist each other in the resettlement process and their integration into this country. They come to express what it can mean to be a Muslim woman within this new country through explorations of their similarities as sisters within the faith and ethnic differences as evident in the sharing of food and worldviews. In this research, I

document how these groups create liminal spaces for encounters, mutual inquiry, collaboration that hold the potential for producing new contributions to this society, both culturally and through community service.

Adding further cultural complexities to this mix, migrant Muslim women bring not only their ethnic identities, but also their identities as Muslims to Aotearoa NZ. Hyphenated identities is a concept developed to inform analyses of situations where a person or group's sense of self reflects intersectional memberships of two or more sociocultural groupings (Ali & Sonn, 2010; Sirin & Fine, 2007). Examples relevant to the present study (see Chapters 3 and 4) include Indian-Muslim-Aotearoa NZer and Somali-Muslim-Aotearoa NZer.

Scholarship here is informed by broader notions of the interconnected self that have emerged from Indigenous psychologies (King et al., 2017; Rua et al., 2024) and social psychologies (Gergen, 2009). From this perspective, participants in my research are seen as mutually constituting beings whose sense of self and place in the world manifests their cultural heritage as well as their ongoing interactions in the material world (Gergen, 2009). Relatedly, the two women's groups included in this thesis enable migrant women to come together in shared relational identity as sisters within Islam and provide spaces where they can work through their hyphenated and interconnected senses of self (Gergen, 2009; Hodgetts et al., 2020; King & Robertson, 2017). These selves evolve and manifest within ongoing social interactions between people in particular spaces like these two enclaves of care and are articulated through particular cultural practices such as the sharing of food. In this orientation, aspects of who migrants become as people take shape through mutually (re)constituting interactions and endeavours. As Gergen (2009) has also asserted, human subjectivities comprise emergent selves that take form through various relationships with other people and circumstances, social practices, and cultural traditions or resources (King et al., 2017; Rua et al., 2017). Central to these interconnected selves are cultural traditions that include ways of being and relating and understanding and responding to issues in life and different aspects of migration journeys. As I document in the analysis chapters of this thesis, these ways of being can overlap in terms of a collective orientation to life as well as in relation to aspects of the Islamic faith. Other shared and new aspects of the group's identities require mutual exploration, dialogue, and negotiation between members.

This conceptual orientation towards the interconnected self has led me to document how the participants in both groups create and inhabit shared spaces in which they can grow together as sisters within Islam who are culturally diverse, enacting overlapping but also divergent hyphenated selves and engaging in shared social practices. The everyday practices of

the groups can be seen as central to discovering and enacting what it means to be Muslim women in Aotearoa NZ today, and to how these women contribute to the betterment of this society. In this context, sociocultural practices are understood as normative shared actions that the participating women engage in within these two groups and the various projects in which they engage collectively (Blue, 2019; Halkier & Jensen, 2011). Social practices are often seen as the habitual, everyday actions people perform in going about their lives (Schraube & Højholt, 2016). These include going to group meetings, sharing food, being inventive, and planning and engaging in the shared projects that the group has decided to embark on together. Here, I draw on the turn to the study of social practice as a means of documenting and making sense of how different cultural groups conduct their lives in ways that are understood and derivative of the collective (Blue, 2019; Hodgetts et al., 2020). Our focus here is not solely on the actions of each participant, but on how their actions are implicated or entwined in the adaptation of aspects of their ethnic cultures of origin to life in Aotearoa NZ. In doing so, they are also engaged in diversifying the cultural mosaic that is a multicultural society (Blue, 2019).

Building on this focus on sociocultural practices and the relational constitution of experience, the emergence of Islamic psychology can be understood as part of broader efforts to engage Western psychological frameworks alongside Islamic epistemologies, particularly in relation to cognition, development, and wellbeing. Foundational work by Badri (1979) also advocates a critical engagement with Western psychology to ensure its compatibility with Islamic principles. This position that has informed subsequent attempts to integrate empirical approaches with theological understandings of the self. Within this body of scholarship, both points of convergence and distinction have been identified, particularly in relation to the emphasis placed on moral and spiritual dimensions of development (Hashim, 2024). Also relevant is scholarship on the articulation of the self through Islamic conceptual frameworks as offering contextually meaningful insights into Muslim lived experience (Skinner, 2019).

Concurrently, there have been ongoing discussions regarding the applicability of Western therapeutic modalities, such as CBT. These discussions have drawn attention to the need for approaches that are attentive to religiously embedded worldviews associated with Islam (Cucchi, 2022). These have contributed to the development of models grounded in Islamic cosmology (Rothman & Coyle, 2018) and integrative practices incorporating Qur'anic and Sunnah-based elements within therapeutic contexts (Rassool, 2024; Saritoprak & Abu-Raiya, 2023; Anlı, 2025; Latif, Dockrat & Rassool, 2024).

Whilst scholarship in this area has made important contributions to the development of culturally and spiritually responsive psychological frameworks, the primary focus on theoretical and therapeutic integration at the individual level suggests further scope for engaging with the broader social and relational dimensions of Islamic psychology through a focus on everyday lives experiences of phenomenon such as migration. In this respect, rather than situating my research primarily within Islamic psychology, I draw more substantively on Cultural and Community Psychologies to explore how Muslim migrant and refugee women's experiences are shaped within culturally embedded systems of meaning and practice. From this perspective, psychological processes are understood as culturally mediated and relationally constituted, emerging through everyday practices and dynamic social contexts rather than being reducible to individual-level or purely theological explanations (Kitayama & Salvador, 2024; Hodgetts et al., 2020; King, Hodgetts & Guimarães, 2021).

Practices engaged in by participants in this research are approached as both influenced by and reproductive of gendered norms within Islam, the participants' respective ethnic cultures of origin, and as efforts to adapt ways of conducting everyday life to the conditions of the host society. As such, the practices explored in the two groups are the particular activities, tasks, and roles that are contingent, dynamic and interpersonal within the group and the contributing communities that members represent (Blue, 2019; Halkier & Jensen, 2011). It is through these routinised and often normative practices that the group is enacted as an enclave for mutual care and support, which gets under the skins of participants and into their very hyphenated subjectivities as diverse groups of Muslim women. As such these practices are enacted concurrently at the collective levels of group and culture and at the personal level for individual participants. By focusing on the social practices exercised within these two groups, I consider how Muslim women reproduce themselves as sisters in the faith somewhere new (Blue, 2019; Halkier & Jensen, 2011).

In the present study, I attend to how Muslims come to Aotearoa NZ and negotiate revised senses of self as they work simultaneously to integrate into a new way of life and preserve their values of origin, both religious and ethnic (Friesen, 2008; Guerin & Guerin, 2002, McCarthy, 2021 Sulaiman-Hill et al., 2024). As noted above, the concept of acculturation has been foundational to migration research in psychology and present understandings of the settlement process (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Jasperse et al., 2012; Schwartz et al., 2020). Generally, this concept speaks usefully to the cultural and psychological changes that often occur within individuals and groups as they interact with one or more cultural groups (Berry, 1997). These changes are around social structures and/or cultural practices (Sam & Berry,

2016) and are often described in relation to four strategies (Berry, 1997), which are broadly referred to as assimilation, integration, marginalisation, and separation (AIMS; Berry & Safdar, 2007). Assimilation has occurred when people have acquired the receiving culture and discarded their heritage culture. Conversely, separation exists when people maintain their heritage culture completely and avoid interactions with others in the new country. Integration involves people both maintaining their original culture and seeking to engage with other cultures as they come to understand more about their host societies. Alternatively, marginalisation arises when people engage with neither the heritage culture nor the receiving culture (Berry, 1997).

These acculturation strategies have provided seminal insights for understanding the dynamics of migrant cultural adaptation. Scholars have argued that earlier models relied on implicit characterisations of migrants as members of nondominant groups with limited choices regarding their acculturation goals (Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019) with successful integration determined by level of acceptance by dominant groups in the host country (Berry & Safdar, 2007). This means that migrants were deemed more successful if they possessed the same acquired preferences in terms of family, employment, religious ties, and ways of thinking as dominant host groups (Navas et al., 2007). That is, migration was constructed from the perspective of dominant receiving community. Further, according to Berry's classic model of acculturation, integration represents the ideal means of achieving successful adaptation and long-term psychological well-being, whereas marginalisation is positioned as the least favourable (Berry & Safdar, 2007; Meca et al., 2017). Therefore, the degree of integration is often used as a key indicator of successful adaptation by immigrants to life in the receiving society.

Importantly, research suggests that the playing field is not level in this regard because integration can only be realised for those who have options and opportunities to grow in the host country (Kyeremeh et al., 2021). Immigrants who experience difficult conditions, such as poor working situations, language barriers, low social support, and perceived discrimination, are likely to experience negative impacts on their mental health, and as a result, integration can be much more difficult (Rodríguez Álvarez et al., 2014). Additionally, integration is an ongoing process rather than the realisable state referred to in J. W. Berry's model. Integration can also vary over time as it is influenced by multiple factors, including the length of residence in the new cultural setting, which plays an essential role in spanning cultural distances and addressing issues of social exclusion (Arias-Uriona & Guillén, 2020; Millán-Franco et al., 2019; Wessendorf, 2017).

Berry's seminal scholarship is still widely regarded as the most prominent conceptualisation of acculturation within psychology (Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008; Schwartz et al., 2020). However, significant limitations have also been identified with this approach to understanding immigration processes and experiences (Alvarez et al., 2020; Garcia et al., 2020; Kuo, 2013; Meca et al., 2017; Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019). Criticisms include that this model is unidirectional and simply accepts and promulgates the assumption that acculturation is stable, favourable, linear, and necessary (Safdar & van de Vijver, 2019). A focus on acculturation has also contributed to less attention being paid to the dynamic processes through which migrants deal with various everyday challenges or develop culturally hybrid and situationally specific strategies for making lives for themselves somewhere new. Insufficient attention has also been given to mediating factors, such as personal characteristics, perceptions of the new social context, or characteristics of the receiving society (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006).

Scholars have argued that migration functions as a more complex and multifaceted ecologically contextualised process that is not reducible to the phases proposed by scholars (Arends-Toth & Van de Vijver, 2006; Berry, 1993) and which is impacted by varying levels of discrimination, exclusion, trauma and acceptance within the receiving society (Zhang et al, 2018). This model of acculturation also may not fully account for migration as a disruption to patterns of daily life, social ties and identities, necessitating people to engage with complex processes of (re)socialisation and cultural hybridity. It has been found that the adoption of what can be read as less favourable acculturation strategies from the perspective of the host society, at least in the short term, can be highly adaptive for some migrants as part of their resettlement journeys (Berry, 1997; Bhatia & Ram, 2009; Navas et al., 2007). Processes of migration and resettlement can also be more dynamic and complex than proposed by the acculturation strategies outlined by Berry (1997). For example, the adoption of a separation strategy of avoiding contact with the dominant culture by first-generation migrant women from ultra-minority groups in the receiving society (Viruell Fuentes, 2007), or for those who with particular ethnic and religious backgrounds that have often been stigmatised (Meca et al., 2017), has been found to limit discrimination and feelings of "otherness" for such migrants (Meca et al., 2017; Yoon et al., 2013). As such, this may be a very adaptive strategy in settings where migrants are marginalised and have little input into how others perceive them.

Although Berry (2003) has acknowledged that acculturation processes may differ across cultures, he has also argued for the generalisability of his model by finding similarities across cultures. In doing so, Berry has constructed culture as a factor separate from

psychological (personal) experiential processes. This conceptual separation of person and culture has been questioned. For example, some scholars have argued that culture is intertwined with and reproduced through personal ways of being and everyday practices and cannot be parcelled out conceptually in this way (Hodgetts et al., 2020; King, 2019). Relatedly, migrants can also create what has been termed as hyphenated cultural identities by negotiating intercultural spaces for belonging and engagement (Cassim et al., 2019; Cassim, Stolte, Hodgetts, 2020), experiencing both integration and marginalisation, sometimes in the same settings at the same time. As societies change due to worldwide migration influx and globalisation, so the need for more dynamic understandings of migrants' adaptive strategies are warranted (Alvarez et al., 2020). Rather than simply measuring the degree of integration or comparing strategies among migrant groups who bring different values and cultures with them, it is important to move out beyond current models to consider some of the broader issues I have touched on above.

In considering these issues I have become particularly interested in how the participating migrant women share cultural aspects of Islam, whilst differing in terms of their ethnic and often class-based cultures of origin. What is offered here is a focus on the role of Islam as a particular faith-based or religious culture that intersects with ethnic, gender, and class cultures as central to how members of the two women's groups come to understand themselves and their places in this society (cf., Huertas Bailén, 2018). The corresponding focus on cultural hybridity is important for shedding more light on the complex processes involved for women from shared faith-based and different ethnic backgrounds in helping each other manage the settlement process in a new place. Of particular interest is how these groups embody a caretaking role that is associated with key functions for women within Islam. From this perspective, it is important to embrace an orientation towards acculturation as a dynamic, relational, and evolving process (Bourke et al., 2019) that can be aided by encounters between mutually supportive communities (Baker-Lewton et al., 2017; Habermas & Köber, 2015; Li et al., 2014).

I also seek to draw from and articulate an Islamic perspective on Muslim women's migration to Aotearoa NZ. The Islamic tradition is rich with migration stories in which efforts to escape persecution are related to the accounts of the great prophets. These include the Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) who migrated to Canaan (Qur'an, 29: 26), the Prophet Musa (PBUH) who migrated to Madyan (Qur'an, 28: 20-28), and the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) who migrated to Madinah, followed years after by a great number of Muslims who migrated to Ethiopia (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2019; Hassan & Majid, 2019). As outlined above, *hijrah*

is the Islamic term used to refer to Muslim who seeking refuge and asylum for security and protection and realising freedom from harassment, and other such benefits (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2019; Chuhan & Khalid, 2019; Elmadmad, 2008). *Hijrah* also refers to leaving a bad way of life for a good or more righteous life, and how sometimes people have to sacrifice their belongings in order to make such transitions (Chuhan & Khalid, 2019). This means that *hijrah* is not merely about moving from one place to another but also about improving one's lot in life and transitioning from bad to good places and ways of being. Scholars have described how *hijrah* is about more than just personal efforts to migrate; it is the beginning of a continuous effort to establish a strong and resilient ummah (Hassan & Majid, 2019).

By moving to safer places, migrants can also realise educational and occupational aspirations for themselves and their families, experience reunification, and achieve religious freedom if they are moving from situations of persecution (Elmadmad, 2008; Hassan, 2007). Islam teaches that migration, as *hijrah*, means contributing positively to the new host society as an act of gratitude to reciprocate our acceptance. This value is strongly demonstrated by the groups who participated in this research, whose members strive to encourage Muslim women to enable them to help not only other Muslim migrants, but also other minority-group migrants to resettle and become part of Aotearoa NZ.

Several of the key issues I touch on in the following section on conceptualising women's groups in Islam have also been touched on in previous sections. However, I felt it was important to also include a section devoted explicitly to this topic to enable better understanding of the participant groups in the context of previous migration and community scholarship (see Chapter 5 for further contextualised discussion).

Conceptualising Women's Self-Help Groups (WSHG) within Islam

Migrating to other countries stretches people's connections to place and community of origin, at the least (Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020), but often completely displaces people from their organic social and cultural supports within their societies of origin (Wachter & Gulbas, 2018). Such disruptions have been associated with stress and isolation for some (Kim, 2019). Engaging with Muslim migrant women in various community settings lead me to realise that many women experiences struggle to forge new lives of engagement and support in this new home country. In this context, the participants in this research came together to support each other and fulfil the human need for friendship and support. When laying the foundation for this research and engaging in initial discussions with these groups I was surprised by how open potential participants were about how the enclaves of support and care they were co-creating helped them cope with the stressors of dislocation and the sense of isolation and

culture shock that can come with being a visible minority faced with Islamophobia in a new country. I was also surprised by the practical functions of these groups in helping women discover how to access services and negotiate with the institutions and organisations that can help them to adjust and build new lives for themselves and their families in Aotearoa NZ. All this, without having to give up or compromise their core cultural values and worldviews and senses of self (Due et al., 2021; García-Cid et al., 2020; Oke et al., 2018).

Reading more widely, I discovered that seminal community research in psychology has shown that such self-help groups (SHG) have been used effectively for some time by middle-class-majority and minority groups to address a range of mental health issues (Lieberman & Borman, 1976). More generally, women's self-help groups (WSHG) have been recognised for some time as avenues for financial, social, and political empowerment (Badejo et al., 2017; Kumar et al., 2019; Were, 2017), through the building of mutual commitments, confidence, and independence and interdependence (Atteraya et al., 2016; Badejo et al., 2017; Brody et al., 2017; Lieberman & Snowden, 1993; Nawaz, 2017; Were, 2017). Such empowerment processes have also enabled women to transform existing power relations and engage in capacity building and cultivate solidarities (Ghosh et al., 2015). Within WSHG, heterogeneity in terms of educational backgrounds and skills has also been found to positively predict the effectiveness of group work (Kumar et al., 2018). Furthermore, through regular interactions within WSHG, members can also develop gendered leadership skills, which are particularly important for women who experience discrimination and lack of power in other settings (Ghosh et al., 2015).

Relevant to the present study, research by Foroutan (2017) has suggested that ethnically diverse women's groups can be central to the renegotiation of cultural identities and efforts to understand and embrace the faith-based diversities at the heart of Islam today. Within these groups, mutual support can result in the development of effective strategies for navigating and addressing major issues and difficulties around migration and, as part of this process, diminishing experiences of isolation and the pain of feeling marginalised (Alemu et al., 2018; Due et al., 2021). This is because the groups offer Muslim women safe spaces to share their experiences and come to better understand and articulate cultural nuances and the key challenges and that come with migration, which are often difficult to express in words. In many respects, these groups function as "laboratories" for rehearsing new strategies and developing essential skills for living and growing one's resilience, self-esteem, and confidence somewhere new (Berger, 2004; Butler & Wintram, 1991).

Research has also explored the benefits of encounters between different cultural groups in particular urban areas, such as the one in which my research was conducted, revealing how at neighbourhood and smaller group levels encounter spaces can enhance and shape place-based affiliations and a sense of community and belonging shared by members of different cultural groups (Amin, 2012; Melike, 2017; Schuermans, 2019; Valentine, 2013). Important here are repeated interactions in which members of different cultures can come together, and better understand and collaborate with one another in living and working harmoniously with their differences in shared moments in everyday life. These shared encounter spaces can result in the deepening of interpersonal and intergroup relations, particularly when emergent groups work together towards common goals or projects (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Melike, 2017; Schuermans, 2019; Wessendorf, 2013).

Such enclaves resemble the spaces for care that have been recognised as important for promoting the well-being of individuals and communities and for cultivating a shared sense of place in the city (Conradson, 2003; Gibb et al., 2024; Hodgetts et al., 2020; Roxberg et al., 2020). Current theory on spaces for care conceptualises these spaces as comprising more than passive backgrounds or containers for human behaviour. These spaces take shape through ongoing social interactions in particular settings (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Roxberg et al., 2020). In this research I am interested in how participating women come together to form Muslim women's groups that function in overlapping and unique ways as spaces for care. Central are the social relations and opportunities for intra- and cross-cultural dialogues whereby women holding various ethical and societal subjectivities can come together to explore their communal lives in Aotearoa NZ. Also evident in such spaces is the working through of the issues faced by the groups and the cultivating of mutually supportive responses to obstacles to successful resettlement, including those associated with work, housing, and civic engagement. Also relevant here is recent research that suggests that these spaces of care can function as enclaves for women from minority cultural backgrounds who come together in solidarity for mutual support, where participation can contribute to enhanced personal and collective wellbeing (Conradson, 2003; Gibb et al., 2024; Roxberg et al., 2020).

As noted above, the WSHG I interacted with for this research have strong commitments to cultivating mutual trust and support between members. These groups were also formed with the family orientation that is central to Islam, whereby each member comes to recognise the others as sisters over time. For example, the leader of Group 1, who initiated these Muslim women's groups in Aotearoa NZ, had developed the practice of building relationships with new members and supporting them to recruit other younger women. This

kind of family approach is common in Muslim relationships where age and life experience are valued, and family is recognised as a core foundation for cultivating strong Muslim communities (Shitu-Agbetola, 1989). Like other WSHG, the groups participating in this research choose leaders to coordinate the group's activities. These leaders do not always have professional training, but they are instrumental in setting the direction of learning and, in keeping with Islamic values, are tasked with encouraging group members in flexible, humble, supportive, and inclusive ways of relating to each other as a basis for promoting harmony within the group (cf. Ahmed & Al Amiri, 2019). These leaders are also instrumental in representing the groups' interests with outside groups and agencies. Both participating groups also acknowledge the vital contributions of other groups, including Māori and government agencies, to their successful resettlement. Such engagements are facilitated for these groups in that many participants have come from countries with collective cultures that resonate with core Māori values and practices such as *whanaungatanga* (positive relational networks) and *manaakitanga* (the duty to care or others).

In short, my preliminary engagements with the two participating groups suggested that each enclave featured many of the positive functions described in the scholarly literature on SHG and spaces for care, as well as playing crucial roles in the successful resettlement of participating Muslim women. More than this, as attested to in my analysis to come, these groups do not merely assist their own members but provide enclaves in which Islamic values can be enacted across ethnic differences and resources to be drawn upon by participants seeking to live as good Muslims somewhere new (cf., Al-Jayyousi & Myers-Bowman, 2019).

Thesis Focus and Overview

This thesis explores the migration and resettlement experiences of ethnically diverse Muslim women from two mutual support groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Of key consideration is how members of these groups work collaboratively to support each other and facilitate the settlement of newcomers. Both groups are interesting in their own right while also offering interesting points of contrast. Group 1 exemplifies the prosocial community-based initiatives that support both Muslim and non-Muslim people in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. Group 2 also offers an exemplar for how members come together through various collaborations, but the focus is more on aiding migrant and refugee women in establishing their own businesses and commercial activities. My analysis documents how both groups work to facilitate the resettlement of refugee and migrant women and their families, while promoting interethnic dialogue that is in keeping with key Muslim values of care towards others regardless of ethnic or cultural background. As well as focusing on the group activities and

functions, I focus on each member's migration story encompassing where they migrated from, why they came to Aotearoa NZ, their resettlement journeys, how they became involved in these groups, and the function of these groups within the context of their new lives in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill.

The thesis is not primarily about these Muslim women's own migration journeys and associated dilemmas. Nor is this thesis an effort to replicate findings from a growing body of literature on such journeys. My thesis draws on this migration literature to understand the journeys of the participants, but my primary focus is on how the participants use core Islamic values and their own refugee and migrant experiences to help new Muslim arrivals settle and integrate into this society. I explore how the two groups support the socioeconomic inclusion of newcomers so they can contribute positively to the host society. My thesis is also informed by my own understanding of what it means to be a Muslim newcomer, to not only observe our Islamic faith through prayer, but also to enact the teachings of Allah and the Qur'an through prosocial practices in service to other human beings. This thesis documents what I read as an authentic faith-based approach to community service exemplified by the activities of these two groups of Muslim women in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland.

The following chapter presents the methodology for this research. I explain the overall methodological approach taken and the process followed in this research with two Muslim women's groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. This approach draws insights from narrative psychology within the context of an auto-ethnographic case-based investigation that involved me immersing myself as a participant within the two groups. I also discuss the implementation of a "family approach" to the fieldwork, ethical considerations for this research, the methods of participant engagement employed to generate empirical materials, and how I conducted the analysis of these materials. Chapter 3 presents my analysis of the data from Group 1. Chapter 4 then presents my analysis of the data from Group 2. Chapter 5 concludes the thesis with a general discussion of the research findings, the contribution to existing knowledge, and the implications of the thesis as a whole.

Chapter 2: Methodology

This chapter outlines the auto-ethnographic, case-based approach that I developed to explore Muslim migrant women's resettlement experiences within the context of two women's groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. I begin with positioning this research within the existing research in narrative and community psychology and the emphasis it places on culturally and locally informed participative action (Collins et al., 2018; Cornish et al., 2023; Hodgetts et al., 2010; King et al., 2015; Seedat et al., 2001). Community-wise, my research was complicated in that members of the two participating women's groups are sisters within the Islamic faith and the corresponding faith-based culture, as well as coming from diverse ethnic cultures from different parts of the world. As such, group compositions feature similarities and differences as community spaces for care. I am also a migrant sister in Islam, but from a different ethnic and culture background to those of the participants. This required us to explore the similarities and differences within our faith and its intersections with our ethnic and cultural backgrounds within the additional cultural context of the secular society of Aotearoa NZ.

In my PhD journey, my original topic of interest and fieldwork were disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. I had initially planned to conduct research into the needs of homeless young women in Indonesia and work with government agencies to establish service supports. However, with the onset of the pandemic, it was simply not viable for me to conduct the planned project in Indonesia. In consultation with my supervisors, it was decided that it would not be appropriate for me to engage participants through online interviews or have a research assistant conduct the fieldwork. We decided to pivot my research towards working with Muslim participants here in Aotearoa NZ. After further discussions with my supervisors, I started to consider possible topics that involve working with Muslim migrant women, and the more I read on this topic, the more I came to see myself as a Muslim temporary migrant who was in Aotearoa NZ for the purposes of education. One of my supervisors had a close relationship with a senior Islamic advisor from the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) who works with refugee and women's issues. My supervisors and I sat down with this community leader to further discuss possible research topics. We then engaged in several meetings to discuss Muslim migrant women experiences related to their resettlement experiences, difficulties, and the initiatives of Muslim women groups to work independently to help "their sisters". Adopting a participative fieldwork perspective (cf. Cornish et al., 2023; Sonn & Baker, 2016), I then spent 6 months getting to know these women and engaging collaboratively with them in various community programmes. This preliminary fieldwork

proved fruitful in extending my understanding of how diverse groups of women can work together to address resettlement issues through an emphasis on empowerment and personal and collective agency (Sonn & Baker, 2016; Stein & Faigan, 2015).

Subsequently, my research was designed to embrace issues of similarity and diversity through my joining the groups and engaging with participants in their everyday practices of resettlement as we made new lives in Aotearoa NZ. I explored the adaptive processes via which the groups engaged collectively in learning how to integrate but not assimilate into everyday life in Aotearoa NZ. My research centred on how these women work together, not only to adapt to new ways of conducting their everyday lives somewhere new, but also to contribute to the lives of other Muslims and non-Muslims within the society, by applying core Islamic values.

As outlined in the previous chapter, central to this thesis is the role of multicultural Muslim women's groups as spaces for mutually supportive resettlement processes. The first section introduces the assumptions based in narrative psychology from a community research perspective that informs this auto-ethnographic and participative investigation of Muslim women's stories of migration and resettlement. Section 2 considers auto-ethnography as a key methodological element of this research, including my self-positioning in relation to the two women's groups and within the research project. This leads to an introduction to my auto-ethnographic fieldwork with the two participating women's groups. In these sections, I conceptualise my approach to the auto-ethnographic study of the women's everyday resettlement efforts and reflect on how my orientation relates to aspects of the psychological scholarship on the conduct of everyday life, and on the importance of integrating Islamic knowledge and concepts into this work. Section 4 outlines the procedural and relational ethical issues central to this investigation. This leads to a discussion of how I worked with participants to generate insights into their migration and resettlement stories, and the role of the groups they belong to in these processes. This involves an exploration of how I employed a flexible interviewing technique that included go-along conversations, mapping, and photo-elicitation exercises. The chapter ends with a section outlining the case analysis process through which I constructed the two case analyses outlined in Chapters 3 and 4.

Orientating Towards Narrative Community Psychology

Scholarship on narrative or community storying in psychology is compatible with the conceptual foundations regarding the interconnected self that I established in the previous chapter. What is offered is a perspective on people as storied beings who construct and interpret their experiences and very senses of self through the narratives that they produce

about themselves and the stories that are produced about them as groups or communities (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Rappaport, 2000). In other words, human beings are storied and storying beings who make sense of the world and their place in it and as members of groups and communities through engaging in storytelling (Smith, 2013). Research in psychology from a narrative perspective explores the meaning of the stories people tell and the functions these stories serve in the conduct of their everyday lives and sense of self (Hodgetts et al., 2020). The approach emphasises the centrality of human relations and culture in the orientation and content of the stories different groups tell, and in how people employ both personal and collective narratives to interpret events in the world and how these relate to one's own life (Smith & Monferte, 2020). Narratives play an essential role in participants' activities in everyday life (Hiles & Cermák, 2008). According to Mankowski and Rappaport (2000), narratives give coherence and meaning to various life events, providing a sense of continuity between the past, present and future. As such, this approach is particularly useful for exploring the migration stories offered by participants in research such as mine.

In this research I apply this orientation to examining participant's personal stories of migration and their engagement in their respective groups, which they story as enclaves of care in resettlement processes. Seminal narrative psychologists including Frank (2010) and Riessman (2008) emphasised how people story their lives from within sociocultural contexts that contain and are shaped by various shared story frames. These community and societal narratives are available for people to draw on in the construction of their personal stories and subjectivities. As such, narrative research spans explorations of personal narratives outwards to the broader group, institutional, and societal narratives that inform participants' personal stories (Murray, 2000). In this particular situation, participants actively "told" me about their experiences, acting as narrators who storied themselves as particular "actors" within their migrant journeys and group activities by also drawing upon aspects of the accounts of their sisters in Islam and members of the broader population (Frank, 2010). This implies that they were far from passive in the meaning-making process. In constructing and telling their stories, they work with, innovate upon, and reproduce shared faith-based and ethnically informed cultural perspectives and values.

As I show in the case analyses, the participant narratives are hybrid and value laden stories of movement, resettlement, and mutual care. These participants' stories are crucial to understanding how these women work collectively to integrate themselves and their families into the host society in Aotearoa NZ and the complexities this carries into their everyday lives (Frank, 2010; Smith & Monforte, 2020). Relatedly, the participants can be approached as

storytellers of their own lives and migration as well as socioculturally immersed story analysts who draw upon and position themselves within available public and cultural narratives in crafting their own accounts of migration (Bochner & Riggs, 2014; Smith & Monforte, 2013). In this case, as storytellers, the women shared aspects of their resettlement journeys as these had evolved through dialogue over years of being Muslim migrant women in Aotearoa NZ. Occasionally, different participants reflected on the shared stories relating to Islamic migration and related faith-based concepts that have shaped their own accounts. These participants are not simply storying themselves but are also innovating upon the narratives of their ethnic groups and the Islamic faith and what it means to be Muslim women on the move. My research was designed to tap into these social practices of storytelling within the groups.

According to migration scholars such as Mahmoud and Tehseen (2021) and Cassim and colleagues (2019), employing narrative concepts to research experiences of movement and resettlement is essential because migrants' first-hand accounts can deepen our knowledge of their past and present circumstances and how these interactions shape their efforts to build lives somewhere new, now and into the future. Narrative-based inquiry is crucial for enabling policymakers and public and community services to address the resettlement needs of migrants (Dennison, 2021). Research into migrants' narratives has also revealed that in building new lives, migrants implant their cultural identities somewhere new as well as innovating upon and extending their very senses of self and place (Soguk, 1995).

Moreover, employing a narrative perspective in the context of migration, along with participative storying techniques like photo-elicitation, effectively elucidate the coping mechanisms of migrants during displacement and resettlement processes. This is because such interview techniques can offer a deeper understanding of the cultural aspects of the resettlement process. These techniques can reveal how migrants navigate their feelings of disorientation and ultimately develop a sense of continuity of self from their country of origin to their new home country (Cassim, Hodgetts & Stolte, 2015; Cassim et al, 2019). More specifically, in the context of Muslim migrants, narratives can include more voices from diverse ethnic groups (not just Arab Muslims) about their experiences, aspirations, and challenges. Narratives can also highlight their efforts to engage with the host society as strategies to conform, negotiate, and create alternative lives (Syed, 2023; Ward et al., 2019).

Sensitive issues such as the pain and confusion of displacement, anger about life-changing events, and the uncertainty that comes with resettlement, as well as feelings of nostalgia for the home country are rendered accessible through narrative investigations (Ayeb-Karlsson, 2021; Tamboukou, 2021). Exploring migrants' narratives provides

opportunities to delve deep and gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of our everyday lives and, in particular here, those of Muslim migrant women in Aotearoa NZ. Central to the research process has been to build on existing group dialogues and to share accounts of resettlement in depth and the role of the women's groups in these processes (cf., Quayle & Sonn, 2019). The participants engaged in the research through individual interviews, informal conversations with other women, and group discussions. This approach allowed me to generate a deeper understanding of their life stories, which also provided opportunities for various levels of analysis at the individual, interpersonal, and positional levels (Murray, 2000).

Following the series of narrative interviews and focus group discussions (FGD), I engaged participants with a range of issues that I had observed through more informal discussions as part of these groups. Such fieldwork has been referred to in migration research as a form of culturally informed immersion, which I discuss further in relation to auto-ethnography below (Cassim et al., 2015). Moreover, narrative interviewing in such immersive contexts allowed me to document complex participant subjectivities within the context of their life stories and everyday interactions. This was particularly useful when working with these participants who represent minoritised communities and wanted to voice their positive stories (Cassim et al., 2015; Quayle & Sonn, 2019). Group discussions were also important because the participating women are members of community service groups who come together to reconnect with their Islamic values and to find effective avenues for integrating into and contributing prosocially to life in Aotearoa NZ. Here, the narrative perspective adopted offered valuable opportunities for the participants to cultivate senses of settled selves, belonging, and community within both the Muslim community and broader society (Li et al., 2014).

Briefly, this research was designed to draw on insights from narrative psychology to document participant migration and resettlement stories as reflections of core Islamic values and personal and collective meaning-making processes. Central to this work was the assertion that such narratives are culturally grounded and central to how migrants make sense of their memories of home, reasons for moving, resettlement practices, new lives, and responses to life events and resettlement in this country (Hiles & Cermák, 2008; Polkinghorne, 1988). To access these stories and to understand the context in which they were voiced by participants I spent considerable time with both case groups, drawing methodological insights from auto-ethnography.

Auto-Ethnography

Moving from the legacy ethnographic approach developed in anthropology whereby outsiders would go into a community and write “objective” accounts of the cultures of other groups, auto-ethnography was developed to foreground insider accounts. Auto-ethnography involves researchers who share demographic and situational characteristics with the groups with whom they are conducting their investigations. Often, the researcher is an insider or member of the participant group who embraces shared subjectivities with group members as a researcher and a community member (Watkins, 2017). Since the early work of the Chicago School of Sociology, psychologists have integrated aspects of auto-ethnography into explorations of community narratives in efforts to provide more nuanced and grounded explorations of contextualised human experiences (Adams et al., 2015; Adams et al., 2017; Bochner & Ellis, 2016).

In this doctoral research, autoethnography was embraced as a useful orientation towards the everyday life stories of participants whereby I reported on my observations and interpretation of the storied experiences of group members from my own positioning as a participant within the groups and their activities. As such, I drew on my own personal experiences and positioning as a Muslim migrant woman in Aotearoa NZ who shared some experiences and key values with the other group members. I then drew on participant stories and my own experiences to engage ethnographically to understand the lived realities for the members of the two groups and their efforts to facilitate resettlement for themselves and other migrants while considering the broader psychological and community processes and public narratives at play in informing participant’s narratives of their journeys and everyday lives (Adams et al., 2017; Garance, 2010; Poulos, 2021). Central to this auto-ethnographic sense-making effort was connecting my fieldwork observations, experiences, and interpretations as a researcher and group participant with those of other group members and broader social and political narratives, everyday practices, and the values and psychological structures at play in the functioning of these groups (Van Maanen, 2011).

Central to my research was the cultivation of close relations between myself as a migrant Muslim woman and the other members of the two Muslim women’s groups. As alluded to above in relation to the Chicago School tradition, my orientation towards auto-ethnography was not situated within the genre of self-ethnographic research, which involves turning the research lens solely inwards and engaging in introspection. Rather, my orientation moved outwards from my observations and participation in the group to the narratives of other group members and on to the broader narrated Islamic and ethnic cultural values and identities at

play in the migration and resettlement experiences, narratives and activities of the group members (Bochner & Ellis, 2016). Further, this approach positioned me not as an isolated unit of analysis, but as someone embedded within relational, affective, and cultural contexts, allowing for critical reflection to find deeper meanings (McIlveen, 2008; Parker, 2020). Auto-ethnography recognises the emotional and cognitive dimensions of the researcher's engagement as legitimate and generative sources of knowledge. This then facilitates recursive movement between personal experience, collective meaning-making, and broader sociocultural frameworks, acknowledging the psychological processes, such as empathy, identification, memory, and affect, that mediate the research encounters and shape both the production and interpretation of narratives.

This research also reflects a core intent of auto-ethnographic research to craft and provide counter narratives (Adams et al., 2015; Garance, 2010), in this case, against hegemonic and stereotypical narratives of Muslim migrant women as subjugated and lacking personal agency, and of Muslims as anti-social threats to Western nations. Drawing on this narrative-informed and case-based auto-ethnographic approach, I positioned myself as a participative researcher and a fellow sister in Islam. I became an ingroup storyteller engaged in documenting the agency and nuanced diversity within these groups of migrant Muslim women.

I interacted with participating women iteratively within community settings over a period of 5 years, and wrote my PhD thesis as an insider immersed in these groups. This positioning gave me a chance to work from the insider subject position that Geertz (1973) seminally described as being more attuned to the nuances of the operations of a group and from which I could produce "thick descriptions" of our activities. Immersing myself also afforded access to contextual information that helped me assign meaning to the relational functioning of the groups. According to Maykut & Morehouse (1994), this also means that for a time it was necessary to "live within" the group settings in order to understand participants' perspectives empathetically and contextually. The term "indwelling" describes my involvement in the groups and resulting capacity to share experiences from an insider's perspective (Smith & Monforte, 2020).

Adopting this auto-ethnographic orientation to the fieldwork, I intentionally prioritised the cultivation of reciprocal relationships with the participants as these also created a sense of familiarity that brought mutual responsibility (Jones, 2005). It also enabled us to establish common ground from which to explore Muslim women's experiences of migration and resettlement through dialogue and shared work. This common ground was established

through the sharing of our experiences as Muslim migrant women from different ethnic backgrounds living in Aotearoa NZ (Jones et al., 2013). This approach also required me to acknowledge that I was the subjective research instrument, and my similar experiences as a Muslim migrant woman from a collectivist culture meant that my engagements with participants were often culturally easier and more fluid than would have been the case if we lacked such common ground (Ellis et al., 2011). This self-positioning also enabled me to establish partnerships in the knowledge production process with participants. We not only explored various topics together but also shared insights into various Islamic values that informed our respective migration experiences and engaged in the everyday activities of the groups together (Sonn & Baker, 2016).

My own experiences as a Muslim migrant became integral to the ethnographic accounts and analyses, I produced of participant stories (Ellis et al., 2011). Through the initial immersive facets of this project that involved me going to group meetings and getting involved in the groups' activities, I also learned to rely less on my formal training in psychological research methods modelled on the physical sciences and notions of the researcher as an objective outsider to work more from an Indigenous psychology-inspired perspective in which the emphases are on the cooperation and relationships between researchers and participants, and embracing one's own personal and cultural skills in the research process (Havea et al., 2023; King et al., 2015). My background in Islam and Javanese collectivism equipped me to engage respectfully with the participating Muslim women and cultivate mutual trust and reciprocal working relationships. I found myself immersed within the groups to the point that, despite our ethnic differences, we recognised each other as sisters in Islam and were comfortable in each other's company to the point of discussing how different facets of our shared faith manifested within our ethnically textured everyday lives. We could explore diversity within Islam together and consider how it informed our experiences of migration.

The relationships cultivated with group members over a period of years provided the core foundation for my interpretations of their stories and associated cultural practices as reflexivity of our shared Islamic values, to the point that these values became central to my interpretation of the participant's narratives of migration. This foundation enabled me to explore ideas with participants as these were formulated; to check my own assumptions; and to offer a more nuanced, dynamic and locally informed interpretation of their experiences, motivations, and actions while settling in Aotearoa NZ (Adams et al., 2015). We explored our shared social identities as Muslim migrant women (I was a sojourner so there were also some variations in this shared subjectivity) and how these positioned us in society and within the

groups. I also reflected on the privilege I had as a partial insider to capture aspects of the participants' efforts to determine their respective places in this new society, how to live in and navigate the place, and the meanings of tensions and struggles as these surfaced along the way. I explored the interplay of introspective, personally engaged selves and religious beliefs, practices, systems, and experiences. It also provided opportunities to engage in careful self-reflexive, also referred to as "reflexivity," and to discuss the intersections between self and society (Jones et al., 2013). Writing about the participants' experiences and my own reflexivity also nourished my work to balance intellectual and methodological academic rigor with cooperative friendships, and to engage in collective creativity with Group 1 in particular as they sought to contribute prosocially to society.

Gaining Access to Relevant Cases

My supervisors had existing relationships with Khadija, a Muslim senior Islamic advisor on refugee and women's issues or MSD. This senior advisor is well-known in Muslim circles in this country, a cofounder of the oldest Muslim Trust in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, and a leader of one of the Muslim women's communities which is concerned with supporting women and child refugees. She is also a Member of the Aotearoa NZ Order of Merit (MNZM) for services to refugee and migrant communities. I was introduced to Khadija so that we could discuss possible research topics.

Khadija and I engaged in several meetings to discuss Muslim migrant women experiences related to their resettlement difficulties and the initiatives of Muslim women's groups to work independently to help their "sisters". Subsequently, Khadija connected me with group leaders from five women's groups as potential participants. After conversations and meetings with group leaders, they then introduced me to the members of their groups. Adopting a participative fieldwork perspective (cf. Sonn & Baker, 2016), I then spent about 6 months getting to know these women and engaging collaboratively with them on various community programmes. I engaged with three Muslim women's groups in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland for my preliminary research, however, one of the groups was unable to continue as most of the members could not speak English fluently. This preliminary fieldwork proved fruitful in extending my understanding of how diverse groups of women can work together to address resettlement issues through emphases on empowerment and personal and collective agency (Sonn & Baker, 2016; Stein & Faigan, 2015). I also engaged remotely with two other women's groups, in Kirikiriroa Hamilton and Ōtautahi Christchurch. The practical difficulties of distance, time, and cost, and the added complexities due to the COVID-19 lockdowns meant that I could not continue with these groups. Given this, I settled on the two groups in

Puketāpapa Mount Roskill that feature in this research.

Immersing myself in these two groups allowed me to observe their interactions and activities, and to engage with them in a range of discussions relating to the focus of this research and their lives in general. I could also explore the motivations informing their narratives and sense-making about their migration journeys and key events along the way. Here I also acknowledge my power to interpret the details. From inside the groups, I was able to witness and narrate rich, thick interpretations of the values, motivations, practices, meanings, and interpretations that populate the migration journeys and resettlement practices of participants.

The concept of the case is a central analytical device within psychology (Radley & Chamberlain, 2012) that enables us to develop worked exemplars of the phenomenon under investigation (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Relatedly, my main emphasis was on scrutinising the two women's groups as case studies of enclaves of care and mutual support that facilitate migrants' integration into new societies. To be clear, I did not create these two groups; they were existing groups created by the women participating in this research and sustained through reciprocal relationships providing mutual support and mentoring, and through engagement in shared endeavours which enable participants to engage more actively with the new host society, whilst maintaining adherence to the Islamic faith.

Through my interactions with these groups over a number of years, I came to recognise them as communities of practice (Hoadley, 2012) that functioned as enclaves of care and respite for participating women (Conradson, 2003). Both of these women's groups were also located within the same diverse local ummah or Islamic community. They worked with different cohorts of sisters in Islam to help one another learn more about and adapt to life in Aotearoa NZ. These groups offered enclaves for women to come together and engage in various practices to share knowledge and learn collectively how to live as Muslim women in this country. Both groups brought Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds together into group settings with their own *kaupapa*, purposes and goals. As cases, both groups exemplified the similarities and differences in migrant-initiated, grassroots-led processes to support migrant adaptation through engagement in various social practices through which women could access resources, learn, grow, and make contributions to collective life in Aotearoa (Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). As with many communities of practice, both groups are assembled through ongoing social interactions, those that are central to the reproduction of the Islamic faith, which include aspects of the cultures and ethnic values systems the women bring to their everyday engagements (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Orford, 1992).

In this research, Annisa Trust became Group 1, and the Azura Trust, Group 2. In general, the groups share commonalities such as their aims to assist Muslim migrant women in their resettlement in Aotearoa NZ, their application of Islamic values in daily community life, their diversity in terms of ethnicities and educational backgrounds, and their collaboration with other non-Muslim communities and government agencies to explore the most effective ways to integrate with Aotearoa NZ culture and foster a more cohesive society. However, the orientations of the organisations are slightly different in terms of their group work and the membership. All members of the Annisa Trust are volunteers, while the Azura Trust includes both volunteers and paid workers. The Azura Trust takes a more vocational orientation, whereas the Annisa Trust tends to be more socially oriented.

After more than 6 months of learning about the groups, I continued my participation in Group 1, where all members are volunteers with paid employment elsewhere. As a member of Group 1, I participated in both formal and informal activities. The formal activities included attending events and helping to organise classes for refugee children, while the informal activities included activities such as cleaning the centre, preparing materials for the sewing classes, delivering groceries to the families during the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting sick Muslim families, and simply having lunch together with the members and other women activists from different communities. And, at the end of my research process, I collaborated with the members, alongside other non-Muslim women's communities, to engage in dialogue about racism against women. These activities not only enhanced my insights but also strengthened my relationships with the groups.

Group 2, which combines prosocial and entrepreneurial activities, is a bigger group. They manage a lot of education programmes including sewing classes, playgroups, gardening activities, and even shops, restaurants, and local social services. Many members are also in paid employment within the group and I often engaged with them outside of their working hours and at social events. I was also involved in running several events with this group, particularly those addressing issues of diversity.

The Ethics of Engagement and my Immersion in the Two Groups

I engaged in numerous conversations with group members, sharing stories while cooking lunch, enjoying coffee, and during excursions between Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Kirikiriroa Hamilton for Islamic occasions and events. I also spent time preparing for sewing classes, distributing groceries to elderly migrant women, and participating in fortnightly meetings. It is important to note that I was not the only person from my family to engage with the groups. As is common practice in relationship building within Islam, my

husband and daughter also accompanied me on several occasions. For example, on one occasion, while I was helping the women prepare for the sewing class, my daughter played with the other children, and my husband busied himself with brothers from the Islamic centre cleaning and painting the building. Involving family in this way reminded me of the importance of being engaged, helpful and open with local people when setting the foundations for designing community-based research (cf., Sonn & Baker, 2016).

Involving family in a community as part of the establishment of a research project in psychology was a new experience for me, and through the experience, I have learned the benefits of taking the time to build rapport and trust with participants. I consider this approach to constitute an enactment of relational ethics that requires openness and the establishment of dialogue and partnerships with community participants and the organisations they are part of (cf., Hodgetts et al., 2010). Relational ethics is about cultivating and enacting meaningful relationships first before embarking on formal research activities such as the interviews discussed below (King et al., 2015). In other words, valuing relational ethics can be considered the first principle of immersive community research, which is necessary to produce knowledge *with*, rather than *on* community groups (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Hopner & Liu, 2020).

The process of community immersion outlined above also informed my own understanding of Islamic values, which are often applied when women engage in shared and mutually beneficial activities with others, such as following *sunnah*, *dhua* (prayer), and *sadaqah* (charity). *Sunnah* refers to the traditions and practices of the Islamic Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) that relate to the Muslim conduct of everyday life (El-Dabbās, 1979). For example, whilst sharing an “eating moment together”, *sunnah* is applied through prioritising the needs of elders, hugging them and kissing their hands, ensuring one sits while eating and uses their right hand, and *dhua* before eating. I also came to realise that we shared the value communal eating over feeding oneself and others separately as we were sharing the “flavour” of our home-country traditions in Aotearoa NZ (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Longhurst et al., 2009). Eating together was valued as a “bonding moment” accompanied by dialogue about our own cultural traditions and the sharing of stories. This realisation also reminded me of a verse in the Qur’an that says, “Within Islam, we are family, no matter which ethnicities and skin colour” (49:10). Coming from different countries and ethnic cultures, with the associated differences, we were able to build trust and friendships because we shared the faith-based culture of Islam. Sharing in faith and collectivist- values-based acts with the other Muslim women enabled me to establish common ground for this research and for us to come to know each other as sisters.

Whilst living in Aotearoa NZ, I continued to cook a lot with the group and to share food and other resources, though not everyone is a fan of my Javanese hot sauce, for example. This level of involvement required me to collaborate with participants in ways that prioritised their needs and perspectives, rather than focusing primarily on producing a PhD for myself. The two agendas of being relationally respectful and producing a doctoral thesis are not mutually exclusive when one engages in relational ethics of mutual respect and benefit, kindness, understanding, and open dialogue throughout the research process. The relationally ethical principles of respect, beneficence, and fairness can be said to define the relationships between myself and the participants.

Immersing myself within these evolving community relationships reminded me that core Islamic values operate within the community beyond formal situations, such as in the practising of daily prayer and related everyday religious-cultural practices. We were informally and organically engaged together in helping and taking care of people, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and re-emphasised in his last sermon about the importance of assisting people of more modest means without thought for oneself (Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d., *Sahih Muslim* Hadith No. 98).

Considering the history and function of women's groups within Islam, valuing and enacting Islamic teachings within community activities enabled me to start reflecting on the values I needed to embody in this project and which were also embodied by the group members generally and the leaders in particular. What became very apparent was the importance for them of "paying it forward" in terms of the types of support and inclusive practices that they themselves had benefited from early in their own settlement processes. Supported by the groups, these women continued to enrich lives through their efforts to help other Muslim migrant women, particularly those from "difficult" backgrounds as refugees, asylum seekers, and survivors of domestic violence. Foregrounding the importance of these relational processes and experiences is important for this account of my method, as it enables me to contextualise the overall research design and conduct, whilst highlighting the sense of agency and empowerment that is central to the functioning of the participating women's groups. The present research focuses on a cultural and symbolic (Islamic) understanding of the groups and how ethical relationships are conducted, which fits with an auto-ethnographic and immersive orientation to community research.

As a relationally ethical auto-ethnographer, it was crucial to consider how I positioned myself in relation to the research, the participants, and the fundamental question, "Who am I in relation to the research?" Pitard (2017), an auto-ethnographer who worked simultaneously

as a researcher and a teacher, exemplified my role as both a researcher and a member of the community. As I interacted with the women, my perspective and values inevitably shaped my subjectivity during the interpretation and construction of this sociocultural paradigm. In this context, the dialogue between me as a researcher and the women revealed my knowledge and values as a woman from a collective culture that practices the Islamic faith.

With the Annisa Trust, I was involved in their prosocial community activities as well as having personal relationships with the members. With the Azura Trust, my immersion was not as substantive, in part, due to their more commercial orientation that limited my opportunities for participation (see Chapter 4). However, I did engage in personal narrative interviews and focus group discussions with participants from both groups, which form the bases of my case analyses. In terms of procedural ethics and the conditions set by the Massey University Ethics Committee, I was committed to conducting this work responsibly and ethically. I carefully evaluated the potential risks that might arise at the individual, interpersonal, and group levels. The Massey University Human Ethics Committee reviewed and approved the research on October 26, 2021, with the approval number NOR 21/54 (see Appendix A). Establishing ethical relationships that honoured each participant as an autonomous person was of central concern in this application.

A participant information sheet was provided to potential participants (Appendix B) before they signed the participant consent form (Appendix C) as evidence of their informed consent to participate in the research. I also protected participants' well-being by endeavouring to do no harm and maximise the possible benefits of their participation. To minimise any risks to participants and maximise the benefits of this research for the participants, I protected their privacy and identity and avoided revealing anything that might embarrass or harm them.

Informed consent was sought at each stage of this study, from my initial explanation of the study to each group leader and their respective groups, to gauging the willingness of each participant to share their experiences. This process did not stop with the initial sharing of the information sheets and consent forms approved by the Massey Human Ethics

committee. I also continued with periodic checks that the participants were happy to continue their support for the project. These checks were conducted every time we engaged in interviews, photo-elicitation projects, and focus group discussions (discussed in the following section). This dynamic and ongoing process of consent was intended to ensure comfort for participants. It also reflects my prioritising of our relationships, including making sure that I was not making undue demands on participants' time, resources, or emotional energy. Nurturing the relationship by whatever means appropriate and being willing to change patterns of interaction to accommodate the participants' needs.

My conduct of this research was also in keeping with Massey University's Code of Human Ethics. This code emphasises the importance of research procedures that protect the well-being and dignity of participants while also striving to minimise the potential for any harm to them. Participants' privacy was protected by the use of pseudonyms in all written materials, including this thesis, publications, and other research summaries. My supervisors and I were the only ones who knew the identities of the participants. All personal information was securely stored and will be kept separate from any identifying information for 5 years, after which it will be destroyed. This includes the images taken during the study and the photographs shared by the participants themselves. Photographs were taken with the participants' consent, providing them full autonomy in choosing the subjects they wanted to document. In addition, all individuals depicted in the images utilised in this thesis and publications were anonymised, with the exception of those featured on the magazine cover and public flyers used for advertising purposes. Further, participants were given the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the interview transcripts, and they were allowed to withdraw any information that they did not agree with or did not want included.

Participation in this research was voluntary, and participants were provided with comprehensive details regarding what was involved before giving their informed consent (See Appendices B and C). Each participant received comprehensive information regarding the research procedure, how I would gather materials, and how it would be analysed. Further, I had exclusive access to the raw data which was kept in a secure password-protected location. The thesis and subsequent publications do not contain any identifying information.

Further, as a Muslim woman with a lot of commonalities with the participating women, I worked from an "insider" perspective, aiming to promote the voices of marginalised individuals from the bottom up and understand their approaches to mutual support and empowerment. I also sought to gain insights into their implementation of Islamic principles in their daily activities in the community, as well as their strategies for building

connections with other communities to enhance their capacity to make a greater contribution to Aotearoa NZ. My ethical conduct of this research was also informed by Islamic values of care towards others.

Participants, Interviews and Focus Groups

In terms of membership, the Annisa Trust and the Azura Trust are multicultural groups that include women from diverse cultural backgrounds who come together to work as Muslim women’s community groups. These women represent the cultural diversity of Muslims as they originally came from cultural backgrounds which include Fiji-Indian, Afghani, Cape-Malay/South African, Sudani, Somali, Tanzanian, Bangladeshi, Samoan, Thai, and Russian. Table 1 presents the demographic details for the participants.

Table 1
Participant Profiles

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Reason for migrating to NZ	Duration of stay in NZ	Role in the community	Duration of the Interviews	
Group 1 (Annisa Trust)								
1	Khadija	Fiji-Indian	50s	Female	Coup in Fiji Family reunification (husband came first)	35 years	Leader	Seven times: • 17 min 5 sec • 1 hr 10 min 21 sec • 51 min 09 sec • 1hr 30 min 45 sec • 45 min 30 sec • 57 min 13 sec • 1 hr 10 min 10 sec
2	Zainab	Fiji-Indian	80s	Female	Family reunification (following Khadija)	21 years	Member	Twice interviews: • 1 hr 2 min 6 sec • 46 min 2 sec
3	Eshaal	Somali	50s	Female	Study	31 years, 2021 moved to Australia	Member	Twice interviews: • 45 min 24 sec • 47 min 3 sec
4	Hafsa	Cape Malay - South African	60s	Female	Family reunification (husband came first)	19 years	Member	Six times: • 45 min 49 sec • 1 hr 13 min 14 sec • 10 min • 21 min 58 sec • 10 min 40 sec • 59 min 41 sec

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Reason for migrating to NZ	Duration of stay in NZ	Role in the community	Duration of the Interviews	
5	Kinza	Afghani	40s	Female	Refugee (conflict in Afghanistan)	34 years	Member	Four times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hr 4 min 3 sec • 56 min 3 sec • 1 hr 30 min 36 sec • 15 min 36 sec
6	Khalisa	Fiji-Indian	40s	Female	Family reunification (husband came first)	25 years	Member	Five times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hr 8 min 59 sec • 45 min 5 sec • 31 min 51 sec • 57 min 15 sec • 58 min 15 sec
7	Rida	Fiji-Indian	40s	Female	Study	21 years	Member	Five times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 27 min 11 sec • 27 min 25 sec • 1 hr 6 min 11 sec • 46 min 41 sec • 57 min 59 sec
8	Aisha	Fiji-Indian	40s	Female	Family reunification (following Khadija)	21 years	Member	Five times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 56 min 22 sec • 1 hr 13 min 46 sec • 54 min 11 sec • 1 hr 2 min 5 sec • 36 min 38 sec
9	Sadia	Somali	30s	Female	Refugee (conflict in Somalia)	20 years 2022 moved to Australia	Member (for youth projects)	Four times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hr 25 min 17 sec • 1 hr 23 min 42 sec • 54 min 28 sec • 40 min 04 sec
10	Sobia	Sudani	20s	Female	Refugee (conflict in Sudan)	25 years	Member (for youth projects)	Twice interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 hr 10 min 5 sec • 59 min 13 sec
11	Huzaiifa	Fiji-Indian	30s	Male	Family reunification (following parents)	19 years 2017 moved to Australia	Community partner (youth & men)	Once interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 41 min 21 sec
12	Na-deem	Somali	20s	Male	Refugee (conflict in Somalia)	22 years 2022 moved to Australia	Community partner (youth & men)	Once interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 43 min 25 sec
13	Rashid	Indian	50s	Male	Study	26 years	Community partnership	Once interview: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 58 min 45 sec

Participant	Ethnicity	Age	Gender	Reason for migrating to NZ	Duration of stay in NZ	Role in the community	Duration of the Interviews
Group 2 (Azura Trust)							
14 Feli	Thai	40s	Female	Work	24 years	Paid member	Four times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 min 47 sec • 30 min 44 sec • 59 min 37 sec • 15 min 37 sec
15 Sumay-ya	Bangladeshi	40s	Female	Study	14 years	Paid member	Three times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 min 14 sec • 35 min 06 sec • 30 min 14 sec
16 Sarah	Samoan	40s	Female	Study	9 years	Paid member	Three times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38 min 41 sec • 45 min 39 sec • 15 min 15 sec
17 Keysha	Tanzanian	30s	Female	Family reunification (following husband)	10 years	Paid member	Five times: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 min 39 sec • 1 hr 38 min 2 sec • 15 min 39 sec • 15 min 21 sec • 57 min 10 sec
18 Fatima	Somali	40s	Female	Refugee (conflict in Somalia)	17 years	Paid member	Twice interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20 min 48 sec • 45 min 7 sec
19 Alifa	Somali	40s	Female	Refugee (conflict in Somalia)	10 years	Volunteer member	Twice interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 46 min 56 sec • 30 min 22 sec
20 Vitkaa	Russian	30s	Female	Seeking Asylum	7 years	Group participant	Once interview: 57 min 17 sec

For this research, I conducted a series of individual interviews and focus group discussions (FGD) with members of the two women's organisations. For the individual interviews, in total, 20 participants were interviewed between one and five times, depending on their availability and role within the groups. Annisa Trust members (Group 1) were generally interviewed two to three times, excluding the participatory activities in which I was also involved. For the Azura Trust (Group 2), the paid workers were interviewed once or twice, while the volunteers were interviewed once. I also interviewed male community partners associated with the organisations once or twice each. In addition to the individual interviews, I facilitated FGD to elicit collective experiences and shared meanings, and explore group dynamics (Agar & MacDonald, 1995). With Annisa Trust members, I conducted two in-person FGD involving four members who were directly engaged in programme design, while with the Azura Trust, I carried out one online FGD with three members.

To capture participant experiences and their agency in the resettlement process and beyond, I used flexible and responsive interviewing techniques, including narrative-style and recorded go-along interviews, where I accompanied participants in their daily lives (Kusenbach, 2003). The questions were deliberately open-ended and adaptive, enabling participants to share their migration stories, resettlement challenges, and community experiences in their own words. Go-along interviews allowed me to engage participants in conversation, ask questions, observe practices, and explore interpretations in the spaces they inhabited (Carpiano, 2006). They also provided affective moments beyond spoken accounts, as we shared activities together (Stiegler, 2021). This approach helps to reduce social distance between researcher and participants, fostering a more equal and inclusive atmosphere (Hodgetts & Griffin, 2015). Ultimately, it supported the development of partnerships in which we co-constructed understandings of participants' experiences and contributions to their communities.

When interviewing the members, I began by asking how they first became involved with the organisation. Although the questions were prepared in advance, they were framed to be open and flexible. As the conversations unfolded, I followed participants' leads with prompts such as, "What did that experience mean for you at the time?" or "How did you feel supported in that moment?" I also invited participants to reflect on their paths toward economic independence, encouraging them to recount specific experiences that shaped their agency. In this way, the interviews became co-constructed narratives rather than fixed responses, offering rich insights into the lived realities of Muslim migrant women.

In addition to interviews, I employed photo-elicitation techniques (Hodgetts et al., 2007), which enabled participants to set the agenda by showing and telling me about their lives in Aotearoa NZ. For example, one participant from the Azura Trust shared a photograph of a sewing class she taught with other newly arrived migrants. She explained how these sessions not only provided practical skills but also created a sense of friendship and mutual learning, helping her and others to feel less isolated. These images functioned both as conversational stimuli and as powerful tools for collaborative storytelling, anchoring narratives in everyday life (Harper, 2002; Hodgetts et al., 2007). Images of group activities were generated by both participants and myself; for instance, participants sometimes provided their own pictures to reflect on how collective activities fostered friendship and solidarity. In other instances, I photographed objects and spaces, such as a community centre, which enriched later conversations by prompting reflections on feelings of inclusion and solidarity. In working with women from diverse backgrounds, photo-elicitation proved especially

effective in illuminating shared processes of meaning-making (Salma & Temuri, 2024). This participatory method enhanced the open and relational dynamic between participants and myself, often eliciting emotionally candid reflections and deeply personal narratives. As Coleman (2016) has argued, photo-elicitation can function as both a methodological tool and a relational practice that supports the co-production of knowledge.

The FGD encouraged participants to build on one another's perspectives, negotiate meanings, and share insights that may not have emerged in one-on-one interviews (Ahmed et al., 2019; Peterson, 2020; Rodriguez et al., 2011). Importantly, participants discussed how they integrate Islamic values such as compassion, generosity, and community service into daily life, revealing how faith and identity are embedded in everyday routines and forms of communal participation. While FGD were somewhat limited by availability and other practical constraints, they proved particularly effective for capturing relational and collective dimensions of identity, belonging, and resettlement (Casimiro et al., 2007; Stuart & Ward, 2011; Yohani et al., 2023).

Together, the one-on-one interviews, go-along techniques, photo-elicitation projects, FGD, my reflective research journal, and direct participation in group activities formed the empirical foundation of this study. This multimethod approach enabled a layered and contextually grounded understanding of participants' experiences and the ways they navigate, negotiate, and narrate migration, faith, and community-building in Aotearoa NZ.

Analysis Processes

My relational ethics extended to my engaging with participants in lengthy discussions regarding my interpretations from my time in the groups, direct observations, casual conversations, our shared activities, the interviews, photographs, and FGD. These conversations were instrumental in extending my use of Islamic teachings and values in the analysis process whereby I sought to re-story their migration journeys. Shared learning through open conversations was a foundational component of the process of analysis outlined in this section.

My time with the two groups, observations, and participation in events were recorded in a fieldwork diary and combined with the audio-recorded interviews and FGD. Audio-recordings of interviews and FGD were also transcribed for systematic analysis. I had a wealth of information to analyse. I began to organise, use, and make sense of all available information by adopting the position of the bricoleur (Berry, 2015; Pinar, 2001), piecing together different field notes, reflections, and extracts from the recorded materials. This process began during

my fieldwork engagements as I reflected on issues and events and often asked participants about what they thought was going on. The early iterative analysis also involved me identifying key issues and topics that were raised in participant narratives that we could explore further in subsequent interactions. I also developed an initial coding framework once the fieldwork was complete that was informed by the migration literature and core Islamic concepts. For each case, I sorted, clumped and coded different ideas, notes on interactions, insights generated in the field, and extracts from the interviews and FGD. I also used a reflective journaling strategy to identify specific materials that interested me and then describe the issue or experience in detail to create a meaningful and coherent narrative that I then reflected on.

The photographs captured by both participants and me were examined by aligning these materials with key points from the transcripts and fieldnotes. My interpretations of the photographs were not simply confined to what was revealed within the frame because the meaning in participants' pictures can lie outside of the physical frame of an image (Hodgetts et al., 2007). In the context of this thesis, the photographs are presented as illustrations of key points of discussion with participants, locations populated by the groups, and key events that were important to participants. These pictures became part of the storying practices of the group through which I sought to make sense of their migration experiences and the functions of both groups.

As my analysis progressed, I became increasingly engaged in the broader worldviews and Islamic concepts that seemed to offer insights into the motivations for migration and experiences storied by participants. I developed a simple grid exercise whereby I considered the similarities and differences between the two groups and their goals and processes. I then systematically coded the materials from participants in each case according to an emergent coding frame and in keeping with the overall orientation towards narrative analysis (Cassim et al., 2019; Mahmoud & Tehseen, 2021; Murray, 2000; Riessman, 2008). My analysis also focused on storying participant's biographies, personal experiences of resettlement, and the roles of the groups in these processes. Central was my use of core Islamic values evident in participant accounts and our ongoing conversations as interpretative heuristics. This is important for furthering present understandings of how women's groups can function within Islam, the role of core Islamic values and concepts (e.g., *hijrah*, *madrasa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*) in the resettlement process, and how Muslim women navigate everyday interactions in a non-Muslim majority country.

Working iteratively across the materials, I began to structure each case. Formulating and developing these cases, as presented in Chapters 3 and 4 required me to actively reflect on

my own experiences as a Muslim migrant woman with a collective cultural background, as well as my 4 years of engaging in the lifeworlds of participants. The resulting cases reflect my efforts to construct meaning from the experience of embedding myself in the groups and our ongoing conversations regarding our migration experiences. As such, the auto-ethnographic fieldwork and subsequent analysis process functioned as a vehicle for me to construct authentic interpretations of participant experiences (McIlveen, 2008) that was in keeping with our faith as sisters within Islam.

There were also some technical details involved in reaching this point of comfort with how I was representing participant perspectives on migration as Muslim women. For example, I had initially transcribed the audio-recorded interviews and FGD that had occurred in English. However, particular conversations were mixed with Arabic words, as Muslims use these in everyday life to express certain situations and nuanced meanings. I am fluent with these Arabic expressions that all Muslims use, no matter what their first language is. However, to confirm the meaning of the Arabic phrases, I sought advice from the senior members of the groups, enabling me to clarify and explain key phrases and terms in an authentic manner that reflected the intended meanings of the groups. The meanings I was applying to the use of core Islamic concepts were also checked with each of the participants who had provided the material I had selected as extracts to exemplify a key point in the analysis. Insights from the relevant literature were also used as interpretive aids to provide further context and to unpack and develop additional insights into how core Islamic values were informing the participants' migration stories and the groups' related activities.

This strategy for analysis held exploratory power, allowing me to explore a range of issues and engage with participants' migration experiences informed by an Islamic worldview that was brought into dialogue with the literatures of migration and women's groups, for example. The use of interpretive tools, including the four key Islamic values (*hijrah*, *madrassa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*), and concepts such as spaces for care also enabled me to unpack the various meanings behind the taken-for-granted everyday life practices of the participants. The findings of the present study for both cases are structured around the participants' migration narratives and group activities, and in accordance with the four core Islamic values.

Chapter 3: The Annisa Trust Analysis

Case 1 focuses on the establishment, ethos, composition, good works, and educative functions of Group 1 (the Annisa Trust), which comprises a Muslim women's centre in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill, Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. As noted above, my orientation towards this group is as a prosocial enclave of care from within which participating women and their families can support each other through the processes of migrant resettlement. Whilst focusing substantively on the needs of group members, this group is not simply inward-looking. As is documented below, the group engages in a range of programmes and activities that also benefit the broader community, often in partnership with other women's groups.

My case analysis begins with a brief account of the establishment of the Annisa Trust, its support orientation, and the key activities in which members engage. I then attend to the backgrounds of participating members, their migration stories, and how they became involved in Group 1. Subsequent sections draw on key concepts from Islam, such as *hijrah*, to explain the migration and resettlement processes engaged by the group. This then leads on to discussion of the issues around articulating faith-based institutions such as *madrasa* as spaces for learning about the prosocial practical application of Islam as adapted to participants' everyday lives in Aotearoa NZ (Abdul Jaleel et al., 2024; Abubakari, 2021). The focus then extends beyond the women's centres and *madrasa* formed there to explore connections between Group 1 and their community partners as part of participants' migrant integration experiences. We explore these relations from the perspective of *da'wah*, which refers to processes via which the women work to educate others about the humanity of Islam and to connect with other groups and faiths with whom they can share prosocial values and efforts to help others. This then leads to a section exploring the concept of *barakah*, which refers to service to others and how the group strives to live well in constructive ways with others. Central here are efforts by the group to pay forward the support and opportunities afforded to them as migrants to Aotearoa NZ. The case is completed with a brief discussion section.

Background to the Annisa Trust

The Annisa Trust was founded by two Muslim women, Khadija (a Fiji-Indian woman) and Eshaal (a Somali woman), in the early 2000s and formalised legally as a trust in 2019. Its aim is to aid in the resettlement of Muslim migrant women, particularly refugee women and families, by providing assistance with accommodation, job placement, and integration into the local way of life. During our discussions Khadija, the group leader of the Annisa Trust, reflected

extensively on the formation of the group and how it was shaped as an independent entity with minimal material resources, but succeeded in mobilising the strengths and gaining the confidence of local women.

At the time, Khadija and Eshaal were confident they had enough knowledge and skills in community work and networking with other migrant communities, local Māori and NZ European allies, and government agents to embark on this collective journey. In the following interview extract, Khadija contemplates her experiences and thoughts regarding the establishment and mission of the Annisa Trust as a self-directed entity:

So, we started it from scratch, from ground zero again... You saw the sewing machines there [pointing to the main room of the former house in Figure 1], later we got that equipment and starting the programme with the women. We also don't affiliate with any masjid or other Muslim organisation in New Zealand. That's why we are successful because we don't get caught up in the politics within these organisations. We just work and work and that's it, very independent. Because we knew the system [and key people in government agencies and charities allocating resources to communities].

(Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

Eshaal and Khadija set up the group as women who had migrated to Aotearoa NZ earlier and recognised the need to gain resources from government agencies to support the settlement of newcomers. Khadija's years of work assisting refugees provided her with valuable insights into ways of working with refugees and establishing solid relationships with other communities and government agencies (Almakhamreh et al., 2020; Eggerman et al., 2023; Sahin Mencutek, 2020). Her experience was instrumental in the establishment of this independent trust as a community centre (location depicted in Figure 1). Her resilience and self-assurance were crucial for the group acquiring start-up resources and developing further cooperative connections with community partners (Alshabani et al., 2023; Olcese et al., 2024).

Simultaneously, Khadija and Eshaal deliberately chose not to affiliate with any Muslim umbrella organisation, not as a rejection of the Islamic community, but as a strategic move to maintain autonomy and avoid entanglement in institutional hierarchies (Lee, 2024; Spinner- Halev, 2005). This independence gave the group the flexibility to respond more effectively to the diverse needs of the women it served, many of whom came from varied ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Free from organisational constraints, the group was able to design contextually relevant programmes grounded in shared Islamic values (Hoque et al., 2013; Rezual Islam, 2017). Autonomy thus became a means of fostering inclusivity, adaptability, and meaningful collaboration across communities, while remaining rooted in

principles of compassion, justice, and collective care (Cesário & Campos, 2025; Fernández-Sánchez, 2023; Sajber & Khaleefah, 2024).

Figure 1

The Annisa Trust Centre



Eshaal also explained how she had learnt a lot from working with Somali refugee women, especially Muslims, that she brought into the setting-up of this trust. The following account also illustrates the practical orientation of the group in terms of helping new migrants to navigate systemic issues related to accessing healthcare, education, income support, and so forth:

So, for me when I started working with my community [of Somali women], I feel strong, I was learning a lot with those agencies I was working with. I was working with immigration, AUT, education, I was working with medical, income, all those things... They called my position a cross-cultural worker, so I have to advise them, tell them. Alhamdulillah. And I met Khadija early then started the Annisa Trust, with Annisa Trust, and we do a lot with Somali community for so long, together, women programme, sewing programme for Somali ladies. (Eshaal, Somali)

Eshaal commenced her work with refugee women during the early 1990s while pursuing her undergraduate education. At this time, there was an influx of refugees from Somalia to Aotearoa NZ. Eshaal responded by dedicating her initial assistance efforts to her Somali community, particularly the women. This work built her knowledge and confidence that more could be done to support the settlement of refugees and migrant resettlement.

It is important to note that Eshaal arrived in Aotearoa NZ as an undergraduate student at the age of 19, just prior to the outbreak of civil violence in Somalia (this is a topic I delve into in the section, Stories of Members of Annisa Trust). Her subsequent interactions with Somali refugees resulted in a heightened sense of connection and motivated her to assist

newcomers to facilitate their resettlement journeys. Similarly to Khadija, Eshaal’s seminal work with refugees had provided her with a wider network of service providers and government officials who also aided in the establishment of the group. From the beginning, the work around the group featured networking and collective efforts that have continued to the present day.

Khadija and Eshaal established the group to provide a space for Muslim migrant women, initially for a small group of Somali women that expanded inter-ethnically over time. Group 1 has become larger and more diverse, whilst maintaining a strong sense of independence and collective self-determination. The building depicted in Figure 1 is rented as a dedicated hub and in many respects functions as a home-away-from-home space for participating women and their families, and the various activities of the group documented below. Approximating a home space, this setting is for sharing, supporting each other, and cultivating a shared sense of security and belonging as sisters in Islam, where participants can share their experiences, trials in life, feelings, and thoughts.

Figure 2 depicts the women from the group spending time in the space together engaged in practices of mutual care and inclusion. The Annisa Trust Centre depicted in Figures 1 and 2 is located in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill, where the largest Muslim migrant population in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland resides. The setting is an older house that is spacious enough to accommodate a workshop for 20 people. This building is divided into three areas (see Figure 1): an entry area; a living area; and kitchen, storage, and toilet areas at the rear of the house. The sewing machines, tables, chairs, settee, and other workshop furniture and equipment are located in the single living area. Further, the living room functions as the “heart” of the centre, a space where most of the group’s activities, including workshops, English and sewing classes, meetings, and informal activities where the women talk and share stories while eating lunch (See Figure 2) are conducted.

Figure 2
Annisa Trust Members Sharing Lunch



Figure 2 also represents my fieldwork in action in the form of regular lunch conversations with members of Annisa Trust. We often shared food and explored similarities and differences between cultures in this space. We ate and talked about the names we had for various foods, how to spell these in our native languages, and key ingredients for various dishes. Such group engagements also exemplify the kinds of mundane social practices via which members of the group explored similarities and differences across our respective ethnic cultures. When it came to ingredients, the conversations about spices and how these travelled around the world with migrants opened up broader conversations around contact between early and contemporary civilisations. As such, these pictures represent practices of open and inclusive dialogue that are supported with reference to material objects such as food that act as vehicles for the transmission and sharing of cultural knowledge from around the world (Hodgetts et al., 2020).

Figure 2 also carries resonances for me in how open the group was to appreciating and embracing cultural diversity. These lunchtime moments were also central to my coming to feel accepted within the group. The pictures reflect a level of comfort in my interactions with group members that enabled participants to speak casually with me and each other as we discussed the issues of identity, migration, and resettlement that are explored throughout the chapter. I felt accepted in this space with members when they began to ask for my phone number and invited me to have lunch or dinner at their houses, where we could engage in further food and cultural exchanges as sisters in Islam.

Relatedly, the foundational leaders for the group were keen for the centre to have an informal and homely feel as a space that offers a sense of safety and freedom for the women to openly express their thoughts and feelings, and within which new relationships of mutual support could be fostered. This effort is also represented in Figure 3, which displays how group members have decorated this place to look and feel welcoming. I photographed the artwork in the centre's central living room, which was created in the sewing classes by refugee women. Prior to being mounted on this wall, this artwork was displayed at various ethnic events designed to promote dialogue and interpersonal connections.

Figure 3

Artwork Decorating the Living Room of the Annisa Trust Centre



After conducting interviews in this space, I discovered that the art on display (as shown in Figure 3) was created as a reflection of the women's emotions and desires for peace, freedom, unity, and strength. These elements are recognised by members of the group as central to what it means for them to be a Muslim woman in Aotearoa NZ. As Khalisa explained:

We sewed it together to exhibit in the Aotea Square, you know in a culture day when every cultural group showcase their own, and because we are mixed [from diverse backgrounds]. So, we were thinking of what makes us together, oh okay about our background, we might not come from same culture and faith, but we came as minorities and most of us experienced hard lives before [in our home countries]. So yeah, we express it, because we got space here. (Khalisa, Fiji-Indian)

Decorations, words, and images presented within the space prominently conveyed themes of peace, freedom, strength, unity, and love. These elements were recognised by group members as foundational to creating an atmosphere that inspired reflection and connection among members, and fostered group harmony. By showcasing such artworks, the space encouraged visitors to embrace and promote these values of connection and care in their own lives. These ideals resonated deeply as I noted in my fieldwork diary, with the atmosphere of the sewing class that was not just about producing such artworks. It also promoted a sense of connection and purpose among participants. The sewing classes not only served as a creative outlet but also as a catalyst for building relationships and reinforcing communal bonds which cultivate the centre as a supportive and cohesive environment (Afshar, 2012; Hertz-Lazarowitz & Shapira, 2005).

Through my observations in this space, I noted frequent expressions of gratitude among participants, not only for the access they had to this shared space, but also for being in Aotearoa NZ, where spaces like this provide women with opportunities for growth and empowerment. These observations were central to my coming to understand the group space as an enclave of care for migrant and refugee women within which emotions and thoughts can be freely shared, and positive relations fostered. I came to understand the space as not only a setting for women to develop practical skills, for example, those related to sewing, but also as offering a platform for participants to explore their passions and build confidence and resilience. Further, as scholars (Ebele & Ahmad, 2024; Ferdman, 2017; Nagda, 2006) have noted and evidenced here, despite language barriers, dialogue within these types of spaces facilitates the cultivation of mutual appreciation and understanding and a sense of unity and belonging among women from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Participant Journeys Led to the Growth of the Annisa Trust

As an independent centre, the Annisa Trust has its own ways of attracting members. The group has grown from the initial two friends (Khadija and Eshaal) to 10 engaged members with different ethnicities and personal backgrounds. In this section, I introduce the other members of the group and how they came to this shared space of prosocial endeavour.

The group began to grow with the inclusion of Rida (Fiji-Indian) who joined the Annisa Trust through a feeling of connection and solidarity with Khadija and Eshaal. These women had worked together professionally with various communities and government agencies, Rida's addition was a new chapter in an existing relationship, as she described:

I worked a lot with the Pasifika Community and Māori Community, and then working with the Blind Foundation, Blind and Low Vision NZ, which its known as now. It's totally different here, like you have a group of teachers who are so kind, like they are really kind not only to you but to everybody around them. And then they'll go to help everybody. And then I am doing Red Cross as well... And when I started working with refugee and migrant people for the Ministry of Education. That was when I met her [Khadija]. And then I came to realise another part of the community, the society like I knew they were new refugees but like most people... It was like something at the back of my mind, you can't think about it, you're not really think about it. You know, you just think that they are people who come, and because of this and this. But when you actually start to work with them, meeting them, getting into them, and yeah you can understand them, you know the stories, you think so much more that's happening.

(Rida, Fiji-Indian)

Rida was profoundly reflective in our conversations and understood the importance of her work with people from vulnerable, often marginalised, and minority communities within the local area. Her work with these groups, who have been her teachers, has had profoundly positive impacts on her, improving her sense of connection with human beings from different backgrounds, with similar and different struggles to her own. Rida valued prosocial connections through which people can work together to encourage each other to grow to be good people and to help each other. This valuing of cooperation and support was central to her decision to join the group. Also, substantive was the impact of Rida's work in the Ministry of Education, where she assisted with the resettlement of refugees, particularly Muslims. Rida's involvement aroused her empathy, motivating her to further assist refugees to resettle successfully in Aotearoa NZ. Her active involvement and efforts to create relationships with marginalised persons are consistent with the principle of social inclusion (Kruithof et al., 2021) which motivated Rida to collaborate with Khadija and the Annisa Trust to establish further projects aimed at helping refugees.

The inclusion of new members with considerable experience working with marginalised communities was significant in the prosocial and inclusive orientation and activities of the group and their embrace of a sense of urgency to help those most in need. Sadia (Somali), who had worked as a volunteer with other groups, shared similar motivations for joining the Annisa Trust:

I was a part of Student Justice for Palestine, [a] university group, and they posted it there was a fundraiser at Mangere where Khadija's son went to, for Kia Ora Gaza. I went there as a volunteer. I took a bus from the city to Mangere. I think it was in 2011. And then Khadija was there obviously. And she was like "Assalamualaikum," and she goes, "Where did you come from?" because everyone is packing and going home. And then I was looking for a bus. And she was, "Where do you live?" I said "in Mount Roskill" and then she goes, "What??? Are you telling me that you as a woman, black girl, took the bus all the way to Mangere for the fundraiser?" And I said, "Yeah, what's wrong with that?" So, she told me that she saw like leadership I guess in me. And she said that's why she got me on board with the group. First, we worked on trust projects I think for 7 years, then the last 2 years we started Project Kindness. (Sadia, Somali)

Sadia is a highly educated young Somali woman who has been actively engaged in humanitarian activities since she was at university. She was involved as a volunteer in a fundraising programme to support a number of young people to go to Gaza for humanitarian

purposes. The fundraising event, organised for a programme initiated as a joint venture by Muslims and Māori non-Muslims, led to Sadia's first meeting with Khadija who was one of the organisers of the event. She noticed how brave and tenacious Sadia was as a young woman. Since then, Sadia has worked closely with Khadija who has mentored her in leadership skills. Their involvement in a range of programmes, especially those focused on youth development, has led to Sadia developing the group's new programme, Project Kindness to empower Muslim youth leadership.

Both Rida and Sadia met Khadija and were asked to join the Annisa Trust because Khadija saw the potential for them to collaborate on various community projects. Kinza (an Afghan woman) came to the group through a similar, but slightly different process. Kinza came to know Khadija through her father, who also supported the foundation of the group. Kinza saw her involvement in the group as a continuation of a family legacy of collaboration in this space:

I think the early foundation [was] that Sister Khadija, my dad, and another brother worked really hard to establish the group. That was the first organisation they established. They had worked very hard for that. Now, funding goes there and stuff, all these things because of their hard work. They have dedicated their lifetime, years, all of them. For us, to carry on this legacy of their work and I think all of their hard work...And Sister Khadija has been my mentor and to other sisters. And I am very thankful I have support around. I think without them, I would be reluctant to do this work, it's not easy. (Kinza, Afghani)

In this account, Kinza centralises the collective efforts of various people to establish the group and how her participation has given her the strength to also develop as a leader in this space. Kinza recounted how hard Khadija and her father and others had worked to establish this trust to serve the needs of refugees and migrants, and how this inspired her to also get involved, despite how hard the work can be. Through the Annisa Trust, Kinza has learned how to develop and manage community projects and to sustain herself and others within such efforts.

Central to such participant accounts is how family role modelling plays a significant role in socialising young people into prosocial efforts to help others. Including children in such collectivist ventures helps to model the core Islamic values of the group, in that seeing what their parents do within the community provides concrete examples of how to apply such values within community settings. Aisha, Khadija's youngest sister, also watched family members busy with community work and then joined in such efforts:

You know my sister Khadija, she is the one who encouraged me to come. Then she of course introduced me with the Somali group. When they have function and stuff, I would volunteer, met the girls there, met the women there. So, not as much as I would love to, but I have given a hand, and then Khadija really encouraged me. “How about if you are really involved in Annisa Trust?” (Aisha, Fiji-Indian)

In this account, we see the influence of not only parents but also older siblings in encouraging women such as Aisha to get involved in the group. Such accounts suggest that family can provide a multidimensional context for young people to develop a sense of community and a willingness to support others (Al-Jayyousi & Myers-Bowman, 2019; Ishaque & Mahmudulhassan, 2025). Moreover, as this research has been conducted with Muslim migrant women, the Islamic value of family is also crucial here. In Islam, family is referred to by both blood and by faith, whereby every Muslim is considered family. For Muslim migrants, being somewhere new and meeting other Muslims is like meeting family, as happened with Khadija and Sobia’s mother. They got to know each other and developed trust to the point that they collaborated as sisters in the faith who then worked to include other sisters, such as Sobia, in their efforts. This line of reasoning was first introduced into this research in my fieldnote reflections (January 2022) from my first meeting with Sobia’s mother:

I visited Sobia’s mum’s shop, somewhere in Avondale. A shop that sells various Ethiopian products and other African stuff. We had a conversation there, paused for a moment to pray and continued again for about an hour. I saw the way Khadija and Sobia’s mom were talking, and I assumed that they were quite close. I could see that Sobia’s mother trusted Khadija as well. When Sobia was at high school, her mother told Khadija a lot about the Sobia’s struggles as a young Black person and a Muslim. She was intelligent but had a lot of challenges in finding her identity. Sobia’s mother told me she did not want Sobia to get into trouble by being involved with things that are against Islamic values so she asked Khadija to bring her daughter on board to keep her busy within the Muslim community. She said that she had to work, and had a lot of things to do to feed her kids, and very limited time to always be with them. (Nuke, researcher)

Sobia became involved with the Annisa Trust and the youth programme, Project Kindness, through being referred by her mother to “Aunty Khadija”. It is common in Muslim communities for mothers to work with other mothers in raising their children, especially in certain cases where the mother (by blood) feels too overwhelmed to support a wayward child

by herself. In this case, Sobia's mother was busy earning money as the sole breadwinner with no other relatives in Aotearoa NZ to provide financial aid. Further, Sobia's mother thought that Sobia needed more exposure to Islamic values. She saw the opportunity through community work with Khadija to help her daughter change direction in life. So, she entrusted her daughter to Khadija's tutelage.

Engagements in shared projects offer foundational opportunities for the group to bring members into the fold and to cultivate a sense of community and shared effort. A core purpose of these projects is to support others whilst also enabling group members to learn how to apply core Islamic values of care in practical ways and to grow as Muslim women. Khalisa (a Fiji-Indian woman) is a survivor of domestic violence who also came along to the group to improve her personal circumstances:

I met Sister Khadija actually. We [she and her husband] had a bit of problem at home and then Sister Khadija came. Then we talked and I've been meeting her since. And then what happened was Sister Khadija found out enough after talking for a while. And from then, we started talking and slowly, slowly she brought my husband as well on board. And it's how we came to the community. She is an angel, Alhamdulillah. She is gold, Allah give her that. She gives me a lot of confidence. She built up my self-esteem. And she slowly, slowly gave me the project. Like "You'll be doing this... You'll be doing that. Now you'll be doing this..." And slowly, slowly got bigger. We had coffee group, in this project like a multicultural event and things like that. And then she made me participate in all that. Build me up with a lot of confidence and encourage[ment]. (Khalisa, Fiji-Indian)

Khalisa showed her agency in being able to move out of her previous position of vulnerability to now occupy a position of confidence in the group. Her first meeting with Khadija while she was dealing with issues of family violence led Khalisa to understand her abilities to help others and share her strength with other women. This is another example of how Khadija has functioned as a talent scout for the group by recognising the potential of women such as Khalisa.

As a group leader skilled in dealing with such complex situations, Khadija often features in the accounts of other group members as a person who has opened a shared enclave in which women can work together to support each other in addressing issues of trauma and become empowered Muslim women. Khadija has encouraged many women to become group members; many continue to face challenging circumstances that are worked through via their shared participation in the group activities and initiatives that are documented in this case.

The accounts above also reveal how the formation of Group 1 did not happen through a formal process or deliberate recruitment drive for members. The group emerged as a consequence of the relationships formed with the two leaders and has now been running for over 20 years. Muslim women from various ethnicities and educational backgrounds, and with different skill levels have been welcomed into the group. At the time of this research, 10 women formed the core membership and were working together on a range of community initiatives to assist vulnerable Muslim migrant women and their families to settle in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland. Khadija, Khalisa, Rida, Aisha, and Zainab are Fiji- Indian, Kinza is Afghani, Hafsa is Cape-Malay South African, Sobia is Sudani, and Eshaal and Sadia are Somali. Zainab, an 80-year-old, is the mother of Khadija and Aisha. Together, they make up three of the five Fiji- Indians in the group.

Four of the Fiji-Indians entered Aotearoa NZ on family reunification visas and one on a student visa. Khadija was 19 years old, and Khalisa was in her early 20s when they came to here to join their husbands who were already residing here. Khadija is now a senior advisor at MSD. Years later, her mother (Zainab) and her youngest sister (Aisha) arrived on family reunification visas to join Khadija. Back home in Fiji, Khadija's mother, Zainab, had been a civil servant who worked with the police and did extensive community service with Fiji's indigenous communities. Zainab and her spouse retired to Aotearoa NZ. Aisha was born when Khadija was in her early 20s; she is a domestic violence survivor, a single mother, and a kindergarten teacher. Khalisa formerly provided cultural support to Asian patients for a district health board (DHB), and she is now a call taker at Hato Hone St John. Khalisa is a survivor of domestic violence who received assistance from Khadija. Rida arrived as a graduate student when she was about 20 years old. Formerly employed in a local library for the blind and visually impaired, Rida is now a senior advisor at the Ministry of Education.

Kinza came to Aotearoa NZ from Afghanistan as an adolescent. Prior to relocating as migrants to this country, she and her parents and siblings lived in Pakistan. As documented above, Kinza's community service was influenced by her father, a physician, and Kinza now works for a DHB. Hafsa, a South African of Cape-Malay descent, entered Aotearoa NZ with her four children on a family reunification visa when her husband was working as an engineer here. Later, Hafsa divorced, and she now has custody of her children. She previously worked part-time for another Muslim organisation and is now volunteering for the Annisa Trust as well. Sobia, the youngest member of the group, arrived in Aotearoa NZ with her family at the age of 6 as an asylum applicant from Sudan. She recently graduated from university and is now an independent artist. Sobia is the daughter of an exiled Sudani politician, community

worker, and activist. Eshaal and Sadia, two Somalis, came to Aotearoa NZ as undergraduates majoring in English. Eshaal arrived a year prior to the outbreak of the Somali civil conflict. She worked for Immigration for a long time before relocating to Australia. Eshaal currently resides in Australia with her spouse and two adult sons, but she maintains ties to the Somali community in Aotearoa NZ and the group. Sadia immigrated to Aotearoa NZ at the age of 8 with her mother and seven siblings to join her refugee uncle on a family reunification visa.

Age-wise, these women belong to distinct categories. The senior of the group, Zainab, is 80 years old and the mother of two group members, Khadija and Aisha. Khadija and Hafsa are both approximately 60 years old. Eshaal is around 50 years old. Rida, Khalisa, Kinza, and Aisha are all around 40 years of age. Sobia and Sadia are the youngest participants at around 20 years old, the same age as Khadija's and Hafsa's children. Khadija's only son also supports many of the group's activities, along with many of the male relatives of other group members.

Five of the women have permanent employment, and one is retired. These women work as cultural support volunteers for the DHB under the Ministry of Health, early childhood educators with the Ministry of Education, health practitioners in the DHB under the Ministry of Health, casual workers for Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland's Muslim community, self-employed artist, and for the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. One group member relocated to Australia during the later stages of my fieldwork but has continued to participate in online seminars as a translator for Somali women in Aotearoa NZ. Most of these women have endured hardships in their native countries and during their initial years in Aotearoa NZ. They collaborate as a group to upskill each other to support other migrant women to overcome similar obstacles to achieve successful resettlement and flourishing. In this work, they extend the meaning of Islamic sisterhood to include caring and support for non-Muslim women migrants.

The key findings from this case study are presented in four main sections below. The first section articulates the concept of *hijrah*, examining how the women framed migration as both a physical relocation and a spiritually transformative journey that contributes meaningfully to the wider society. Their narratives reveal how Islamic ethics are continually reinterpreted and enacted in relation to local and Indigenous values, giving rise to resilient, faith-informed practices of belonging, gratitude, responsibility, and community care. The second examines the nature of the women's relationships with one another, positioning these bonds as a continuation of Muslim women's role as providing the first *madrasa*, as a source of foundational learning and moral development. This section highlights how trust is built across ethnic and cultural differences, including the supportive roles that some men play in

supporting the group. The third section explores the intergenerational composition of the group, spanning three generations of women who actively engage in the application of Islamic values through various activities and programmes articulated as forms of *da'wah*. It also considers the group's interactions with non-Muslim organisations, focusing on two key themes: the socialisation processes rooted in familial experience, and the women's capacity to engage and collaborate with communities across diverse ethnic and faith backgrounds. The final section centres on the group's contributions to community life and the resettlement of Muslim communities in Aotearoa NZ, with particular emphasis on the concept of *barakah*. Here, I explore how the group organises its initiatives, fosters partnerships with other organisations, and cultivates trust within and beyond the Muslim community.

***Hijrah*: Moving to Contribute Somewhere New**

In the narratives shared by participants, *hijrah* is a key feature central to their experiences of migration and resettlement. *hijrah* can be articulated as both physical migration and spiritual transformation and associated with *barakah* or blessings that can come with such journeys. This connection reflects a common belief that the act of leaving behind one's previous life for the sake of faith, growth, or community results in increased spiritual reward and a deepened sense of purpose. Within this Islamic framing, *hijrah* is not merely a geographical relocation, but also a sacred journey that opens pathways to *barakah* in various aspects of life, including family, livelihood, and community relations.

In the Islamic tradition, *hijrah* refers to moving permanently to a safer place where migrants can practice the Islamic faith without persecution (Chapparban, 2020; Chuhan & Khalid, 2019). Scholars have also referred to *hijrah* as a connotative term for a psychological shift from a previous way of life to the adoption of a new and preferably more righteous way of living as Muslims (Reda, 2017; Vroon-Najeem & Moors, 2021). In this study, I refer to *hijrah* as a dynamic concept referring to both of these understandings. It is a useful concept for understanding the migration experiences of the participating Muslim women who have migrated to Aotearoa NZ and continue to reproduce Islamic teachings and values in the composition and running of the group and its various prosocial activities. As such, this section focuses on the concept of *hijrah* as a useful heuristic for informing my analysis of the "movement" of the participants to settle physically and spiritually in Aotearoa NZ. This focus has allowed me to deepen my engagement with how Islamic values are transposed into the Aotearoa NZ context by the migrants. This deepening is also associated with adapting faith-

based practices such as wearing *hijab* to fit with the new society and finding spiritual connections with Māori culture through expressions of similar values of care towards others.

The women of Group 1 described migrating to Aotearoa NZ as a turning point or the beginning of a new chapter of their lives. *Hijrah* is articulated as both an act of physically moving and a transition towards finding new meaning in being Muslims when reproducing Islam in Aotearoa NZ as a multicultural and multifaith country. For participants, the process of relearning and reproducing Islam here also encompasses making useful connections to local value systems that also emphasise respect for elders and ancestors, for example, which plays a crucial role as a cultural “bridge.” Despite sharing this general experience of migration, the migration processes varied for participants in terms of the reasons for movement and their subsequent resettlement experiences. For example, some came as refugees and others as non-refugee migrants, with different consequences for the freedom to choose where to live and the resourcing of their relocation.

When Sadia (a Somali) and I discussed her motivations for coming to this country, she talked about her geographical displacement from her country of origin and extended family and community as a result of conflict. This displacement and her journey here as a refugee were felt acutely during the COVID-19 pandemic:

So, I came here without a choice as a refugee. I didn't choose to migrate here. Even though we are blessed to be here, Alhamdulillah. You know, there is nothing better than our homeland, our land, to be honest. So, colonisation is traumatising for all generations, like we live in different land...like we are living as diaspora. And now with COVID, we don't know when we will back home. It would be hard, difficult and impossible. (Sadia, Somali)

In such accounts, having no choice but to move to Aotearoa NZ was experienced by Sadia and others as particularly disruptive to their lives and sense of connection and place. Due to the unsafe circumstances in her homeland, Sadia and her immediate family fled to save their lives. Despite experiencing forced migration, Sadia foregrounds her gratitude for the opportunity to come to this country. Her positive disposition to this new life in Aotearoa NZ is expressed in an Islamic way using the word *Alhamdulillah* (All praise to Allah or God, thank you to Allah). In this context, *Alhamdulillah* can be interpreted as reflecting the hope held by people in unfortunate situations of moving to somewhere safer. We are reminded that good things can come out of the difficult processes of migration for refugees.

A related migration story about liberating oneself from oppression through movement to be able to develop a decent life somewhere new was also narrated by Kinza (an Afghani

woman):

We came to Pakistan as refugees. Because there was a war [in Afghanistan], there was no transportation and stuff so we had to walk all the way from Afghanistan to Pakistan. I can't remember how long, but my dad said it was more than a week. We took shower or whatever on the way when we could. And then we came to Pakistan. We were living in a camp for a little while, in a tent. After that, I think my dad was working some jobs, so we were able to get some money to rent a property, like for extended family. So, Alhamdulillah, we just managed to get by. We stayed there quite a few years. Then he came to New Zealand in late 90s as an asylum seeker. I think...because there was no future for us [in Afghanistan]. He really wanted to go somewhere, where the kids could have a good education and good life. And he found, he was able to bring us to New Zealand. (Kinza, Afghani)

This journey reflects how refugee migration can be a lengthy and tough process which requires resilience to achieve a decent life somewhere new. Kinza and her family were living in an area of conflict which was harming the family. They had little choice but to leave their homeland and seek asylum elsewhere. The process of leaving the homeland to seek asylum took years for Kinza and her family. In this narrative Kinza characterised her father as having strong faith in them being able to realise a better life and education for his children. Faith in such positive outcomes from migrating is one of the meanings of *Hijrah*. As stated in the Hadith such journeys are associated with seeking new knowledge which is a duty upon every Muslim (Sunan Ibn Majah: 224). For such participants, the meaning of *hijrah* is not just about moving and finding a safer place, but also about finding a place where Muslims can learn to become more knowledgeable and to grow as people. It is also recognised that a consequence of learning and becoming more knowledgeable is being able to share the benefits of education with others. This later point is linked to the emphasis made by many participants regarding the importance of contributing to the new host country.

The following extract from Eshaal deepens our understanding of the role of Islamic ideas and teachings regarding migration in informing how participants understand their own migration journeys. In this case, Eshaal also voices her sense of privilege in coming to Aotearoa NZ as a student who took a less harrowing journey than others who also came from Somalia, but as refugees. As such, the following extract also exemplifies how participating women come to story their own journeys relationally with reference to the stories and journeys of other refugees and migrants:

So, for me, I choose New Zealand. I came as an international student, but for refugee groups they can't. Because when they left Somalia, there was civil war, they went to refugee camp in Kenya or Ethiopia or Djibouti and United Nation choose which country they will go. So, those groups who came at that time to New Zealand, UN choose for them. But, Alhamdulillah, nobody chooses here for me, Allah choose for us. I said, "Your rice [is] here, that's why you eat, your food is here, Allah choose for you." So, we have to earn (money), work hard, and contribute to this country. (Eshaal, Somali)

Above, Eshaal expresses gratitude for having the choice to move to this country, and a sense of empowerment and obligation to reciprocate by contributing to the host society. Even though the refugees she has come to know did not have this choice, their arrival is associated with the will of Allah. This is reflected in the statement, "Your rice is here, that's why you eat, your food is here, Allah choose for you." Eshaal's narrative framing of *hijrah* which contrasts elements of her own journey with those of refugees also reflects the key value within Islamic culture of being, or adopting the character of, a humble believer. This humility involves accepting one's fate or situation wherever one lives and working hard and contributing positively to achieve a decent life for oneself and those around you. Moreover, as a humble believer who is thankful, giving back to others becomes a relational responsibility or duty of care. This desire to contribute is adaptive for resettlement and integrating into wider Muslim networks and communities in the host country, and the host society more broadly (Reifsnider, 2022). Eshaal expressed her gratitude and these values by saying Alhamdulillah. Being thankful to the creator signifies that life itself is a blessing. Accepting is the key to being grateful and respectful towards Allah and other people.

Contributing prosocially to community life in Aotearoa NZ is a central trope in participants' migration narratives and an important part of enacting the Islamic value of *hijrah* for these Muslim women. Moreover, the duty of giving back is also clearly mentioned in the Qur'an. It is stated that everything belongs to Allah (God), and therefore, a Muslim is obliged to share wealth, especially with those who less fortunate (Qur'an, 2:43). In the Islamic tradition, giving back is called *zakah* if it is something obligatory to do, and *sadaqah* if it is non-obligatory or altruistic. Moreover, the principle of giving back to the host country can be contextualized as a *sadaqah* because Eshaal receives no specific amount of money or resources for her contributions. Further, while scholars (Chetioui et al., 2025) have explored the meaning of *sadaqah* through a monetary lens in terms of charitable donations, what we see with the group is a prosocial practical form of *sadaqah* where one gives time and energy to

helping others (Bagasra, 2021). Sadaqah, or charitable acts in the Islamic tradition, are described by the Prophet (PBUH) in the Hadith as all that is good (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Sahih al-Bukhari, Book 78, Hadith 6021). The prosocial spirit of sadaqah is also evident in this Hadith excerpt:

When you smile in your brother's face, or enjoin what is reputable, or forbid what is objectionable, or direct someone who has lost his way, or help a man who has bad eyesight, or remove stones, thorns, and bones from the road, or pour water from your bucket into your brother's, it counts to you as sadaqah. (Al-Tabrizi, M. ibn 'A, n.d., Mishkat al-Masabih, Hadith 1911)

This Hadith excerpt articulates sadaqah as being about more than giving money or materials to others in need. It is a value of consideration and curtesy towards others that can take different forms, from smiles to various prosocial acts. As documented in this chapter, through the Annisa Trust, participating women organise various activities to help others resettle and negotiate life in Aotearoa NZ, which can be seen as acts of *sadaqah*.

In the process of enacting *sadaqah*, these participants keep the *imaan*, or faith as Muslims, by finding new practices for supporting others that are suitable for how systems work in Aotearoa NZ. Here I am invoking important elements of *Hijrah* that requires these women to resettle and live outside of their homelands whilst preserving their ways of being as Muslims in service to Allah and other people. The exemplars presented in this section also speak to their efforts to integrate and contribute to the host society, whilst enabling others to also feel comfortable and at home. As it states in the Qur'an, observing the faith as a Muslim is about *rahmatan lil alamin* or providing grace or bringing goodness for all humankind and the universe (Qur'an, 21:107). In observing such Islamic imperatives, the women manage, negotiate, and reproduce practices of care towards others that fit within this multicultural society. Some everyday practices are retained, for example, modesty as articulated in the wearing of *hijab*. However, what counts as *hijab* may be altered. I mention *hijab* here as it is a style of dress or practice that does mark Muslim women out as distinct. The wearing of *hijab* also reminds participants of who they are and their commitment to Allah and Islam.

Group members who had been in this country for some time often recounted initial reactions to them wearing *hijab* that functioned as barriers to their integration into society and their sense of place:

...we had to dress properly, in a modest way, and they found it difficult...Kiwi people. At early 90s, there were not many Muslims in New Zealand who wore hijab, you know. There was no cultural understanding, there was not much about Islam. Although they

were Muslims practising in a very private kind of thing. It wasn't much exposure. Yeah, Alhamdulillah. (Kinza, Afghani)

For Kinza, wearing *hijab* in the early 90s was important, even though people in Aotearoa NZ were unfamiliar with the attire. She also presented an understanding of how at that time, other Muslims chose to practice Islam in a more private way and to not display the markers of their Islamic faith in public. This account also implies that this society has changed and now most Aotearoa NZers are more familiar with *hijab*. However, although this growing awareness has resulted in more acceptance by many, instances of discrimination still occur.

Rida (Fiji-Indian) recounted how she arrived in Aotearoa NZ shortly after the 9/11 tragedy in the United States, which was when Islamophobia more broadly began to increase within Western nations and particularly in English-speaking countries. As Rida recounted:

I came to New Zealand in 2003 as a student. My journey into New Zealand had ups and downs. So, when I came here first so I came without any expectation. So, couple of times while catching bus or train, I did come across a lot of people who passed racist comments like, "Go back home," and sort of thing like that. So, you just brush it off and keep moving... And then you start thinking, "Oh, what was happening the time people were racist to me." And, you know, when you wear hijab, you are always judged anyway because you are visible, you're different, you are visibly different. (Rida, Fiji-Indian)

Discriminatory experiences such as those experienced by this visibly Muslim woman can rupture one's sense of belonging and place. However, Rida had the strength of mind to brush it off, to not overthink it, and to press on with her commitment to wearing *hijab* in this new country. This is because wearing *hijab* also offered her a sense of continuity in her identity from accepting her identity as a Muslim woman in her country of origin to continuing this commitment in Aotearoa NZ. She also dealt with such instances psychologically and maintained a positive disposition towards this country by telling herself that instances of discrimination were the acts of individuals who held these discriminatory beliefs, who did not represent how Aotearoa NZ as a nation viewed Islam. Rida was also supported in maintaining this positive disposition via her engagements in Group 1 and discussions with other group members who had had similar experiences. It is useful to note that for group members such as Rida, it was important to continue to learn about the reasons for wearing *hijab* as well as how to integrate into this new society whilst keeping one's faith in Islam.

Relearning Islam and one's place in a non-Muslim majority society was a feature of all participants' migration stories. All talked about adapting their everyday Islamic practices in

efforts to harmonise these with the local environment. In discussing their efforts to adjust to life in Aotearoa NZ, the women also found useful synergies with aspects of Māori culture. They reported feeling more confident as minority group members and able to reproduce Islamic collective values of care through reference to the Māori collectivist worldview that features the value of *manaakitanga* (duty to care for others). The following extract also reflects the recognition in the group of the need felt by participants to reproduce not only their Islamic values and practices of care in this new country, but also their ethnic and collectivist cultural traditions:

I think with the diversity, trying to understand and accept each other, you know, as a collective. And the moment we do work, even with other Christian organisation and Asian Community, as a collective group, we chip in resources to one and another. And I think as a refugee, as an Afghani, we have a lot of similarities with them. The Māori are also tribal. They are collective, and they are very family based, and a lot of things. Sometimes I think the government doesn't need to change, bringing a big separate policy for the refugee, Muslim or migrant community. We can incorporate with the Māori and Pacific model into our community. Because there is a lot of similarities in that. (Kinza, Afghani)

For Kinza, adjusting to life in Aotearoa NZ and her participation in the group is facilitated by the recognition of the collectivist orientation of Māori and Pasifika cultures already evident in this society. She realised that becoming integrated into the host country did not mean that she had to change everything, and that she had a lot in common with the cultures of established ethnic communities in this society. Further, Kinza raised the significant issue that policies for Muslim refugees can be adapted from the Māori and Pasifika policies⁶.

Similar sentiments were expressed by Sadia and Rida, who also experienced their efforts to enact Islamic values of care and embrace the diversity in this country as being supported by the similarities they found between Islam and Māori culture:

New Zealand has beautiful culture, Māori culture...I went once to marae when I was in school. So, I helped with the kapa haka group. So, it was at Polyfest and they compete. So, we have Somali, Nigerian, Ethiopian, all the cultures into dance and then we have the kapa haka one. So, I have a friend, a Māori teacher we always like compares our culture like Māori tikanga, Māori values. So, they have kōrero, for us it's mashura. So, coming together talking about it finding solution, similar. They also

⁶ I also pick up on this point in the recommendations from this research in the final chapter with reference to relevant cultural policies of the Ministry of Social Development.

have aroha which is giving without expecting anything in return, we talk about zakat, similar to us. And there is whakapapa, whānau, tikanga... So, a lot of them have similarities to us, and it's about community, one part your body hurts your body hurts. It's like one Muslim hurts, is Islam hurts. So, we are connected to our culture through the Māori side. And for Māori, the Islamic concept is already there. So, we feel like, "Oh my gosh, we don't need to assimilate we can integrate by accepting who we are and accepting the country culture which is Māori, and then coming together through that way. (Sadia, Somali)

Sadia articulated cultural similarities she had identified between Islam and Māori. Central to both is respect and care for others. Rida also recounted how she had found similarities between her own cultural worldview and those in Māori and Pasifika cultures, and how this aided her in developing a sense of belonging and agency to care for others in this new host society:

And then when I started working and I worked a lot with Pasifika community and Māori community, and it was an absolute pleasure to work with them. Like they are so open and so accepting, and they embrace you and you know they make you part of their own community, sort of you part of their whānau. Meeting those kinds of people, kinda shaped into who I am. (Rida, Fiji-Indian)

Rida asserted that the value of family in Māori culture allowed her to feel accepted into Aotearoa NZ. Here, family is storied as involving people feeling loved, accepted, and given a sense of being part of a whānau that extends to being welcomed into this place. From the section above it becomes evident that Muslim migration entails more than physical dislocation and the relocation to a new life in a new host country. Central to the migration stories of participants in this research were their efforts to integrate as Muslims into a non-Muslim majority country and in ways that enabled them to preserve and adapt core Islamic values and their ethnic heritage. This process was facilitated through the recognition among participants of similarities between the Islamic and ethnic cultural collectivist values that they brought with them to this country. Another key feature of participant narratives was their attempts to comply with Islamic teachings regarding *hijrah* and their understanding that wherever Muslims go their existence needs to be usefully beneficial to others. The accounts above reveal an understanding of *hijrah* as both a physical migration and a spiritual journey marked by *barakah* (divine blessing). Migration is framed as a transformative process of relearning and embodying Islam in a multicultural context, often aligning Islamic values with Indigenous concepts in Aotearoa NZ society. Moreover, the women's migration experiences, shaped by their modes

of arrival (e.g., as refugees or international students), informed distinct expressions of agency, gratitude, and responsibility. Despite challenges, including racialised gender discrimination, participants interpreted their journeys as acts of faith and resilience, expressed through community engagement and service. These practices reflect an evolving Islamic subjectivity grounded in translocal ethics, spiritual intentionality, and commitments to inclusive and prosocial belonging.

As I will explore further in the following section, these women also relied on each other as members of the trust to form a *madrasa* within which they can share their resettlement experiences and efforts to integrate into this society. Related to the Islamic concept of “woman is the first *madrasa*,” here the women expanded the function of *madrasa* beyond the family and into their engagements with other people within Puketāpapa Mount Roskill and Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland more generally.

The Group as a *Madrasa*

This section focuses on how this group of women built trustworthy familial relationships that reflect the ideal of sisters-in-faith in Islam and how this helped them to successfully navigate cultural differences within the group. Cultivating a sense of sisterhood requires the daily application of this familial value. Despite their various ethnicities and personal histories, the women shared a commonality as Muslim women, with the associated passion for serving others. The specifics of what community-as-family means to these women and how they learn and improve themselves through service to others, create trustworthy relationships, and manage differences are documented below.

Scholars in Muslim family studies (Ahmed, 2012; Ishaque, 2025) have noted that psychological well-being within Islamic family systems is nurtured through emotional security, mutual respect, and affection. These elements are grounded in core ethical principles such as compassion, justice, and consultation, which collectively foster respectful interpersonal dynamics and resilience within the family unit. In this regard, the Annisa Trust provides a family-like space for these women to experience the sense of family, love, acceptance, respect, and mutual care. Relatedly, the group also affords opportunities for members to learn from one another and to develop as human beings relationally through friendship within an ethic of service to others. This is a space wherein Muslim women find fortitude and share knowledge as sisters. Here, the Annisa Trust resembles a *madrasa*.

In Arabic, *madrasa* literally means a school or centre of learning (Angeles & Aijazi, 2019; Delavande & Zafar, 2015; Hefner & Zaman, 2007; Ismail, 2021). In general, a *madrasa* is often pictured as a formal institution for religious education, and in most studies in the West,

especially after 9/11, *madrassa* have been associated with security risks to Western societies through the promotion of fundamentalist beliefs (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019; McClure & Clink, 2009). In this thesis I associate *madrassa* with its conceptualisation in Islamic scripture as the first place for children to learn and understand Islamic values, on the mother's lap. In the Qur'an and the Hadith, women as mothers play a central and pivotal role as the first *madrassa* for their children (The Qur'an, 31:14; Al-Bukhari, n.d., Sahih al-Bukhari Book 73, Hadith 5971; Muslim ibn al-Hajjaj, n.d., Sahih Muslim, Hadith 2548). As such, the meaning of *madrassa* is not limited solely to the formal institution of a faith-based school, though it can take this form.

Today, *madrassa* can be articulated as a mother's lap, a formal school, or, as in the case of this research, a self-regulated peer group for learning that enacts Islamic values in service to others. The Annisa Trust functions in many ways as a *madrassa* for members and their families to learn and grow, and to strengthen their relationships with Allah, or *Habluminallah*, and with other human beings, *Habluminannaas* (Qur'an, 4:36). In the group, the faith-based institution of the *madrassa* is enacted in a practical manner, wherein the emphasis is placed on active engagement in service projects, rather than the use of traditional pedagogical methods such as lectures or sermons. The objective of the group is to encourage participants to actively incorporate and maintain Islamic beliefs in their daily lives and, in doing so, to fulfil their *hijrah*, their migration to share the values of Islam.

Such shared learning resembles the Islamic tradition whereby adherents to the faith study the Qur'an and the Hadith in a group setting as part of their lifelong learning journeys, a method known as *halaqah*. It refers to a small religious meeting group, in which attendees and the mentor(s) usually sit in a circle and the mentor helps attendees to understand the religious teaching (Ahmed, 2014). During this research, it was in these circles that I also explored the meaning of the key Islamic constructs and values which inform my analysis of the two group cases.

Most of the participants originally came from Muslim-majority countries and were familiar with such shared spaces, for learning (formal and informal), or *halaqah*. These spaces often included people of the same ethnicities who spoke the same language. However, in Aotearoa NZ, given the ethnic diversities of the Muslim population, these women have had to adapt and be creative and open-minded to find opportunities to continue their everyday lives as Muslims in ways that are inclusive of ethnic and linguistic differences. Kinza recounted participating in *halaqah* to learn the Qur'an as a teenager in her country in origin and her father then exposing her and her sister to more diverse *halaqah* after the family migrated to Aotearoa

NZ:

He [father] used to take me and my sister, and leave us there by their house. He just said, "Just listen, if you don't understand, just listen." And where is the jamaat [congregation], everywhere, we used to go there. He will drop us every weekend, whatever, even in Friday night, there was a sister from Palestine, she was doing like Friday night ladies' programme, Islamic programme. Like learning Qur'an, Hadiths, and Sunnah. And even there was for adult, she said, "That's fine, they will be alright." So, my sister even younger than me, very little, 6 or 7 years old. (Kinza, Afghani)

Within the Islamic tradition, it is uncommon for adult women to form a *halaqah* or group to study Islam with the younger members of the community (Ahmed, 2014). However, considering that it was hard to find a *halaqah* at that time in Aotearoa NZ, such informal or adapted versions of these religious practices have organically emerged out of necessity (Arar, 2020). Such groups are central to preserving Muslim identities and adapting one's practices in the faith to conditions in the host society through the resettlement process (Mahmud, 2025). The participants saw their children's participation in *halaqah* as being of central importance, particularly for children born, and raised in this country.

These concerns extended to issues of language proficiency for the group members' children, many of whom now speak English as their first language (Verhaeghe et al., 2019). Several women discussed the importance of their children retaining the language of origin for the preservation of their own ethnic cultures and for communication with extended family back in their country of origin and with ethnic community members in this country who may not speak English. Here we also see the women embracing what they see as a mother's role in preserving the faith-based and ethnic cultural identities of their children (Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2012). As such, the new generation learn about Islam in ethnically diverse *halaqah* conducted in English, but also engage in other conversations in their native languages.

Extending the meaning of *madrassa* to a space "to teach something" and "the place that something is taught," the spaces for mothers to educate themselves and their children were not mutually exclusive. Children often accompanied their mothers to trust meetings and planning sessions that also tended to be conducted in English as a means of ensuring social inclusion within this ethnically diverse group. Figure 4 depicts a group of young people in their own circle whilst their mothers met in the central space.

Figure 4
Children Playing While Their Mothers had a Meeting



The children also helped with their mother's contributions to Group 1's projects and activity preparations. At other times they enjoyed playing games and socialising in the group space. Here, the women were not only providing space within which the young ones engaged in shared activities and learnt from what they saw but also created opportunities for the teenagers to socialise. Two of those depicted in Figure 4 were young women about to graduate from high school who were given responsibilities to take care of their younger brothers and sisters and make sure that the younger children played "safe" games and did not fight. Evident here is how the group adapts the institution of the *madrassa* in ways that sustain multiple purposes. This is a *madrassa* for everyone, not limited to certain ages or activities like a *madrassa* that manifests as a more formal religious school setting with lecture-style presentations. A key function of Group 1's *madrassa* is the extension of this shared enclave of care to younger women by providing opportunities for them to care for the younger children and to witness and contribute to the activities of the older group members.

Younger group members and the group leaders reflected that these processes stretched out beyond the physical space of the centre to the outreach work of the group. For example, Khadija reflected further on her relationship with Sobia's mother and how Khadija recognised Sobia's potential as a youth leader and acted as a mentoring aunty to foster her personal growth:

So, you working with the ladies, you going to their home, you see they have children and you start seeing potential in the children, so you see potential... Then working with Sobia's mother, when little Sobia a little bit going off the rails. Yeah teenager, we gave our support for her. And Sobia goes off to Sudan for one year, that's why she

reconnects taking some photographs of culture. So, when she came back, she came back stronger, she got enrol at uni, pull her out and bring her work with us. (Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

This exemplar highlights the group's commitment to nurturing the growth and potential of young Muslim women through intergenerational mentorship and community engagement. Sobia's trajectory, as described by Khadija, reflects this ethos. Initially she was supported by the group during a difficult phase in adolescence, receiving care and guidance through familial and community ties. After spending a year back in her country of origin, where she reconnected with her cultural and religious heritage, Sobia returned with renewed confidence and purpose. Her reintegration into Group 1, including her involvement in leading youth programmes, reflects how the group's model of care extended beyond religious instruction to encompass holistic personal development.

Through such initiatives, the group actively cultivates a new generation of Muslim women leaders grounded in faith, cultural resilience, and community service (Khan, 2021). Relevant here is how the leader of the group, Khadija, worked as a cross-cultural mentor to develop Sadia's skills as a trustworthy community facilitator. As Sadia recalled:

Sister Khadija is my mentor, mashaAllah she helped a lot. She got an eye for the things we do, mashaAllah. She got an eye for people, and for leadership. I got a lot of things from her that everything happened to me, community wise, like my first job was Khadija helping. Alhamdulillah, all thanks to her that introduced me to E Tū Whanau where I found a lot of activities, like the kids, the opportunities that we can work together [in a youth group], for the women's Islamic conference. (Sadia, Somali)

This extract includes Sadia's reflections on the help and guidance she received from Khadija, who acted as an aunty figure or "second mother" to guide Sadia successfully back onto a prosocial track. The women of Group 1 also assisted with providing Sobia with the space and opportunities to find herself by going back to her original country for a while to learn more about Islam and find out about her father. Her reference to kids working together also reflects Sadia's socialisation into a participative leadership style appropriate for such community projects.

When Sadia returned to Aotearoa NZ, she worked in this way with other young African migrants to create a space to express and explore their experiences of living in this country as visible minority group members through the arts. With the support and guidance of the group, this group of young women, called the Kindness Project, began organising art exhibitions (Figure 5), which enabled Sobia, a young Sudanese woman, to document her experiences

alongside those of other African youth (Figure 6).

Figure 5
Art Exhibition



Figure 6
Filming the Diaspora



The group of young women, formed under the guidance of the adult members of the group and known as the Kindness Project, was established to strengthen Muslim youth identities and foster leadership skills through workshops that included creative activities such as organising art exhibitions (Figure 5). One of the participants later expanded her involvement by collaborating with African peers to produce a film documenting diaspora narrative (Figure 6), and highlighting the experiences and challenges faced by migrants settling in Aotearoa NZ. These initiatives serve as key mechanisms for the intergenerational socialisation of group members (Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2012) and illustrate how the Annisa Trust provides a supportive enclave that enables participants to grow through collaboration and empowers young women to develop the confidence and capabilities necessary for community leadership. These activities also prepare the next generation to initiate and facilitate future articulations of *madrassa* within the community.

The dynamic function of the group as a *madrassa* for mentoring and growing younger people into good citizens by offering them supportive spaces to explore who they are was echoed in the narratives of Rida and Khalisa. For example, Rida had previous community work experience with refugee communities through her role with the Ministry of Education. However, together with the sisters of the Annisa Trust, Rida developed an increased sense of connection and authenticity as a sister-in-faith who helps others through such work. This is reflected in her references to “truly doing the work, not just saying you are doing the work”, as evident in the quote below. Through these collaborations, Rida realised that there are many less fortunate Muslim women who need help to realise a decent life. For Rida, working with the group offered an opportunity to share her skills and access to resources with other women and their families:

In 2019, I started working with refugees and migrants for Ministry of Education. That was when I met her [Khadija]. And then I came to realise another part of the community, the society like I knew they were refugees but like most people... it was like something at the back of my mind, you can't think about it, you're not really thinking about it... So, yeah just work with the people who are truly doing the work, not just saying you are doing the work... And then I met Khadija. And then no stopping after that, she introduced me to all of the group. And then I got in touch with different schools, different students, communities. Even when I left the role, I started volunteering in the Red Cross for refugee resettlement and I worked with Afghani, Iranian families. So, you want to help. Work with these people and help them. So, any opportunity you see everywhere, if there's something comes around or some scholarship or something like that, I say, "Oh you should apply for this." I was thinking that our communities need the right information [given] to them by the right people. And if somebody delivering some kind of workshop for free or relevant information, I'll let them know and say, "This is happening and you should connect and get them to deliver for the parents," for example. You know stuff like budgeting workshops, for example. You know, budgeting service is for free. So, we connect community to this service which is free and to empower everyone. So, that's what drives me making sure that everybody has access to everything. And everything is accessible to people. (Rida, Fiji-Indian)

The quote exemplifies the emphasis Group 1 places on networking, community and inclusion, and finding resources and connections that enable refugees and migrants to learn local systems and where to access resources such as scholarships and budgeting support. The interview extract also exemplifies Group 1's emphasis on collaboration, with everybody

working together to support each other. For those who have more awareness of and access to resources, like Rida, their involvements are also storied as awakening their sense of connection and empathy towards others. We can also see how this *madrasa* extends beyond the centre space and into community support initiatives located elsewhere in the network, which are being activated and facilitated by members of the group. Behind such accounts is how this *madrasa* not only shares in the teaching of the Qur'an, but also how core values expressed in this holy text can be implemented practically in everyday life to support refugee and migrant resettlement and integration into the host society.

Central to the story of Group 1 is the creation of an enclave of care which functions as an incubator for the development of young leaders, helping them to feel included, accepted, nurtured, and guided in their service to others. I highlight the notion of “feeling more accepted” here because experiencing isolation and rejection within society in Aotearoa NZ in general and within Muslim communities in particular was a shared experience for many members of this group, who are people of colour and visible minorities from various ethnic backgrounds. This position can result in identity crises and a sense of being out of place (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Miled, 2020; Rahman, 2020). Again, the youth are supported by the “aunties” in addressing such issues and encouraged to develop more confidence and to embrace their identities as hyphenated Muslim migrants in this country (Ali & Sonn, 2010; Fine & Sirin, 2007; Sirin & Fine, 2007) as they navigate intercultural engagements in this multicultural society.

Although Group 1 is led by women and does a lot to address women's issues, this *madrasa* for collective learning does not actively exclude men. As highlighted below, the establishment of the group was supported by older men, and the group also responds to the needs of male family members. These men also often struggle with issues of identity and inclusion when resettling and navigating everyday life in Aotearoa NZ. For example, during our interview, Huzaifa (Khadija's son) reflected on how events such as the 9/11 attacks in the United States also contributed to several group members feeling judged and excluded for being Muslim ethnic minority Aotearoa NZers. As first-generation Muslim Aotearoa NZers and visible minorities, these participants often expressed a sense of alienation from mainstream society and Islam. Group 1 offered opportunities for them to reconnect, gain a renewed sense of belonging, and grow as people. I include the accounts of two young men here to demonstrate the importance of the group as a *madrasa* for enabling young men and women to learn from their experiences and to grow as good citizens with strong senses of self and place:

I was still at school when it was 9/11 happened, but it was, and again it affected your identity because you know what you are, but you don't want to share to anyone because of fear of judgment. So that was plenty of that stuff [racism] at that time, like I said, I was quite a troubled person at the time and very disengaged with everything. And we were disconnected from the mosque. Because even I am going to the masjid, the khutbahs [sermon] their narratives they were all in Arabic. So, we didn't understand... So, I think when my brain developed a bit more and my behaviour about 18 or 19, I think I started to read a bit more clarity and then actually to be honest. When I travelled to the Middle East [with Kia Ora Gaza, supported by Annisa Trust], with some workers over there, it opened my eyes and opened my world and then I saw I guess the reality of being as poor as possible but having a strong faith... So, mom was always like, "Oh you should do some volunteering." It was more like engaged with the youth and I didn't know what to do, but I had experiences and yeah it all began and then mom put me in the various culture groups around Auckland area. And it was a way again for us to get exposed and for mom to push us, for a couple of shy guys, you know, it was really pushing our limit.

(Huzaiifa, Fiji-Indian, Khadija's son)

Nadeem (Somali, Sadia's brother) discussed comparable experiences, relating his sense of alienation to the colour of his skin and reactions from white members of the host society, which Group 1 helped him work through. In Nadeem's story, we also see the functioning of Group 1 as an enclave of inclusion and shared learning that supports young men and women:

I came to New Zealand very young; I was about to start school (primary) and pretty much I was like the only one you know dark skin sort of African people and you don't notice that until people pointed out to you, you know. I was stuck and burdened and you can't do anything when people pointing out to you, it was at the prom and it's just you know you're brown and they are white and it's just the different colour, the skin colour. But it was kind of when they pointed out, oh no you black, like it's different, you supposed to be not here... So, you have a different identity. Dark skin, black, Muslim, migrant, Kiwi, and this and you tried to find how am I gonna put them all together. How can I and make it functional. And yeah, especially after 2001 you heard there was an attack, so that obviously changed things for Muslim community. So that became a different challenge. And my sister [Sadia] also in a health services. And also, by my own experience, we have to always help our own community. We went through those things. We, Somali community doing these things. So, for me it's like more collective activity...And the first job that I joined is the like nonprofit organisation for family. And then they became

funded and I got the job from there. So, and the same time what happen was the Christchurch situation (attack) in the mosque. So, I was called by the Annisa Trust and went into Project Kindness and we did social support, counselling for the victims.

(Nadeem, Somali)

Both these young men recounted experiencing racism and disconnection as affecting their identities. One initially responded by becoming more rebellious and another by isolating himself. The plight of both young men caught the attention of the women of the Annisa Trust. Khadija (Huzaiifa's mother) and Sadia (Nadeem's sister) asked these young men to become involved in helping Group 1 run the Muslim youth programmes as a vehicle for bringing them into the group as an enclave of care within which they could experience solidarity and receive support whilst working through their issues. Here again, we can see how the women created a practical *madrassa* that is inclusive, meeting the needs of Muslim men when necessary.

My own direct observations and participation in Group 1 convinced me that they devote considerable energy to working through how best to support the integration of young people and newcomers into society as Muslims. Their efforts often focus on supporting youth to learn how best to respond to experiences of racism and discrimination as well as how to contribute to the care of others and embrace Islamic teachings regarding what it means to be a good citizen. During regular meetings at the centre, group members would brainstorm strategies for reducing the social distance or gap between the Muslim community and more established communities in society. These discussions often included the stresses experienced by Muslim Aotearoa NZers regarding their identities and sense of place. Some disagreement has emerged in these group deliberations between those who are more progressive and those who are more conservative regarding how to bring those who have strayed from the teaching of Islam (e.g., by misusing alcohol or drugs, or getting involved in street fights) back into the fold. In the process, group members come to learn more about the diversity within the practice of Islam and within the group.

In this context, the *madrassa* is reimagined as a living, collective-learning space that is not confined to formal instruction but is rooted in ongoing relationships and communal care. The group is a dynamic, open environment where women gather to learn the teachings of the Qur'an in practical ways, and where learning extends beyond scripture into the rhythms of everyday life as migrants. While the group is guided by a leader, she is not positioned as a formal teacher. This is because the group, as a *madrassa*-like space, is not run as a formal institution with clearly defined roles for teachers and students. Rather, in this setting, teaching

is shared; everyone in the group is both a teacher and a learner.

Moreover, this *madrasa* is an intergenerational relational space that functions as a familial environment, where older women mentor younger ones, not only in religious knowledge, but also in practices of nurturing, supporting, and leading. Mothers, daughters, aunts, and peers share responsibilities, whether in caring for young children or fostering one another's growth and capacities. The centre becomes a space where leadership is actively cultivated, particularly among young women, who are encouraged to take on guidance roles in which they can express themselves and take initiative. Thus, the *madrasa* in this context is not a static institution, but a fluid and responsive space, shaped by the needs, and aspirations of its members for growth. Built on trust, the group embodies the concept of a gender-inclusive collective learning community where women lead, men participate, and mutual development is prioritised. In this reimagined *madrasa*, mentorship, care, and collaboration replace hierarchy, and learning is reciprocal. Teaching and being taught are interwoven into the everyday practices of faith, family, and social life.

Everyday Learning and the Application of *Da'wah* in Support of Others

This section focuses on how Group 1 members understand their migration and integration into Aotearoa NZ, which can be interpreted partially through the concept of *da'wah* or a faith-based "calling" to help others, in this case, helping other migrant women to resettle. Members repeatedly recounted how this call to service also had familial legacy elements aligned with their family traditions and led them into collaboration with non-Muslim community groups, in the process contributing to their own successful integration into life in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. These intergroup collaborations were based on group members finding similarities across cultures, having respect for diversity, and having shared concerns regarding issues such as finding ways to address prejudice against Islam.

Relatedly, *da'wah* involves sharing positive messages from the Qur'an whilst respecting the faith and beliefs of non-Muslim groups and not trying to convert them to Islam (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020; Wong & Levitt, 2014). *Da'wah* was originally about a calling to bring nonbelievers into a relationship with God. Today, it is also taken to mean a calling to cultivate relationships with non-Muslims to help them meet their needs. Group members realised that *da'wah* related to their enactment of Islamic values regarding the recognition of the humanity and need for support of all human beings. This humanist orientation appears to motivate the women to work with humility and respect for non-Muslim belief systems in order to maintain good intergroup relationships. Such openness also enables group members to learn about other faiths and how they relate to their own ethnic belief systems and to find

similarities and points of connection that facilitate intra- and intergroup cooperation.

Several participants talked explicitly about embracing what they perceived to be the call to *da'wah* to help others resettle in Aotearoa, knowing that this involves a lot of effort and can be a lengthy and at times frustrating process. As documented below, when talking about their commitment to respond to this call to serve humanity, the women talked about their perseverance and contributions to various collaborative activities. These collaborations extended to the inclusion of their families as part of the socialisation of their children through the positive enactment of core Islamic values. In many respects, community service emerges from the participant accounts below as a normal aspect of family life for these Muslim women. Correspondingly, my analysis of *da'wah* as a process central to participant experiences of Muslim resettlement begins with participants' accounts of how they recognised the "calling" to help refugees and migrants as it related to their own socialisation within their own families and the group. I then turn to the significance of the group working with non-Muslim communities such as other faith-based groups, and with Māori, Pākehā, and Pacific people.

Socialisation into *Da'wah* Through Family Experiences

Central to participants' narratives of their experiences with the call to *da'wah* are interrelated processes of socialisation within both the familial and communal spheres, which serve as mutually reinforcing contexts through which individuals internalise religious norms and prosocial values (Mohamed, 2014; Syarifudin et al., 2024; Thompson & Nasimi, 2022; Wang, 2017). This internalisation contributes to the development of a relational identity oriented toward service, reflecting culturally determined pathways of identity formation. It was within these social settings that women learnt key values of service (Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2012). In terms of familial socialisation, participants repeatedly associated their prosocial activities and pathways with *da'wah*, and everyday formative experiences of being exposed to their parents working to support others. Participants recognised that the cultivation of service values was not a quick process and had occurred over a number of years, starting from childhood and continuing through processes of mentoring into adult life, as stated:

So, growing up in Fiji, I watched my parents. They were always helping people whatever they had they would share...So, our home, we saw many people come and go and you just help. Not just my parents but, you know, my father's side of the family and my mother's side of the family. We always help people, never judgemental and very humble. I can say sister, humility. I watched them serve people with humility, never about themselves and they were not into status. So, for me this is normal, you know, take everybody with me. It's never about me, and I get a lot of joy.

(Khadija, Fiji- Indian)

Khadija's reflections foreground the importance of her socialisation into selfless service towards others who are less fortunate than herself. With humility, she asserted that everyone deserves help, and rendering assistance is not about her personally; rather, it is a continuation of what her family have done for generations. Such accounts present service to others as a normal feature of family contributions to community life. Khadija went on to talk about how such community service is now so ingrained into her very being that she finds joy in connecting meaningfully with other people. This account also relates to key Islamic teachings, particularly those relating to the importance of Muslims enacting service to the Creator through service to others and how this can enrich one's own soul and the souls of others. Humility is central in such teachings because it is stated that all human beings are equal in the eyes of Allah and people should be modest, respectful, and of service to each other where necessary (Qur'an, 25:63). Also relevant here is the valuing of inclusivity and ensuring people have the resources they need to live a good life.

Such socialisation was not gender specific in terms of positive role models only being women. Participants such as Rida, for example, emphasised how they were inspired by their fathers and other male family members. Rida reflected on how she draws insights from her father's efforts to care for family and community, and brings what she learnt from observing and helping him into her own community service activities today:

He was really well respected in the community as well. Like where we used to live. Isn't because he was wealthy or anything like that, he wasn't... We were sort of working class, just below working class. It's because he helps everyone. Anyone he could, he'd just go out and help them. And I remember this quite well, my dad's brother, his son wanted to get married to this girl, and my dad's brother didn't want them to get married. And the son came to my dad, and he [dad] had brought them together to have the conversation. And he used to do that for the neighbours as well... Like he was always helping neighbours even for people he didn't know. So, if somebody got in trouble, in school or anything like that, the whole family would come together and he would say, "How we can help this situation". So, he managed so many things and family. So, the helping thing is always there, the community back there affected my community work here. (Rida, Fiji-Indian)

This extract also reflects the importance of parental role models in shaping group members and their own pragmatic, nonjudgmental and inclusive approaches to community service. Also evident is the contrasting of "there" (country and culture of origin) and "here" (service in

Aotearoa) as a reflection of how migrants' experiences of self and prosocial actions reflects a continuing sense of affiliation, community and continued learning that for migrants often spans nation states (Li et al., 2014). When people move somewhere new, they bring their values and sense of self as a person who cares for others and then adapt these to the new locale. Also evident in such accounts are expressions of pride in one's parents and one's own service to others as a continuation of collectivist and faith-based cultural traditions that these migrant women bring with them and develop further in Aotearoa NZ. These traditions, as we explore below offer key points of affiliation and common ground for group members when networking with other Muslims from different cultures as well as non-Muslim groups within the new host society. Briefly, all participants talked about the seeds of their prosocial activities and commitment to the group being planted in their childhoods in their countries of origin.

The emphasis participants placed on seeing the value and dignity in everyone was also linked altruistically to an emphasis on not expecting anything in return. They engaged in community service because it is the right thing to do as a Muslim person, even if the people you are helping are not Muslim. As Rida continued:

And he never used to preach. Also, he used to say, in Hindi, "Neki kar darya me daal". So, what this means is do good deeds and put it in the river. You know, if you do good deeds, you don't expect anything in return, you just do it and forget about it. And he used to say that all the time. And when he passed away, we started saying it every time anyone get angry about something, "Oh, just forget about it". When helping someone, don't expect people to help you in return. Just do your part and then that's it. (Rida, Fiji-Indian)

Here, we are offered an orientation to the enactment of *da'wah* that is in keeping with the broader understanding of *madrassa* introduced earlier in the chapter. That is, learning and applying Islamic values is not necessarily about preaching specific scriptures. It can also be about enacting and modelling humanistic values of care that are in keeping with the teachings of Islam. Demonstrating the application of these values is an organic way for Muslim parents to teach their children about what it means to be a Muslim in service to others. The women learned about the meaning and significance of community service not only by observing their parents, but also through discussions about the nature of this work that they were now participating in through the group, and its significance to participating Muslim families.

These discussions also contributed to the flexibility in how they enacted the values of service and care towards others. At the centre, I witnessed many conversations which appeared to replicate the participants' accounts of familial processes of socialisation. In the

process, participants came to recognise themselves as members of nuclear families and faith-based families. These deliberations also extended out beyond Islamic teachings and involved discussions regarding the ethnic cultural values of participants and overlapping imperatives to care for others. Such intersections between ethnic cultural similarities and differences in imperatives to care for others related to nuanced understandings of enactments of *da'wah*. Often invoked in these discussions were tropes or common sayings and concepts from their native languages related to community service and support, as is evident in the reference to a Hindi saying in the quote above.

In terms of cross-cultural similarities, Group 1 members continued the custom for parents to invite children to become involved in the collective efforts of the group as a vehicle for socialisation. As these children grew older, they were also gradually mentored into *da'wah*. Kinza talked about her socialisation into *da'wah* as part of their refugee journey after the family left Afghanistan. In the following extract, Kinza talked about the continuation of her mentoring into community service that she received from her father as they integrated into life in Aotearoa NZ:

So, we [Kinza and her father] used to do a lot of activities. If there was any student, refugee coming to New Zealand, because my dad was working in the community as volunteer, he always told me to help them, telling them to get what, maybe hijab abaya, clothes, books, how to study, how to enrol. So, all my life I am always doing that because my dad was always doing that. And he was getting us involved. Even high school, 13 years old new student came, my dad came and told me, "So, this kid is starting school, can you keep an eye on [them]? Just help her around and whatever, if you can. And every morning [while dropping the children to the school], he used to talk to us, "Don't worry about people with your hijab; they don't know anything about us, you just be strong. I know it's hard, but Allah is watching and insyaaAllah [the best will come out if you observe the faith] in this dunya [temporal world] then in akhirah [the life after]." Slowly, I got involved at the uni and of course the community with any volunteer programme they had that Dad used to take us to. I did a lot of health promotion workshops with Dad. I became really closely involved with them, with the issues. So, they rang me and talked to me. And that's how I am connected to the different agencies. (Kinza, Afghani)

To the fore in this account is the emphasis on *da'wah* that Kinza has continued with her involvement in the group by helping other refugees and migrants integrate into institutions, including the health and education systems. Evident here is how Kinza's father often acted as a

pillar of support, encouraging her to not only engage actively in her own education, but also in assisting others to do the same.

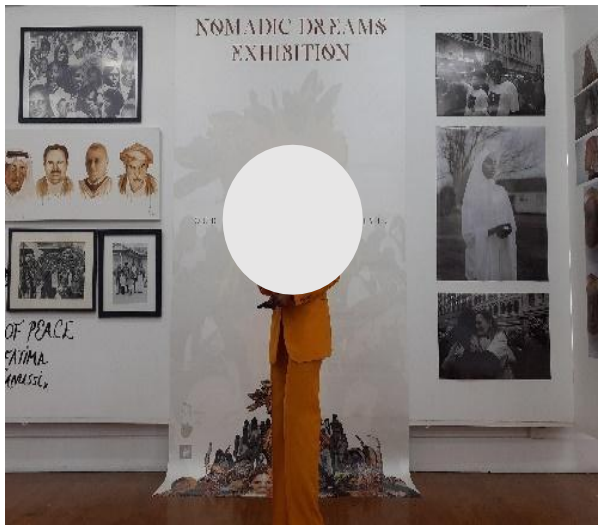
By way of further background, Kinza's father was very active in the Muslim community in this country and set up a number of network connections between Muslim and other faith-based groups, including those from the Jewish community. He also mentored Khadija, and through that relationship, many of his interpretations of the need for Muslims to organise themselves to network with like-minded community groups were instilled in the centre. As described in the extract above, Kinza's father transmitted values of care to her in a practical way, which also reflected his mentoring of Muslim women to be participative leaders. This mentoring is acknowledged by Group 1 as influencing how the group operates today as an open and collaborative space for care within the area. The collaborations between Group 1 and other faith and community groups are intended to create a sense of inclusion and shared responsibility towards others, including those from different belief systems, with whom the group shares their humanity. These multigenerational and interethnic and cross-gender processes of mentoring have been continued by Group 1 as they strive collectively to develop confident, empowered and effective Muslims. The extract above shows Kinza's father encouraging her to practice her faith and wear *hijab* in a nonconfrontational way as an assertion of identity that was relatively uncommon in Aotearoa in early 1990s.

The importance of parental figures, including men, in transmitting the value of taking care of others to members of Group 1 was also emphasised by Sobia (a Sudani woman) who lost her father when she was in her early teens. Her father's piety and intellect inspired her to spread the message of Islam through participation in *da'wah*. Her story reflects the embodiment of Islam as more than just a belief system and as a constant companion that is part of one's being and central to the cultivation of a righteous character. For Sobia, righteous character is enacted in her service to others as a continuation of her father's efforts to enact Islam in a prosocial manner:

I lost my father when I was 12 years old and he was really like pious, religious, mashaaAllah [meaning?]. And he always showed Islam in his character so much, like giving. He had food in full basket for kids, so every time they come to our house, every day to grab food, you know. Like, if we used to go out to eat and see a homeless person, he would literally call to come eat with us. Stuff like that, that was everyday with my dad. MashaaAllah. So, I guess, like me, understanding just enough, reflecting and looking back the way my dad carried Islam and the way my mom carried Islam, enough for me. Also, when I used to start a programme that is dedicated to migrant

and refugee narratives and social justice issues, so it is my journey, my father's journey. Because we used to...when I was younger, every morning he always like, "Tell me your dream" and we've discussed the dream...So, the day before [the exhibition opened that Sobia organised], I was thinking of putting his letters [writing] up [to] give the narrative justice, and I also found one of the dreams, like seeing a little message (Sobia, Sudani).

Figure 7
Sobia at the Exhibition Opening



Sobia's narrative highlights the intergenerational transmission of faith-based care, responsibility, and love within the families of Group 1 members. These values are subsequently expressed through community initiatives in which Sobia now actively participates. Her engagement in a range of socially responsive activities, including preparing meals for those in need, welcoming homeless individuals into her home, and curating art exhibitions, exemplifies a lived expression of *da'wah* as compassionate service. These practices reflect a broader interpretation of Islamic ethics by the Annisa Trust that moves beyond ritual observance to encompass practical commitments to social inclusion, providing material support, and the affirmation of marginalised identities (Syarifudin et al., 2024). Sobia's work also intentionally creates inclusive spaces for youth across diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering interethnic dialogue and mutual understanding as part of the wider resettlement journey (Khan, 2021). A salient example is the "Do You Still Dream?" platform (Do You Still Dream? Vondel & Friends, 2024), which she led to feature photography, painting, poetry, and other creative media to amplify the lived experiences of migrant and refugee youth in Aotearoa NZ. This initiative not only affirms cultural diversity as an everyday reality but also serves as a form of community-building and provides a space for

identity negotiation within a multicultural society (Reynolds & Zontini, 2015).

Muslim and Non-Muslim Communities: Bridging Ethnic and Faith Diversities

As is evident in the previous section, the transmission of Islamic values of care among Group 1 members extends past one's biological family, ethnic group, or Muslim community to the broader community groups and initiatives in which the group is involved. Bridging the social institutions of the family and community, group members bring their family members into the centre's activities and programmes. This involves allowing young children to simply share the spaces created through these activities, and then become more involved as they get older. As articulated above by Kinza, through early socialisation into familial community service, involvement in a range of diverse settings and activities had become a normal part of everyday life for participants. Participants spoke at length about how they learned and refined their appreciation for Islam and core teachings through service to others. They also talked about paying such lessons forward when they bring their own children into community activities. These socialising processes of engagement are central to the groups' functions, as noted in my fieldnotes (January 21, 2022):

Today, I went to Hamilton to accompany my friend to visit an Afghani lady. As we come from different ethnic groups, asked Kinza to come along with us to Hamilton and she agreed. We changed cars because Kinza said the car was not big enough, even though it was only four of us. I said, "It's big enough" but she said, "No sister, I need to bring along my twins." And along the way these lovely kids were so nice, chatting with us, they seemed very familiar with going with their mum, with strangers in the car. I was just so amazed. I thought they would only bring their children when there was an activity in town, but they literally bring the little ones wherever they go. And, when we were having a conversation about research, they were very well behaved and waited for their mum and never interrupted unless their mom called them. A few days after that, I had an opportunity to meet the Annisa Trust members at the centre, and I met these kids again. As we were already familiar with each other, when they saw me they just came and kissed my hand. MashaaAllah. (Nuke, researcher)

For me, this fieldnote speaks to how normal the presence of children is within community networking processes and how familiar the children become at an early age with how to behave respectfully in such settings. From such trips and interactions children's familiarity with community processes is instilled in them and they gain key knowledge of how to conduct themselves with dignity and respect. Kissing an elder person on the hand is a key practice of

recognition and respect within Islam that denotes familiarity. For Group 1, these trips and centre activities are key mechanisms for socialising children within the everyday enactment of Islam. As noted in the previous section and representing the perspective of children raised within Group 1, Khadija's son Huzaifa also reflected on how his mother had instilled in him the values of community responsibility and care.

Embracing diversity is central to Group 1 and their engagements with other Muslim and non-Muslim groups. From the group's perspective, this broader networked enactment of *da'wah* is not about trying to convert members of other groups but about effort to integrate the group's efforts with those of other groups and express of their gratitude for being able to resettle, make homes, and build new lives in Aotearoa as Muslims. Such collaborations are also a means of correcting misunderstandings or misinterpretations of Islam that are often promulgated in media depictions in OECD countries (Hopner et al., 2023). As explored below, these collaborations also facilitate the cultivation of *barakah* (blessings).

These intergroup collaborations were conducted primarily with local Māori and Pākehā groups who supported the Annisa Trust and extended to collaborations with Pasifika, Latin American, and African groups. These collaborations were storied as facilitating mutual understandings among diverse participants who often share core values of respect and care and are also seeking harmonious intergroup relationships in Aotearoa NZ. The influence of connections with Māori, for example, was valued within the group. Khadija talked about being inspired in her own efforts to establish the Annisa Trust by a Māori mentor:

I worked for Internal Affairs, typing and, you know, typing passports and citizenships, and then I got into community development. I must thank my colleagues who were Māori, my manager was Māori. So, I learned community development here from the best of colleagues, Māori. (Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

Whilst engaged in an administrative job, Khadija also gained opportunities to work with and learn about how community development works in this society and its support systems through her manager. This manager included Khadija in various community initiatives, and these experiences lead to her to form the Annisa Trust, which has subsequently maintained relationships and collaborations with Māori. One such collaboration relates to a youth project around participation in football that is led by Māori at Manukau United. Reflecting the intergenerational layering of relations described in previous pages, Khadija, an older Fiji-Indian leader, is mentoring Sadia, a younger Somali group member, to help facilitate the project and engage young Muslim women to participate and, in doing, developing their own intergroup relations. As Sadia stated,

There is a “football for Palestine” activity that happens in Mangere and then we work it out. So, the majority are the Māori organisations, Kiwi organisations. So, we try especially young Muslim women getting into the sport, and so we collaborate with them, it’s kind of encouraging young girls to get fit and healthy by playing football, and then they started the team. And then there is a couple of youth that are very awesome that play with other girls in football. (Sadia, Somali)

Behind this deceptively simple project with a Māori- led sports club is a collaborative effort to facilitate the integration and social inclusion of Muslim refugee women, many of whom are struggling with resettlement processes. Through such initiatives we can see how resettlement is not merely about finding an appropriate house or getting a job. It is also about connecting with different people and finding a place in broader community networks. By including a Muslim refugee team, Māori as mana whenua (first peoples of the land with territorial rights) are also exercising their cultural rights and responsibilities as guardians of the area to host, care for, and help support newcomers. By participating, these young women from traumatic backgrounds overseas can experience more positive civic relations and overcome some of their felt isolation and culture shock in their efforts to adjust well to life in Aotearoa.

Further reflecting the valuing of diversity and intergroup connections, participants also spoke about their collaborations with local Pākehā, and in doing so, recognised the many shared values that made such collaborations possible. Group 1 recognised that because they have collaborated with Pākehā, they can call on these organisations and key people who possess relevant expertise and other resources for assistance with issues necessary:

So, I can go to the Pākehās. Like, for example, I said, “Look I am working with women who are victims of violence. I need some supports around this. I need something here.” Straight away it comes. Even those from their own pockets. They gave me \$50 or \$100 and say, “Here and help the women.” And they also send me, “Go here, go there, you’ll get this.” So, easier to deal with this locally. (Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

This extract is a notable demonstration of the personal commitment and generosity of a Pākehā person towards migrant women in need. Moreover, it illustrates collective action in which a network of people is actively involved in supporting Muslim refugees and migrants in need of assistance. This localised, grassroots approach is storied by participants as standing in contrast to the often complex and impersonal nature of larger, more formal systems. It underscores the existence of strong community cohesion and the presence of informal support structures that are both responsive and effective in meeting immediate needs.

These local intergroup relationships are also shared and deepen within the group in ways that mean Group 1 is not simply gaining resources for their own activities from Pākehā, but are also offering support in return:

So, when I work my way up, I had support from mainstream, Pākehā colleagues. You know the woman that Khalisa drops off the groceries in Northcote, Pākehā woman. So, she used to be my boss. She taught me a lot of administration in New Zealand. So, that's why I make it my responsibility to support her with groceries.

(Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

I witnessed groceries being dropped off to other elderly people during my fieldwork. Trust members saw the value of reciprocity in deepening social relations in their new homeland and made sure that they supported people who had supported the group in the past and who played significant roles in its establishment. Such reciprocity is also in keeping with key teaching from the Qur'an, with Verse 17:23 emphasising respect and care for elderly people. Care for these elderly Pākehā is a feature of the group's activities and reflects considerable complexities in the relationships surrounding the centre.

As evident in Khalisa's account below, group members have developed family, like ties with many Pākehā who helped them integrate into life in Aotearoa NZ, and in whom they recognise the values and spirit of Islam, even if these people do not subscribe to or practice the Islamic faith:

I have a friend, a very old Kiwi. She is 82 or 83. She is like a mother to me. Any advice, her advice, very Islamic I have noticed. Very beautiful. She told me a lot like, "No you have to do this or that." Like everything I told her, so she knows everything of me. She teaches me the Kiwi way of bringing up kids and things like that, but she never says leave practicing Islam. She teaches good values and good morals. She used to be my landlord. She is a very wealthy lady. And if I call her, she'll talk to me so nicely. That's why I take her to the centre to talk on budgeting because she taught me. When I came to New Zealand, I had no one to teach me how New Zealand works. Ten years ago, she taught me the New Zealand way of living...Because back home we have Asian vegetables we just pick off the garden, we use it and that's it, that's finish. Over here, there is season. The season of fruit, and everything, and she taught me when it comes in season, you buy when it's cheaper, you freeze it. And you use it in off season.

(Khalisa, Fiji-Indian)

This narrative illustrates Khalisa's deep and reciprocal integration into the social fabric of Aotearoa NZ through a sustained relationship with an older Pākehā woman who has become a

maternal figure in her life. Khalisa, a Fiji-Indian Muslim woman, describes this relationship as one of profound trust, affection, and mutual respect, referring to her friend as being “like a mother.” Initially featuring in Khalisa’s life as a landlord, this Pākehā woman’s role evolved into that of a mentor and confidante offering practical guidance on navigating life in Aotearoa NZ. She did so without undermining Khalisa’s Islamic beliefs or cultural values. Khalisa’s remarked that her friend’s advice was “very Islamic.” This suggests a recognition of shared humanistic values across cultural and religious lines, reinforcing the compatibility of Islamic ethics with those of the host society. This interethnic and interfaith relationship exemplifies a form of social integration grounded not in assimilation, but in dialogue, mutual concern, ethical alignment, and shared experiences (Zhang et al., 2023). Moreover, by inviting her mentor to participate in community centre activities, including giving presentations to the group, she extended the mutuality of this relationship to other community members (Thompson & Nasimi, 2022). Such accounts also demonstrate how intercultural friendships can not only foster personal adaptation by migrants, but also create broader community cohesion, highlighting the possibilities for meaningful coexistence in a multicultural society (Sharples & Colic-Peisker, 2022).

Group 1’s efforts to work across diversity also extended to people of different faiths and other ethnic minorities, and provided a means for participants to recognise how their own values and faith can be integrated into social relations in this society. This is particularly the case where shared humanistic values lead to reciprocal relations based on these similarities. These relations also strengthened participants’ senses of self as Muslim women who are open to engaging in *da’wah* with others and experiencing gifts of mutual support in the process. For example, as a young Somali woman, Sadia reflected on how the identity and leadership skills of Muslim woman can be cultivated through engagements with difference:

We also did the Rotorua Youth Conference, and then we took about nine youth of different refugee and migrant backgrounds. All young people and went to Rotorua together. So, we were looking at leadership and identity, get them proud to be who they are and where they are from. Mostly are African young women, but overall, it’s different backgrounds also non-Muslim as well. So, we do poetry workshops, art, and we did a couple of events with the youth, like collaboratively with other agencies. But we were working together with Annisa Trust. We’re all sharing ideas because we are under the “family” of Annisa Trust. Same activities...like months ago I travelled with sister Khadija to Hamilton to do the Identity workshop with people from various backgrounds and we collaborated with the Ministry of Education and also with Red

Cross as well. (Sadia, Somali)

From this and the other quotes above, we can see the breadth of engagements with diversity that the centre facilitates as a *madrassa* that introduces young people to diversity in safe spaces that can enhance their senses of self as Muslims. Embedded in this account is how seasoned group members act as aunties or key support people for the younger members who in turn work on various activities with other youth who also bring considerable diversity to the space. Mentoring from the aunties extends to supporting emerging leaders to lead initiatives as a way of multiplying the prosocial impacts of the centre. For example, Sadia and others were supported to organise and facilitate creative workshops within which young people were able to organise a Muslim youth conference. This conference brought young people from various cultural and faith backgrounds together to share ideas, discuss concerns, and explore who they are and how they belong to society. Central to these activities is the socialisation of future generations and the development of their senses of self as Muslims open to collaborating with other groups.

During my fieldwork, I visited many of these events to witness young Muslim people supporting each other, including the art exhibition related to the migrant youth and identity event organised by Sadia. The exhibition was initially focused on Muslim refugee narratives and identities but also included Pacific youth work that represented other faiths. As such, the initiative formed as a space for engagement between Muslims and Christians regarding their experiences of migration to this country. The inclusion of Pacific youth is reflected in Figure 8 below, which depicts printed hoodies that refer to tensions around earlier waves of Pacific migration to Aotearoa NZ and the legend of the Polynesian Panthers (a group from a previous generation of young people who resisted the racism directed towards new Pacific migrants).

Figure 8

Polynesian Booth at "Nomadic Dreams" Exhibition



Participant's accounts of their work with other communities also gave me insights into how the Annisa Trust reaches out beyond the centre and other Muslim groups to enable members to integrate into society. For example, one group member spoke about enacting *sunnah*⁷ by joining St John as a volunteer to learn with and be part of a more diverse network of communities. This account also reflects the efforts of group members to engage in the sharing of *barakah* (blessing) with the wider public. This practice enables them to reciprocate the generosity that participants such as Khalisa described as have being blessed to receive, which enabled them to resettle and participate in society in Aotearoa NZ. In the following extract, Khalisa described how she joined Saint John because she identified with their values of inclusion and care, which she had found out about online:

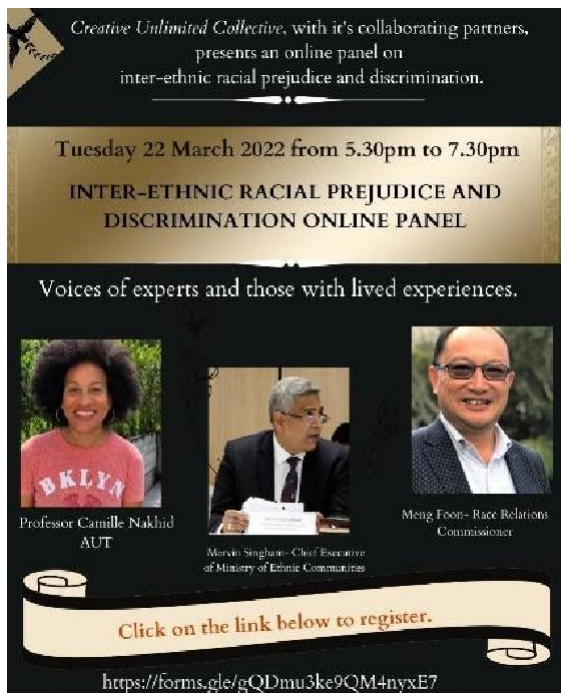
One day I joined the page, the Volunteering New Zealand and it came up, and I told to myself why not. You know the charitable organisation in New Zealand, they look after everyone, they don't say only look after the white people... They see everyone is equal. So, I told to myself why not join something like that as well... I feel like I don't want to be selfish, only helping my community. So, wherever people need help as well like St John is a big organisation and they gave all the, like all of the cultures. People come from different cultures, diversity is there with St Johns. The diversity just different with my community. And the most important thing is I am Muslim. You do not need to say "I am Muslim." Just doing your job. They'll look at you, the way you do your job, the way you think, that's the sunnah. Oh in New Zealand, for me as Muslim it's just very easy to practice Islam. New Zealand is very accommodating. If you come across, the good Kiwis they respect people. They pay a lot of respect to your beliefs. (Khalisa, Fiji- Indian)

Such extracts speak to the values of altruism, diversity, and inclusion in this participant's efforts to integrate into this multicultural and multifaith society. Khalisa's choice to work with and serve in organisations such as St John demonstrates the sense of civic duty that is foundational to the operations of the group and their efforts to assist others, irrespective of their ethnic and faith backgrounds. Group members' engagements in volunteer activities, coupled with their capacities to incorporate their Muslim identities into professional environments, exemplify a wider aspect of Muslim refugee and migrant integration into society in which personal faith is acknowledged and maintained within diverse societal networks.

⁷ The teachings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constitute the Sunnah, which is regarded as the second most authoritative source of guidance in Islam after the Qur'an (Kamali, 2008).

Networking between groups has led to a range of practical initiatives such as the youth and arts programmes. A particularly beneficial initiative involved bring together African and Taiwanese groups into a forum as the Creative Unlimited Collective. This initiative offers a space for young people to express their experiences through poetry. Those involved write poems and then come together to share them and discuss their experiences with each other and attending scholars. Figure 9 depicts the flyer for the first event organised by the Creative Unlimited Collective.

Figure 9
First Event Organised by Creative Unlimited Collective



Not only does the centre provide a shared space for participating women to learn about issues such as diversity (Khalisa); receive support (Kinza); and to share knowledge (Rida) and creative expressions of experiences (see Figure 9), it also provides a safe space for women to express their differences and celebrate their similarities. Additionally, members involve their children (see Figure 2) in witnessing their service activities and broader community engagements. In this case, the concept of community-as-family, where members feel comfortable learning, can be contextualised as a *madrasa* for learning the values of Islam. Group 1 has created a *madrasa* that also engages in various practical activities to enact key values around the care and support of others. The group also works inclusively in ways that enable their children to witness such values in action. This *madrasa* has also broadened out beyond the space of the centre to collaborate with a network of other organisations, services, and people who share variations of these same values. The constant that is central to the

activities of the group is the work to help other Muslim migrant women and their families to successfully resettle and integrate into life in Aotearoa NZ. The group's collaborations also extend to persons from different faiths and ethnic cultures. In the following section, I extend this discussion of the group's efforts in relation to the values of both *da'wah*, and *barakah* in combination.

Through these accounts we can see the combination of Islamic values of inclusion and care and altruistic practices as a form of everyday reciprocity on the part of Group 1 members towards a host society that has offered them many opportunities which have enabled them to establish good lives for themselves and their families as Muslims. This section has also foregrounded how *da'wah* is conveyed through practices of care and kindness towards others as a form of embodied and enacted gratitude. This is possible because these participants report feeling safe, valued and happy with their new lives in Aotearoa NZ, which has brought *barakah* to them and their families.

Power of *Barakah* in Resettlement and Integration Processes

In this last section of analysis for this case, I delve into the relevance of *da'wah* and *barakah* as interrelated concepts. *Da'wah* is one of many ways to realise *barakah*, a fundamental concept in Muslim belief that appears in the Qur'an (Hammad, 2024). It refers to spiritual and material efforts that lead one to work as a supplicant for prosperity (El-Awaisi, 2022). *Barakah* or blessings and spiritual and material goodness is thought to be realised when Muslims have cultivated good relationships both vertically with Allah and horizontally with other human beings. Balancing belief in Allah and exercising this belief through acts of kindness and support for people less fortunate than oneself, the "channel" is opened for realising *barakah* in one's life.

The narratives of participants in this research reflect the shared understanding that *barakah* can be realised through continuity in their service to others that increases the quality of life for other refugees and migrants, as well as for the broader community. In the context of this thesis, I have approached *barakah* as the gift of proactive and prosocial inclusion. It is about obtaining a good life through migration and associated community service that benefits not only oneself, one's family or one's community. The prosocial activities of the group contribute to *barakah* for the broader society here as well as those back in one's country of origin. It is also important to note that *barakah* is related to the meaning of life and coming closer to Allah through service to others and its enactment provides a key means for this group to integrate as citizens into Aotearoa NZ society.

This current section documents how the participants strive to realise *barakah* and live

good lives as Muslims. I consider how participants story their understandings of Islam as *rahmatan lil alamiin* (brings goodness to all humankind and the universe). By working together as a group of diverse Muslim women alongside non-Muslim groups, and through positive relations with progressive Muslim men, these women strive to enact and share *barakah* as part of their efforts to resettle, integrate into, and contribute positively to life in Aotearoa NZ. Central are participants' efforts to cultivate reciprocal and mutually beneficial relations. Group 1 members talked about becoming closer both to Allah and to other people in this country through acts of service within the context of their own integration into this society. The cultivation of these relations is not simply an external activity in the world. Also evident in participant narratives is how efforts to promote *barakah* also get under the skin and into the very sense of self of group participants. This is evident in how participants characterised their sense of place as Muslim ethnic-minority Aotearoa NZers as a blessing that is central to their own personal growth and the realising of a more harmonious society that is inclusive of such diversities. This entails encouraging members, new migrants, and future generations to cultivate a sense of gratitude for being included in Aotearoa NZ without isolating themselves as Muslims and members of diverse ethnic communities. In these ways, the accounts below resonate with previous scholarship on migrants' hyphenated identities (Ali & Sonn, 2010; Boland, 2020; Cassim et al., 2019; Fine & Sirin, 2007; Selcuk & Fine, 2008).

Promoting *barakah* through collective activities that support others was presented in participant narratives as a normative value that members of the group brought with them from their countries of origin and which they seek to continue here as they integrate into society:

So, coming here [to New Zealand], it's normal, like yesterday my mom rang me, one of my cousins passed away, 75 years old, it's about money. So, for us, any remittance back home is nothing new because we support our family members. Because we grew up that way. The more you give to people, the more barakah everyone gets. And Allah subhanahuwata'alla [all praises to Allah] makes it so easy in everything, good health, everything. What we talk to children about, breakfast table, how to give or what to give, how to share. And I saw that with my son. You know, very willing to help somebody comes to the door, fundraising for somebody, will give this and that. So yeah, comes back to the values... (Khadija, Fiji-Indian)

Khadija frames *barakah* not merely as a spiritual blessing but as an integral and routine element of everyday life for Muslims that is deeply embedded in the socialisation of children within familial contexts. She emphasises a relational and reciprocal conception of *barakah* as

a blessing that is meant to be continuously shared and circulated within communities, rather than hoarded for oneself and treated as a finite resource (El-Awaisi, 2022). *Barakah* can be cultivated and grown relationally through care and service towards others. This is evident in her description of remittances sent to family members overseas, which are normalised as an ongoing act of care and support rather than a financial burden.

Khadija's account also aligns with the Islamic principle of *ikhhlās* (sincerity), which encourages giving without expectation of return or recognition, fostering an ethic of selfless generosity. By giving sincerely, Muslims cultivate *barakah*, which in turn brings ease, well-being, prosperity, and harmony to all aspects of life. Importantly, these values are actively transmitted to the younger generation through everyday practices and conversations, such as those at the breakfast table, where children learn the importance of sharing, helping others, and contributing to community well-being (Bensaid, 2021). This embedding of *barakah* within familial and community relationships underscores its role as both a spiritual and social force, sustaining a cycle of mutual care and reinforcing communal resilience in diasporic settings (Sharples & Colic-Peisker, 2022).

The participants also voiced the trope of “caring enough about others” and recognising their shared humanity as key motivations for acts of *barakah*. For example, Zainab (a Fiji-Indian woman) proposed that when people empathise with others it is easy to engage in acts of generosity that often extend interculturally:

I was working for the Fiji government as a secretary, and I can speak Fiji language and Urdu as well, which made it easier to work with indigenous people. You know, when you have a lot, like you have enough, you just need to look after other people who have less or not enough. You know, it is what Islam teaches us, we share. For me, I have enough of everything. And, when I see something that I need to help with, do it right now, not tomorrow because who knows what tomorrow brings. (Zainab, Fiji-Indian)

Zainab is Khadija's mother and the oldest member of the Annisa Trust. In this extract and throughout our conversations, she demonstrated her willingness to engage in practices of generosity and prosocial activities, to share *barakah* with others. Zainab related *barakah* with a sense of sufficiency, compassion, and being able to recognise and respond to the very human needs of others. Also evident in this account are underlying Islamic values regarding living in a simple and modest way, and the emphasis the Prophet (PBUH) placed on following the Hadith (A record of the sayings, deeds, and actions of the Prophet Muhammad [PBUH] that provides a reference for the Muslim ways of life). Moreover, simplicity provides a

chance to cultivate a balanced and meaningful life, central to which is *barakah*.

Barakah is also articulated as efforts to create situations within which people can feel supported and that they have opportunities to grow positively with the support of others. Here, feelings of inclusion and acceptance are promoted as foundational to developing confidence to engage with others outside of one's own family or ethnic group. A sense of *barakah* was central to the account by Aisha (Fiji-Indian) of her work to promote inclusion and intergroup harmony as a kindergarten teacher. The following extract talks to the blessings Aisha feels come to her and others from the positive and inclusive environment offered by this workplace, wherein she is accepted as a Muslim woman wearing *hijab*:

The Kindy is very diverse. We've got Māori; Chinese, Pasifika, like Samoan; Tongan. You name it, we have it. They are all very warm, very welcoming. Talking to whānau is very exciting. It's not difficult, but it's just your approach. How you start off is really important. Give them a bit of information about yourself and tell them that we are all in this together, it's partnerships... No stereotyping, no judgement. You look at the individual the whole and what they bring in... Fortunately, I've been very welcomed by everyone and embraced by everyone. I open entirely, tell who I am, my belief, and they never hate. I think it's also because I work in education... And people are getting more awareness. I also had people apologise to me about the Christchurch attacks. They were very sorry for what happened. But maybe [they] were blessed because of education. (Aisha, Fiji-Indian)

The quote illustrates how the speaker's positive experience in Aotearoa NZ flows from her openness about her identity as a Muslim, which contributes to a positive environment of mutual respect and understanding. This passage underscores the importance of authenticity in cultivating positive relationships, as individuals are more likely to respond with respect and kindness when they perceive others as genuine and transparent. Additionally, the speaker's experience is shaped by Aotearoa NZ's education system, which is characterised by a strong emphasis on diversity, inclusion, and cultural awareness. Within this context, Aisha's Muslim identity is viewed as just one aspect of her personhood, rather than a source of division or discrimination. This mutual respect is crucial not only for promoting positive interactions but also for creating a safe and welcoming environment for individuals from diverse backgrounds. By embracing her identity and prioritising respect for cultural differences, Aisha feels able to contribute meaningfully and thrive in a multicultural encounter space.

In such accounts, *barakah* is associated with the cultivation of mutual understanding and care across diversity, promoting feelings of acceptance, mutual respect, and the

acceptance of difference. Feeling that one is not being stereotyped or discriminated against was presented as a blessing or key aspect of *barakah*, which was shared in various conversations with Group 1 members. Inclusion and the cultivation of mutual understanding across diversity was presented as central to how group members work to integrate into everyday life in Aotearoa NZ and was associated with feelings of safety and belonging. As Aisha proposed, it can also be associated with overcoming shyness and to be well-adapted, and receiving *barakah* from integrating into the host society through engaging in education and employment in supportive and respectful settings:

So, being a shy quiet person. Honestly, sister, it hasn't changed. But from my fellow colleagues who studied with me, and then as kindergarten teacher, that's how I got to know some people and make friends which help me with my work, with my studies, and also my social life a bit...I was a bit scared to get into the work first. So, they made me team leader. As soon as that, I was very nervous...Then one day I got a call from someone, because I didn't sign or something. This beautiful lady called me up, said, "You missed the signature, so I will resend the form, can you just sign that." It's all on the phone. What a kind act. So, all this works here. They gave me a lot of confidence. Then, I go into postgrad in early intervention with the University of Canterbury. They gave me more confidence. So, I just knew in my heart, I am a teacher, and I am enjoying teaching. (Aisha, Fiji-Indian)

Such accounts reflect how group members see *barakah* in being blessed in having opportunities to integrate themselves into society and to contribute to civic life. Sadia, for example, talked about the blessing of opportunities for personal growth that have provided her with the confidence to encourage and support others. Having opportunities to become a well-educated person is positioned within such accounts as a key element of reciprocity or reciprocal relations that facilitate one's integration into society and that one should use this blessing to contribute to this country and assist others.

Figure 10 below shows an image of Sadia on the cover of a diversity journal published by the Ministry of Education. The image and associated journal article represent her ongoing efforts to use her education to encourage others. The content was discussed with members of Group 1 and the resulting article showcases counter-stereotypical examples of success by young migrants and their contributions to the vibrancy and well-being of Aotearoa NZ:

Every 2 years the national head of the Ministry of Education, he looks after the refugee side. Showcases the graduates of New Zealand. Including Somali graduates in New Zealand...And he asked one of us like, "What do you want to be? What is your study?"

Why did you study this? What is your aspiration? What's your next step?" He shows cases how many graduates we have, Somali. Because at that time people were like saying they [young migrants] waste their time. Always on the benefit, not contribute and this and that. But he was like, I have to show the Ministry of Education that we have so many talented kids. Like he started the magazine to showcase what Somalis were doing to contribute and really dismantle the whole stereotype that Africans are not intelligent, and you are refugees and just on the dole, which is not true... A lot of people are hardworking...

Figure 10

Cover of Diversity Magazine



This interview excerpt articulates an appreciation for the opportunity to reside in Aotearoa NZ, the ability to acquire education as a Somali-Muslim-Kiwi-woman, and the importance of sharing personal success stories. Also relevant are participants' aspirations to help other refugees and migrants to realise the opportunities that are available in this country. The account also associates *barakah* with the dual capacity to foster personal growth and contribute to a broader society, in this example, through the medium of an educational journal. In this context, Sadia was selected for an interview and to collaborate on an article in which she shared her successful journey to settle and gain an advanced degree in this country and her image is featured on the cover of the magazine. Here, the act of sharing one's personal story is presented as a form of *barakah* in terms of being blessed with recognition for personal success and using the opportunity to encourage others to further their educations as well. Sadia's account also exemplifies the Islamic principle of leading a *barakah*-infused life, in which one

has the capacity to contribute to the establishment of an environment conducive to encouraging participation in education and the opportunities this can afford people. It was also an opportunity to counter negative stereotypes that some conservative members of the host society hold about Somali migrants not contributing constructively to society. *Barakah* is recognised as manifesting here in the form of a blessing in having the opportunity to grow, share, and encourage other refugees and migrants to take the opportunity to contribute to the nation of Aotearoa NZ.

Contributing *barakah* to the host country was associated in participant narratives with the efforts of participants to create spaces and networks of support, inclusion, and cooperation that facilitated the integration of refugees and migrants. The activities of the group, including the art workshops and the association with the football club discussed previously in this chapter were also narrated by participants as providing opportunities to grow *barakah* in the city. These activities were designed to create shared spaces in which different groups could come together to get to know each other, socialise, and learn more about the local cultures. These activities also materialise the Islamic concept of *silaturrahim* (or *silaturrahmi*), or strengthening the relationship with relatives as family. Again, the term “relative(s)” is not limited to blood relatives and includes faith-based relatives and people with shared belief systems, because all are recognised and valued as human beings.

These project-based engagements with people from diverse backgrounds were discussed by Eshaal at a more personal level with reference to her efforts to help a neighbour in need. Eshaal was a cofounder of the Annisa Trust and she reflected on the religious piety she associates with *barakah* and her efforts to take care of her neighbour:

And my neighbour, she will have knee operation, and I said to her, “Don’t worry about your rubbish bin, I will take it out every week. And don’t worry with the operation. I will look after you.” Although I work, I am busy, but still, you know, those things are good for neighbours. Because in Islam, we look after our neighbours. Although people are busy, but still it’s kind of a family. So that’s how we respect and express our religion. But yeah, still to be honest, I leave everything behind [in Somalia], except my religion. (Eshaal, Somali)

Eshaal’s account illustrates how participants story their efforts as following Islamic beliefs that encourage them to cultivate supportive relationships, including the establishment of familial- like relations with neighbours. Eshaal described a straightforward approach to acquiring and disseminating *barakah*, elucidating the significance of exhibiting kindness towards one’s neighbours, treating them with familial regard, and doing so with sincerity.

Respecting others is associated with acting as a pious Muslim and cultivating *barakah*. Key teachings from Islam are particularly relevant here. For example, if your neighbour smells what you are cooking, you are obliged to share it with them, as an opportunity for connection. Such simple everyday practical acts are acknowledged by participants as important in preserving and growing supportive relationships with neighbours.

Practising Islamic values in everyday life, in ways such as by bringing *barakah*, dignity and care to others, was also presented by participants as bringing one closer to the Islamic faith and as expression of gratitude to the Creator. Related social practices also functioned as a means of reproducing and articulating one's identity as a Muslim. As a person raised in Aotearoa NZ, Sobia reflected on these concerns in relation to her volunteer work in this country and year living in Sudan, her country of origin, in a story of renewed commitment and the deepening of her identity:

I want to get close to my deen [Islamic religion]. Like I want to get close to my identity, Islam, especially my new find way of my understanding. Like I volunteered for a few organisations out there, NGOs. One of them was with cancers... I have my time with stuff like that. So, yeah, it came from, you know, I came from West Sudan. And for me I just wanna see everyday people of Sudan. I wanna highlight that. So, I lived [a year] in Sudan with my aunty. She taught so much. She actually gave me 50% of my Qur'an lessons. And I guess I've got to see the real Sudan, and seeing a lot of people look like you, everywhere, and just so beautiful. Also, you know, it's so beautiful the way the woman wears the scarf. And I fall in love with my identity. So, my aunty she makes coffee, you know, coffee in the street. So, it's beautiful to have that experience. Just like going, sitting, making coffee, washing, talking to everyone. And I got to meet so many people, like discussed in a room, they were all like under 16 years old. (Sobia, Sudani)

Like the other participants, Sobia positioned Islam as a guiding principle that motivates her engagements in volunteer work as the embodiment of the Islamic virtue of gratitude that manifest in her sense of self as a Sudanese-Muslim who lives and also contributes to life in Aotearoa NZ. Muslims frequently express their gratitude through both verbal and practical means, which is known as *shukr* in Islamic terminology. First, Muslims express gratitude by uttering the phrase *Alhamdulillah* (all praise to Allah). This refers to a vertical connection between individuals and the Creator. This saying provides a crucial reminder to Muslims that all things originate only from Allah. As everyone is equal in front of the Creator, then horizontally, Muslims are encouraged to be engaged with other human beings, sharing what

they have, as everyone deserves to have a decent life, and avoid being arrogant.

In her description, Sobia demonstrated her gratitude for being able to embrace her authentic self after returning from a visit to Sudan, her country of origin. After a year of profound and transformative experiences, she returned, strengthened by her resilience and determined to reconnect with her origins. She showed resilience and experienced personal growth, drawing inspiration from the rigorous guidance of her aunt and interactions with Eritrean youth. These influential figures taught her valuable lessons on perseverance in life, instilling in her a steadfast determination to overcome difficulties. Moreover, within her story as a migrant, the act of sharing can also be perceived as a reciprocal relationship that offers advantages to all parties involved. Within such accounts, a heightened sense of proximity to her *deen* (Islamic faith) is expressed as a sense of joy or happiness associated with participation in practices of human connection and expressions of gratitude (Lyubomirsky & Layous, 2013). Sobia is also actively cultivating gratitude (*shukr*) back in this country by participating in the community initiatives of the group, which provide fuel for her religious devotion and associated *barakah*.

Relatedly, gratitude played a crucial role in participants' accounts of efforts to cultivate *barakah*. As scholars have proposed (Al-Seheel & Noor, 2016; Ali et al., 2019; Chalmiers et al., 2023), gratitude (*shukr*) is thought to provide benefit to Muslim people by increasing one's willingness to act prosocially. In the account below, Kinza emphasised gratitude and how it has motivated her to work with government agencies to support new migrants. In the process, she expressed gratitude to the previous Labour government for resourcing efforts to build community inclusion and cohesion:

And we had quite a lot of the newcomers, and Alhamdulillah we are very lucky with such the government, [previous Labour government] put a lot of resources into them. And they do in humanly based support. Sometimes it's very cultural understandings and stuff and we provide assistance with that, then we work with the government. And I believe the government can't do everything alone. We all have to work together. That's just luck with the message of the corona for everyone, and I just said to the family, "Look, the government can do so much, we are all have to help each other, protect the whole of New Zealand." (Kinza, Afghani)

Kinza's account speaks to the group's gratitude and recognition of the *barakah* they receive from living in Aotearoa NZ and having opportunities to contribute to this society. As a former refugee, Kinza recognised the need to acquire fundamental everyday assistance when embarking on a new chapter to integrate into an unfamiliar society. In Aotearoa NZ, she is

grateful for the allocation of government resources towards facilitating the resettlement of refugees. Kinza performed *barakah* by collaboratively working with government agencies to assist Muslim refugees regarding cultural issues and trauma, and in doing so draws from her own experiences having fled from Afghanistan. This background enables her to comprehend the various challenges faced by newcomers, which can impede the resettlement process. Evident here is a form of paying it forward in gratitude for the support she has also received as a new migrant.

Kinza stories herself as an intermediary in that for Muslims it is important to establish *muamalat* between the refugees and the host society. *Muamalat* refers to mutual interactions, often related to economic activities such as trading, banking, and commerce, that are guided by the principles of fairness and social justice for all people involved (Ismail, 2021; Ishak & Asni, 2020). However, in this context, *muamalat* is about mutual interactions in non-commercial social relations. This underlying element that binds Kinza's activities stems from her sense of responsibility towards both the refugees and the host society. This element can be seen in the last sentence of her quote about the importance of helping each other to protect the whole society and promote harmony.

Extracts presented above story *barakah* as the capability to assist others to gain the capacity to settle well, and to explore who they are and how they belong in this new place. The Annisa Trust creates a background support for women and children, primarily, to explore such issues and a place to step out from, to work to assist others to do likewise. Within the coffee group (depicted in Figure 1), for example, these women share their experiences and feelings, and their aspirations for starting a new chapter in life in this new country. Such spaces are also places where women can get information about assistance they can access and how to navigate everyday life situations in Aotearoa NZ. This includes learning that it is safe to call the police if they feel threatened or are the victims of crime, how to manage accommodation, and how to get support in raising children or dealing with trauma.

Moreover, helping others realise *barakah* was also storied as enabling the participants in Group 1 and the people they help to achieve more independence, self-efficacy, and self-reliance in life in this society. People who have been supported by the group in this way often then join the group and are encouraged to pay the support forward. For example, Hafsa (a Cape Malay-South African woman) reflected on how she became stronger after experiencing domestic violence, divorcing her husband, being helped by the group, and coming back to help other women in similar situations to her:

After separation, the ladies, a Fiji-Indian and a Bangladeshi, came to support me, and then I also got support like food parcels and everything and that was the first time I met Khadija. And then I started to work at another trust. I am the only one who is still there. I am running the foodbank there and get food from the South African community and I was picked up from them every Friday. And they are still messy with where to pack the parcels and I do it. Sometimes I got people to help but, yeah. I do it with my children. And I also started to study, it was 2 or 3 years ago, in Te Wānanga. It's in social studies but I dropped out, because me, I have to do work and children and this and that, and I said no. You know, taking care of my six children, and their father abused them, physically, like smack them. For me, it's like you learn every day. And now I support other women and being there for them who go through the same things with me. (Hafsa, Cape Malay-South African)

Hafsa's account illustrates how the *barakah* of support can elevate women to achieve independence and self-efficacy. Hafsa experienced conflict with her husband regarding child-rearing and managing the household that contributed to his violence and prompted the divorce. This decision appeared to be a difficult undertaking, given her previous role as a housewife with six children. Following her divorce, Hafsa assumed sole responsibility for managing all aspects of her life, including taking care of the children and working towards financial stability. The women from the group assisted her and subsequently she has paid this support forward by helping others through her foodbank work. The ability, support, and capability to manage her life and help others at the same time can also be articulated as having *barakah* in life.

One indicator of people having received *barakah* in life is when they emphasise their willingness to share and do not experience giving as a loss. This reflects a key teaching in Islam that encourages people to share and help no matter how hard their situation is, as it will be reciprocated in their good feelings about helping. For Khalisa, *barakah* from her good works manifested in the actions of a kind-hearted landlord who offered her a dwelling at a significantly reduced price. Khalisa has since shared the space for *Jumma* (Friday) prayers for several years:

From 2016, we started doing Jumma upstairs here [at her home]. After then, we moved downstairs. We gave the room downstairs to the jamaat (?) [for] the tabligh (?) and then there was here for a long time and the space got smaller. And yeah, until right now [2021]. So, we got the kids too, we open and organise everything and then our sheikh from Morocco he came and led for Jumma salah. (Khalisa, Fiji-Indian)

Khalisa's account reflects her gratitude for finally having a place to call home. The property is quite large and so she also decided to share this *barakah* by sharing the space with the community for Friday prayer. This was a generous and practical decision because she lives in an area where there are not many Muslims and there are minimal facilities to organise regular activities, not only for the adults, but also for the children. This kind act of sharing also reflects how *barakah*-related acts of generosity and care are not isolated practices, but frequently manifest or occur within ongoing relationships and sharing practices.

To recap, this section documents how participants pursued *barakah* through their community engagement practices. Central to the recounted activities is *da'wah*, the act of inviting others into shared benefits, which emerges as a key means by which *barakah* is cultivated within society. Rather than being viewed solely as divine favour, *barakah* was understood by participants as a reciprocal and relational process that encompasses acts of kindness, inclusion, and service to others. This understanding highlights the interplay between vertical relationships with Allah and horizontal relationships with fellow human beings, including those from different faiths and cultural backgrounds. Through expressions of generosity, volunteerism, and support for other migrants, participants demonstrate *shukr* (gratitude), embody *ikhlas* (sincerity), and contribute to fostering a sense of belonging and integration within Aotearoa NZ society. Their narratives reflect a deep commitment to building cohesive, compassionate communities, promoting social justice, and living out Islam as *rahmatan lil-'alamin* (a mercy to all creation), illustrating how *barakah* is both generated and amplified through ethical, prosocial action.

Case Discussion

Central to the accounts of Group 1 participants is an orientation towards integration into Aotearoa NZ society through active engagement in various prosocial and community support activities. This group of Muslim women consciously cultivates a sense of community and belonging by fostering mutual support and reciprocity which frequently transcends ethnic and faith-based boundaries (Balchin, 2003; Wang, 2017). Their experiences challenge individualistic models of migrant integration, such as those often presented in psychological acculturation frameworks (Berry, 2015 Du et al., 2015), instead emphasising a collectivist process of community integration. This process highlights the importance of reciprocal assistance among refugees and migrants, underscoring a broader communal ethic.

While Group 1 members were committed to making substantive contributions to civic life in Aotearoa NZ, they simultaneously underscored the significance of retaining their

Islamic faith and ethnically rooted identities. This dual identification is reflected in their adoption of hyphenated identities, such as Muslim-Kiwis, drawn from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Cassim et al., 2019; Selcuk & Fine, 2008). My analysis reveals that the group has effectively cultivated a *madrassa*-like space as an enclave of mutual care within which members share experiences, resources, and learn the practical skills necessary for navigating life in Aotearoa NZ. From this supportive environment, members extend their efforts outward, collaborating across faiths, ethnicities, and genders to lead and support community initiatives. These include programmes assisting Muslim refugees and migrants, single mothers, survivors of domestic violence, and youth grappling with identity formation. Their partnerships span Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika, Afrikaans, and Latin American Catholic communities, highlighting a broad commitment to migrant integration.

As a women's collective, participants reported working alongside Muslim men, who occupy distinct but complementary roles within the group as community support partners. Central to their efforts are Islamic teachings and values related to migration, positive interpersonal relations, and the cultivation of harmonious community life. Drawing on the concept of *hijrah*, I interpret the group's activities not merely as the product of physical relocation but as an ethical and spiritual framework guiding adaptation, respect for host society norms, and constructive social contribution. Through their projects and networks, participants articulate key Islamic principles as guiding frameworks to support newcomers in establishing new lives. In doing so, they enact their faith in contextually relevant ways. Upholding strong *imaan* (faith), adapting respectfully, and promoting social harmony encapsulate the values embodied by the example of *hijrah* provided by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH).

Furthermore, Group 1 members have actively sought out opportunities to deepen their understanding of Islamic values and reproduce these teachings within the Aotearoa NZ context through community engagement. The group functions as a dynamic site for collective learning and positive action, where members collaboratively apply Islamic principles in practical ways that model prosocial behaviour. Their outreach to both Muslim and non-Muslim communities is an expression of *da'wah*, the Islamic call to invite others into ethical living and understanding. Within this ethnically diverse "*madrassa*-like" setting, members also learn about other cultures and cultivate partnerships which foster recognition of shared values across hyphenated identities. This engagement facilitates the identification of commonalities between Indigenous Māori and Pākehā values and Islamic teachings, thereby establishing foundations for mutual respect and cooperation.

By working collectively to support Muslim migrant women and broader communities, members report feeling a closer connection to *deen* (faith), Allah, and society as hyphenated Aotearoa NZers (Cassim, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2020; Fine & Sirin, 2007). This spiritual proximity is enacted through *amal* or the practical application of Islamic knowledge for societal benefit, which embodies the ideal of *alīm* (piety). For Group 1, piety is reflected not only in prayer but also in tangible contributions toward societal integration and community well-being. Through these efforts, they share *barakah*, or blessings, which underpin their lived experiences in Aotearoa.

While emphasising the group's strengths and positive attributes, it is also important to acknowledge the inevitable tensions and disagreements that arise within such a diverse and dynamic collective. Challenges often stem from cross-cultural misunderstandings, intergenerational differences, and language barriers, given that English is not the first language for many members. The group leader plays a vital role in mediating these tensions, by encouraging open communication and reminding members of their shared purpose as sisters within Islam (Girdauskiene & Eyvazzade, 2015; Jiang et al., 2017). Ethnic diversity presents both challenges and opportunities; members invest time in cultural exchange and learning, which fosters mutual understanding and tolerance. More established members tend to exhibit empathy and support toward those who are new to these experiences. This also reflects how mentorship is a key component of the group's social fabric, with older women providing guidance to younger members while fostering agency and leadership development (Sharma et al., 2024; Stephens & McClain, 2020). These mentoring relationships emphasise humility and support rather than dominance, helping younger women to apply Islamic values practically in their lives. Collaborative efforts with non-Muslim individuals and groups further reflect the group's commitment to fostering mutual respect and cooperation grounded in the Islamic principle of equality (Agrawal & Barratt, 2014; Carment & Sadjed, 2017). Members are keenly aware that the final sermon by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) affirmed the inherent equality of all ethnic groups, and the Qur'anic recognition of human diversity as a means to cultivate respect and tolerance (Qur'an, 17:70) is deeply embraced by Group 1.

In sum, this case study illustrates Group 1's collective commitment to promoting integration, inclusion, and social harmony without compromising their identities as Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Their efforts enact fundamental humanistic values embedded within their faith and extend beyond the group to broader multiethnic and interfaith engagements. Members emphasise a responsibility to reciprocate the acceptance they have

received from Aotearoa NZ society by actively supporting the integration of others. They consciously avoid dwelling on negative or discriminatory experiences and instead focus on positive contributions to social cohesion. Their proactive role in community healing following the Ōtautahi Christchurch mosque attacks and participation in the subsequent report by the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Attack on Christchurch Mosques (2020) exemplifies their commitment to collective well-being and resilience. Group 1's leader played a significant role in the government response efforts, mobilising group support to aid in recovery and healing after this traumatic event.

Chapter 4: The Azura Trust Analysis

This chapter presents the case analysis for Group 2, the Azura Trust, a nonprofit collective led by Muslim migrant and refugee women in Aotearoa NZ. Established in 2001, the Azura Trust provides a culturally and spiritually grounded space where women of diverse ethnic backgrounds, primarily from African, South Asian, and Middle Eastern communities can gather, express themselves freely, and support one another through the challenges of resettlement (Dobson, 2012; Khattab et al., 2019). While the trust's core mission is to serve the needs of its members, it also maintains an outward-facing orientation, partnering with both Muslim and non-Muslim organisations and government agencies to deliver a range of community services (Liebert et al., 2020; Raissi & Kappmeier, 2025). The trust's work is carried out by a combination of paid employees and volunteers, and it includes programmes that promote social integration, economic independence, and collective empowerment. A distinctive feature of the Azura Trust is its emphasis on mentoring women to establish small businesses as part of a broader resettlement and economic participation strategy (Samier & ElKaleh, 2021).

My fieldwork with the Azura Trust involved participating in community activities while they were at their headquarters (referred to as the centre, the playgroup, and the business centre), at home, and also at the park when they were relaxing after work. I conducted in-depth interviews with seven members from various ethnic backgrounds. Guided by the same analytical framework applied in the case of the Annisa Trust in the previous chapter, this case is framed in accord with four key Islamic concepts, *hijrah*, *madrassa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*, to explore how faith has shaped the participants' migration narratives, community engagement, and resettlement journeys in Aotearoa NZ (Khan-Janif & Mohammed, 2021). Each of these concepts provides a lens through which to understand how participants navigate the complexities of integration while preserving the values and practices of their Islamic identities.

My analysis begins with the background of the Azura Trust, a community-based organisation formed to support Muslim migrant women, many of whom are refugees, asylum seekers, single parents, or survivors of family violence. From this foundation, the analysis moves to the lived experiences of the seven women who participated in this case. Their storied journeys of joining and contributing to the Azura Trust reveal deeper migration narratives, which I interpret through the Islamic lens of *hijrah*, as a spiritual and physical migration in pursuit of a peaceful and meaningful life. The group, then emerges as a *madrassa*-like enclave of education and care, where women share and co-construct knowledge, develop

practical skills, and create a safe space that fosters integration and personal growth. This interpretation builds on an expanded understanding of the *madrassa*, not just as a formal Islamic school, but as a nurturing space for holistic learning and support, rooted in Qur'anic teachings about dignity and equality (Qur'an, 17:70). Through their work, the women embody *da'wah*, the Islamic practice of conveying divine values such as wisdom, compassion, and respect through their interactions, service, and mutual support in everyday life. Rather than traditional preaching, *da'wah* here takes form in community engagement and service, demonstrating the flexibility in the everyday enactment of Islamic ethics. Finally, their contributions are infused with a sense of *barakah*, or divine blessing, expressed through their selfless efforts to ease the integration of others. For these women, *barakah* is not only something received in their ability to resettle and flourish in Aotearoa NZ, but also something to be shared, extended, and multiplied through acts of care, gratitude, and reciprocal giving within their communities.

Background to Azura Trust

Established in 2001, the Azura Trust is a nonprofit organisation that provides support to women from a range of ethnic backgrounds. The trust emerged from an ethnic women's association, which was initially formed in response to the growing needs identified within the local migrant and refugee communities. A significant proportion of the women engaged with the trust are former refugees who encounter multiple challenges in navigating life in Aotearoa NZ. These include limited English proficiency, limited employment experience, and the complex responsibilities associated with caregiving in large families. In response to these settlement challenges, the Trust offers a variety of community-based services aimed at enhancing participants' confidence and practical skills. These include English language classes, health education initiatives, and early childhood playgroups that also support bilingual development. The organisation operates primarily through volunteer contributions, with a small number of paid roles allocated to specific service areas, such as a sewing instructor and a playgroup coordinator.

Correspondingly, aiding successful resettlement and participation in the Aotearoa NZ workforce and society has become the core concern of the Azura Trust. As most of the Muslim women who participate in the Trust came to this country as forced migrants (as refugees or asylum seekers) from non-English-speaking countries, language is a key barrier to socioeconomic integration. The Trust assists more recent arrivals to learn the English language and adapt to a new way of life that is different from that in their countries of origin. These women also face financial and skill challenges in adjusting to the workplace

requirements of this host country. In response, the trust has developed a range of programmes to help women navigate what is for them a new socioeconomic landscape.

For the participants, the trust functions as an enclave of care that is inclusive of women from different cultural and societal backgrounds who have found commonalities as minorities despite the diversities they bring to the trust. Within this enclave of care, women are supported to feel safe to share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. They are enabled to express and share their cultural identities, embrace opportunities to learn how to navigate socioeconomic support systems in this country, and empower each other as a collective of women seeking employment skills and business opportunities. Some of the programmes offered by the trust (e.g., English classes) are supported by government agency partners and funding. Other classes (e.g., sewing classes) are independently managed by the trust with support from related local businesses.

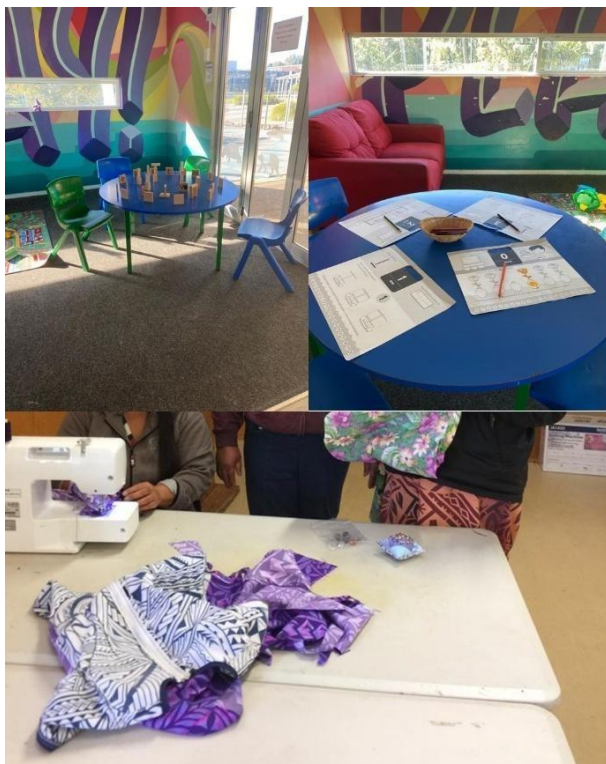
Azura Trust activities extend to parenting and playgroup services that free up time for women to engage in trust programmes and employment opportunities, community garden activities to supplement their incomes, and distributing groceries and visiting local people in need to enhance their social connections and English skills. All these programmes are designed to facilitate the women's learning of new skills and adaptation to everyday life in their adopted home country. As is documented in this chapter, these programmes can also assist women to become more financially independent and able to integrate more fully within NZ society.

To be more specific, the biggest service provided by this trust is the sewing classes, which encompass beginners and more advanced sewers. The classes offer opportunities for women to upgrade their sewing skills, develop their creativity by producing various items, engage socially, practice their new language skills, and build connections among people of different cultures and faiths. The classes also encourage women to undertake work experience with business enterprises that can lead to paid employment. Several participants now produce clothing and handicrafts under their own labels and sell these through brick-and-mortar and online stores. The success of these classes is reflected in increased funding from the Government agencies, community organisations, and local businesses. These classes have also been extended to include business mentoring relating to planning, tax, and legal obligations.

Another significant service is the family support service programme, which helps refugee and migrant mothers focus on increasing familial resilience by connecting them with other families as a means of facilitating their transitions into NZ society. Key features of the

programme are the parenting seminars and a SKIP programme (Strategies with Kids: Information for Parents). This parenting programme focuses on parents with toddlers to help them address any problematic behavioural issues and to create an enjoyable and harmonious family life. The SKIP programme offers support for parents of migrant and refugee backgrounds by providing information on integrated NZ approaches to parenting, whilst continuing to balance these with parenting values from the families' countries of origin. Young people also receive services from the SKIP programme. For children under 6 years of age, there is a playgroup that is parent-led and meets on a regular basis. Unlike the Annisa Trust, which centralises its programmes within a single dedicated building, the Azura Trust adopts a more dispersed spatial strategy of hiring multiple venues to facilitate its initiatives. These venues operate as activity spaces that support diverse forms of women's participation, which include sewing classes and parenting sessions, as well as informal social interactions such as sharing coffee while children attend the playgroup. This adaptive use of space reflects a flexible approach to community engagement and illustrates how spatial practices can shape opportunities for belonging and participation. Two such activity spaces are presented in Figure 11 below.

Figure 11
The Azura Trust's Adaptable Spaces



Beside those two adaptable spaces, the Azura Trust also has another new space where they have started to interact with locals through an outdoor community gardening programme that offers another diversity-embracing space for the organic cultivation of community and vegetables. People from diverse backgrounds come together in this space to share gardening techniques and to grow food that is shared locally. In particular, participating migrant women acquire knowledge and skills for gardening in the local climate, which is often very different to the tropical climates in their countries of origin. In many respects, the garden offers opportunities for local people to learn about other cultures whilst acquiring gardening skills (Agustina & Beilin, 2011; Harris et al., 2014; Hinton & Schnurr, 2021). This experience, particularly for migrant women, motivates them to enhance their adaptability and potentially engage in valuable employment. The most recent programme initiated by the trust is focused on health promotion. This programme was launched in response to the COVID-19 pandemic with the aim of assisting participants to develop healthy lifestyles.

Participants' Narratives of Working with the Azura Trust

The seven women who participated in this research were recruited through snowball sampling via the Azura Trust. Four participants worked full-time in paid employment for the organisation, one worked part-time, one contributed as a volunteer, and one is neither a paid worker nor a volunteer. The latter participant is a former asylum seeker who actively participates in the programmes and is friends with other group members. Below, I draw on aspects of the stories of how these women came to participate in the Azura Trust.

Stories from the four paid participants (Feli, Sumayya, Keysha, and Sarah) focused on how the Azura Trust leader recognised their expertise and willingness to serve the community and asked them to take on specific roles within the organisation. Representing a typical account from this group of participants, Feli's work began after she had completed the sewing class as a student:

When my daughter was 4 years old, I started joining the sewing group in the Muslim community. She [the leader of the trust] asked me because I have nothing after I dropped my daughter to the Kindy at that time. So, every morning after I dropped my daughter and then I learnt to sew. And then after I finished the course, my friend offered me a part-time job as a sewing tutor and now is more than 10 years [laughs]. She helps me a lot. Then she connected me to another aunty, and we worked together. So, we teach the ladies like how to sew as beginners, to finish things. And then after that, one lady came, she was a designer, and my friend wanted to make her own brand. So yeah, we teach. And then we also do many things not only for the sewing group, but

like playgroup and many things, and I go helping around. Sometimes if they need help, they call me and I will go help, or sometimes there were like events and we go together, we go together for the events, to the market, cook or other programmes. (Feli, Thai)

This quote exemplifies how Feli's acquisition of sewing skills through the Azura Trust provided not only practical training but also a pathway to long-term community engagement and employment. Through this involvement, Feli not only refined her creative skills but also played a key role in supporting the development of a locally inspired fashion brand. Her journey illustrates how craft-based learning within culturally safe environments can empower migrant women through personal growth that is fostered via engagements in meaningful community contributions (Hewett, 2021). Feli's story has also inspired others to explore their creative interests, fostering a cooperative and encouraging atmosphere within the sewing programme. Under her guidance, the class has evolved into a vibrant hub for sharing skills and cultivating local talent. Moreover, her participation in the trust has enabled her to build strong social networks, facilitating deeper integration into the local community (Singh et al., 2022). For many migrant women like Feli, professional relationships formed through such community organisations often develop into personal connections that provide essential emotional and financial support. These supportive networks not only help women to navigate the complexities of migration and settlement but also contribute to a stronger sense of belonging with enhanced self-confidence and opportunities for both personal and professional advancement (Harima, 2022; Hashemi & Amiry, 2024).

Other participants followed similar paths, often recounting coming into contact with the trust through friends or acquaintances. For example, Sumayya (a Bangladeshi woman) recounted how her involvement within the trust started with her getting to know her Muslim neighbour. This neighbour was involved in the trust and introduced Sumayya to the family support programme. Sumayya then met the trust leader who recognised her office skills and offered her an administration position in the Azura Trust:

One day I visited my neighbour, a Somali, my neighbour [down the back]. She said that her community had a family support programme and then I join with that. And then I met the leader [the Azura Trust manager] there. She said, "If you are interested, you can work with me, I need someone to help me, in the administration side." And then I came and signed a contract, then I started. (Sumayya, Bangladeshi)

Sumayya's involvement with the Azura Trust began through a personal connection with her Somali neighbour, highlighting the pivotal role of informal community networks in shaping the resettlement experiences of Muslim women (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020). Her journey

reflects a recurring theme across participant narratives, in which relationships and social connections often serve as the gateway to meaningful engagement, access to support services, and personal development (Jozaghi et al., 2016). Through her current roles at the Azura Trust, Sumayya not only contributes to the organisation's mission but also embodies the dynamic ways in which Muslim migrant women forge new pathways and give back to their adopted society.

Likewise, Keysha (a Tanzanian woman) also came to know the trust leader, who subsequently offered her a job with the Azura Trust:

So, I and her [the Azura Trust's leader], we met a lot in meetings especially when the Christchurch thing happened [the mosque massacres] and we were getting closer, sitting in the same table, we had good conversations, we knew each other, and she explained who she is to me and telling me what she was doing. Then I was going to her because I wanted to put my products not inside the house, take them out, selling them. Because she is selling African things, I met her and told her that we could collaborate. Then she told me, "You are qualified because you have this and that [certificates as a computer engineer], we have a computer programme, maybe you can teach." But I say no [I was pregnant at the time]. And then I saw she had a sewing class and I was going to join to gain more techniques and it was free. But then corona came, and I was sick, pregnant, and didn't do anything. So, I decided to go to her, if you are for looking someone to do the website, advertisement, doing social media, please let me know. And then she came and told me, "We are looking for someone to do that, will you help?" (Keysha, Tanzanian)

Keysha's pathway into the Azura Trust reflects a recurring pattern among participants in which recruitment is facilitated through informal networking and sustained interpersonal engagement with the trust's leader. These interactions fostered a sense of familiarity and trust, deepened by their ethnic and religious backgrounds. Keysha's willingness to collaborate was met with openness and encouragement. This exemplar highlights how shared cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds can accelerate trust-building and facilitate inclusion, particularly when combined with relevant skills or aspirations (Rogers et al., 2021; Saleem & Milovanovic, 2023). Cultural and linguistic familiarity can reduce misunderstandings and foster smoother communications, making it easier for migrant women to navigate opportunities within community organisations. Consequently, the Azura Trust, like many grassroots initiatives, tends to be composed of individuals who share common identities and values, creating an environment of mutual understanding and solidarity into which the inclusion of additional

diversities can be cultivated.

Another professional reason for joining the Azura Trust was voiced by Sarah, a Samoan convert to Islam who talked about how she came to manage the parenting programme in an adaptive manner to fit in with family group activities that are familiar to many Muslim migrants:

So, I went to some different facilitators, and then there was a facilitator in Mount Roskill that said, “We have eight families that will go picnic in the park, can we arrange a workshop in the picnic so the families can come here?” and I said, “Okay, we can do parenting here. So, it started from that day. (Sarah, Samoan)

Sarah’s involvement with the Azura Trust was shaped by her earlier experience managing the Muslim Parents’ Programme and collaborating with other Muslim facilitators across the community. Her engagement in grassroots initiatives, including delivering parenting workshops at informal gatherings such as picnics, demonstrates Sarah’s responsiveness to community needs and her ability to deliver support in culturally relevant and accessible ways. These experiences, alongside her relevant professional credentials and fluency in English, positioned her as a strong candidate for a role within the Azura Trust.

From my observation, Sarah’s communication skills and familiarity with migrant support programmes played a significant role in her successful integration into the organisation. The combination of Sarah’s formal qualifications and lived experience as a Muslim migrant woman not only allowed her to build rapport with participants, particularly members of Group 2, but also enriched the trust’s ethos of inclusivity, diversity, and cultural responsiveness (Thompson & Nasimi, 2022). Her trajectory illustrates how professional expertise, when rooted in shared identity and lived experience, can bridge service provision and community trust in meaningful ways.

Other interviewees initially came to engage with the trust as volunteers, several of whom then became part-time employees. For example, Fatima (a Somali) volunteered first as a playgroup teacher, but now has a part-time paid position with the organisation:

...I have my last one [son] and I didn’t go anywhere at that time and then I feel lonely. So, when my last one was 6 months, I said I wanna go out, maybe work or volunteer or study. And then a lady knocked on my door, she said, “You have 10 years working with playgroups, can you come with us?” I said, “Oh my God, yes!” So, I went there, working here. They [the trust] pay me some and I volunteer some. And then I came here with my 6 months baby, and my son grows up here. And now I am 6 years here in this community. (Fatima, Somali)

For Fatima, the decision to become a playgroup teacher was motivated less by financial gain and more by a desire for connection, belonging, and meaningful interaction with other Muslim women. Her previous experience in playgroup settings made her an ideal candidate when a community member approached her, and she eagerly accepted the invitation to join the Azura Trust. Through this role, Fatima found not only a place to contribute her skills but also a supportive environment to socialise, share experiences, and rebuild her confidence. The trust provided a space of inclusion and emotional support that addresses the loneliness and disconnection that can often accompany migration, especially for women with young children (Lim et al., 2022; Olofsson et al., 2024). Fatima expressed contentment in receiving only partial payment for her work, emphasising that the opportunities to interact with other parents and be part of a community were more valuable to her than financial compensation. Her story illustrates how organisations like the Azura Trust create vital social spaces where migrant women can reconnect with themselves and others, finding purpose beyond economic participation.

Likewise, the following extract from Alifa (a Somali) reinforces how several members of Group 2, whom I interviewed, are neighbours who conduct much of their socialising, and exercise mutual support, while they work and volunteer at the trust. Alifa is a Somali woman who lived in Malaysia for 10 years on a humanitarian visa before being accepted into Aotearoa NZ. Alifa struggled with English during my interview with her, but she was able to speak Malay, which is similar to my first language (Bahasa Indonesia) so we spoke in Malay as well:

So, Fatima is my neighbour, very good people. Now I am a volunteer here for 2 days in a week to clean the clothes machines [sewing machines] and the office. The leader asked me, "Are you happy?" I said, "Yes." And she said, "Now you help Fatima [in the playgroup] to clean there." I think now is one year-ish, and every time the leader has lunch or we eat together she will ask me to cook. I understand what she wants. Now I also help her in her shop.

Alifa became involved with the Azura Trust through her neighbour Fatima, who introduced her to the Trust's leader. She began volunteering 2 days a week, initially helping to clean the sewing machines and office spaces and later assisting in the playgroup and community shop. Although her work is unpaid, Alifa takes pride in her contributions and feels a strong sense of belonging within the trust. Her involvement allows her to serve the community while gaining valuable opportunities to practice her English and engage socially in a supportive environment (Schenk et al., 2022). Alifa's story highlights the significance of recognition and dignity in

voluntary work, especially for Muslim migrant women who may face barriers to formal employment (Spoonley & Bedford, 2012). Rather than viewing her role purely in economic terms, Alifa sees her service as an expression of personal commitment to the greater good. For her, such service constitutes an act of giving rooted in faith, community values, and a desire to be included and useful to others. Her narrative underscores how organisations like the Azura Trust offer spaces where women can contribute meaningfully, even without formal compensation, and be respectfully acknowledged for their efforts and experience social inclusion.

The six women introduced above are members of the Azura Trust who contribute in various ways to the collective efforts to run the organisation. The seventh participant was Vitkaa (a Russian), whose initial relationship with the trust was slightly different. Vitkaa was a participant in several programmes that assisted her to become more well-versed with life in Aotearoa NZ, and how to communicate with key agencies and secure housing. Vitka also came to the trust through networking with one of the Group 2 members. She associates the support she received in her migration journey with members of the Trust rather than the local Russian community:

I've got support from my Muslim community, not Russian. We have Russian Muslim, but it's just a few people. So, not really connected with them. So, first year was the most difficult, it was like frustrated, stressed, depression. It was language problems and then housing. Then, I met the Azura in my first year, also met sister Keysha. She came to us and gave some furniture that we need. Jazakumullah khair [thank you and may God bless you]. Then I join online gathering during the lockdown with sisters from South Auckland and it is about supporting each other. And then join classes in the Azura Trust for the parenting programme. (Vitkaa, Russian)

As a former asylum seeker from Russia, Vitkaa faced significant challenges adapting to life in Aotearoa NZ. The early stages of her resettlement were marked by stress, frustration, and depression, compounded by language barriers and housing difficulties (Jozaghi et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2019). However, her story reflects how vital community support can be in easing the resettlement journey. Lacking a strong connection with the small Russian Muslim community, Vitkaa instead found solidarity and practical assistance through the Azura Trust and the personal support of Keysha, who visited her home and helped provide essential items during a particularly difficult period.

Vitkaa's experience underscores the transformative power of inclusive community networks, particularly those grounded in shared faith but open to ethnic diversity (Brigham et

al., 2018; Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Holt, 2013; Longhurst et al., 2009; Pearce et al., 2017). Her engagement with online gatherings during lockdown, parenting classes, and ongoing participation in Trust programmes illustrates further how faith-based community initiatives can offer emotional, spiritual, and practical support to those navigating displacement. Vitkaa's story also highlights how Muslim women from diverse backgrounds can come together in solidarity, demonstrating that a shared religious identity can bridge cultural differences and foster mutual care in the resettlement process (Zoellner et al., 2018).

In sum, the accounts provided by these participants illuminate the trajectories through which Muslim migrant and former refugee women became engaged with the Azura Trust, reflecting complex intersections of personal circumstances, agency, relational networks, and culturally grounded mutual recognition and inclusion. For the majority of participants, their introduction to Group 2 was mediated through informal social connections, often via neighbours, friends, or community events. This highlights the central role of interpersonal relationships in facilitating inclusive care and community participation. Within these accounts, the trust's leader emerged as a key figure who actively identifies and nurtures women's capabilities and inclusion, thereby validating their contributions and enabling pathways into meaningful roles within the organisation. The porous boundaries between volunteering, informal participation, and paid employment reflect a broader ethic of mutual care and collective responsibility that is underpinned at the trust by shared faith-based values and culturally inclusive relational practices. Participants' accounts suggest that the psychosocial benefits of community engagement, such as enhanced self-efficacy, social integration, and recognition, are embedded not only in formal service provision but also in everyday practices of inclusion and relational affirmation. As becomes evident across the ensuing sections in this chapter, the women's stories underscored the role of participation in the trust in the dynamic interplay between migrant and refugee identity reconstruction, the cultivation of a sense of belonging, and community-based empowerment.

Hijrah: Finding a Peaceful Life

At this point, I shift the analytic focus back in time to consider participants' broader migration experiences within which their involvements with the Azura Trust are located. As with the first case, I interpret participants' experiences of moving to Aotearoa NZ through the lens of *hijrah*. To recap, originally used in the Islamic world to refer to the migration from Mecca to Medina by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in 622 CE, today *hijrah* also refers to migration that is motivated by religious, ethical, and/or socioeconomic motivations (Reda,

2017). As noted in early pages, in the context of this thesis, *hijrah* involves more than just relocation from one place to another; it is associated with seeking better and more spiritually fulfilling lives somewhere new and involves processes of resettlement in which participation in the Trust emerges as a functional consequence.

Aspects of my conversations with the women of the Azura Trust to deepen my understanding of participant migration journeys and our understanding of the contemporary meanings of *hijrah* are presented below. In this section, we delve deeper into the motivations (spiritual and economic) behind their migration to Aotearoa NZ, the challenges of resettlement, and the abilities of the participants to enact and grow their identities as Muslim women whilst integrating into this secular society. Relatedly, the seven participants featured in this case analysis recounted coming to Aotearoa NZ for three primary reasons. These were: seeking refuge from persecution (forced migration), following a partner (husband) who was seeking better economic opportunities, and seeking a better life. Common to participant accounts was the motivation to deepen their faith and learn more about Islam.

According to these participants' accounts, life after migration has never been easy as they have dealt with various everyday life challenges. Those participants who experienced forced migration to avoid persecution, with little-to-no preparation, reported more difficult migration journeys. However, their narratives also foregrounded key lessons that accompanied their migration and resettlement in this place. For example, Alifa reflected on her complex migration journey to flee civil war in Somalia, from which she suffers posttraumatic stress-related symptoms. After escaping the war followed by a period of some stability in Malaysia that was facilitated by the kind generosity of local people, Alifa then subsequently moved to NZ as a refugee:

You know the first time before I moved to NZ, I had problems, I was sick, one day okay and day after sick, always like that. You know shoot here and there in Somalia [the trauma of war] and my brother got tickets and then we go to Malaysia in 2004. In Malaysia people coming, from Indonesia, Singapore, and they gave me hijab, and we make friends. They helped me to work at a canteen. People gave me everything to wear. They were kind. But they couldn't give my passport. Then my friend said, "Go to NZ." And then my friend helped me, and I apply here as a refugee, with my sister, nephew, and niece, no husband. Then moved to NZ. English is a problem. I did not understand what people say, and also no people give me this [points to the hijab she is wearing]. But I met people, Muslim and non-Muslim, they always say hi and greet me. They don't judge my face [a dark-skinned African woman wearing hijab].

Living for a period of time in Malaysia gave Alifa the experience of kindness from other Muslim people that she later associates with deepening her faith in Islam (Sirin & Fine, 2007). Coming to know Muslim women during her journey also gave her experience with similarities and differences within the faith as it intersects with different ethnicities and locations. A common feature across participants' accounts of migration was that they gained positive experiences and developed relationships with people from different backgrounds (Berry, 1997). These experiences were instrumental in Alifa becoming confident and open to engaging with diverse local people subsequently in Aotearoa NZ.

English was cited a barrier to Alifa's integration into local networks, and the English language classes provided by the Trust were a crucial part of her successful resettlement in this country (Essa et al., 2024). Alifa has also come to appreciate being able to engage with both Muslim and non-Muslim NZers and sees this as one of the blessings that have come to her with the opportunity to live in this country. Alifa's migration experience reflects the concept of *hijrah* in the sense that she has come to not only deepen her appreciation of the Islamic faith but also appreciate the benefits of living as a Muslim woman integrated into life in this non-Muslim majority country (Karpat, 1996; Mrahorović, 2017). The participants associated *hijrah* with Muslim people learning to be humble and to accept that Islam does not own the world.

Another experience foregrounded by Fatima, a Somali woman, speaks to how *hijrah* can also be conceptualised as moving not only to survive, but also to grow; movement can lead to growth because refugees are exposed to new cultures, languages, climates, and food. The following account also positions the trust's language classes as facilitating this migration and resettlement process by motivating women to leave the house and enabling participants to engage with the broader society:

My husband came here first. I and my child came here in 2007 and... Oh, of course language, weather challenges, and also the food differences. Oh, you know the first time I came here the food smell was like something else. I don't know because it was different, and also the weather, it was cold in September at that time for me... [laugh]. You know the smell and taste were different for me. Maybe after a year, I was okay. Oh my God, the language, but I had chances to go to English classes, and because I don't want to be locked inside the house. Otherwise, I will be stressed [laugh]. I always go there [English classes] until I got another child. Alhamdulillah 4 of my 5 kids were born here.

Fatima contemplated her experience as a former refugee, migrating to Aotearoa NZ, to start over in a safer place. Like several other participants, she reported having to adjust to the language, weather, and food in her first year. Evident in reference to such practical matters is an implicit understanding of the extent of change in her life and cultural disruptions, in that migrants have to adjust to different aspects of everyday life somewhere new (Hodgetts et al., 2020; Li, Hodgetts & Ho, 2010). Such transition processes are also associated with emotions of unease, confusion, and potentially longing for home. Fatima's account reflects how these women engaged with the trust as a support system to help with their adjustments outside of the domestic home.

According to these accounts, a key function of the trust is providing opportunities for refugees and migrants to overcome social isolation and loneliness and to facilitate processes of resettlement. Pivotal for Fatima was her enrolment in the English language courses to acquire sufficient proficiency to communicate effectively and socialise with other people, which enabled her to comprehend the cultural nuances of her new home country, and integrate more smoothly into life in this country. Like other participants, Fatima also spoke about how the trust's courses enabled her to adjust her parenting style to the norms of the receiving society: *I am working here in this trust like this activity, teaching playgroup. Actually, to help children and women because when you come to the second or third country, you always face difficulties, you know, language, the weather. And I don't have family here, only me and my husband and my children. I knew what I feel, the same sisters, like me, you know, that's why I decided okay don't wait for help, you have to help the others. Also, I have supports from my husband and also my mom, because it's different, different style of taking care of children, compare in Somalia. So, my husband is okay with my activities because we agree to be responsible, and I never lose my responsibility. When I finish my work, I straight away go home and start cooking, washing, and then he picks up the kids, and we have food and then the kids go to madrasah, and also, I have to go to teach Qur'an. So, it's not like send kids to madrasah and let them Qur'an with the teacher, but I have to teach them first.*

Fatima's adjustment involved learning to integrate into a new parenting style and practices to those of her culture of origin and to grow as a parent. Such accounts reflect how these women became open to adjusting their everyday practices to those evident in the culture of Aotearoa NZ with support from the Trust. This is not an account of cultural dislocation or radical change. It is one of supported transition and integration as Fatima and the other participants adjusted

to their new everyday surroundings and in doing so adopt new everyday practices and routines. These participants also reported maintaining a sense of continuity between their cultures of origin and new host nation (Cassim, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2019).

A complimentary refugee story was voiced by Vitkaa, a Russian woman, who participated in some of the Azura Trust's resettlement programmes. This account again showcases a different facet of the work of the Trust and what it means to participating Muslim women, particularly as new arrivals in terms of their gaining a sense of escape, respite, safety and inclusion from this enclave of care:

When I came here, I just felt...Alhamdulillah, I escaped Russia. Being Muslim here in NZ is Alhamdulillah. You can't compare. But my mum and dad are still there. My husband's sister is also there. And I don't think they want to move here because they are doing good, and they are not practising the religion. So, first year was the most difficult. It was like frustrated, stressed, depression. So, it was language and then housing especially for units because in Russia we don't have like units. So, for us it was new, and yeah, I don't think I like it [living in a basement]. And it was very stressful because in [the] day we turned the lights on. But food or finding halal food is okay for us here is easy to find halal shop. (Vitkaa, Russian)

Vitkaa migrated to find a more favourable living environment, guided by the principles of the *Sunnah*⁸ and the Qur'an (Saeed, 2008). Her journey reflects a form of *hijrah*, a purposeful migration undertaken to preserve and practice one's faith more freely. In the initial years of resettlement, she faced considerable emotional and practical challenges, particularly with language barriers and unfamiliar housing conditions, which left her feeling overwhelmed and isolated. Nevertheless, her story follows the Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) migration, in that her motivation was to find a safer space to practice Islam without fear of persecution (Hassan & Majid, 2019). Her account underscores the recurring experiences of Muslims who undertake *hijrah* to protect their religious identity. Despite the initial hardships of resettlement in NZ, Vitkaa expressed a sense of spiritual liberation and security, aligning with the deeper significance of *hijrah* as both a physical and spiritual journey.

The preceding narratives position the women from refugee backgrounds as forced migrants, while the following three self-characterisations present the women's experiences from the perspective of voluntary migrants. As presented, there is significant overlap in the

⁸ The teachings, actions, and approvals of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) constitute the *Sunnah*, which is regarded as the second most authoritative source of guidance in Islam after the Qur'an (Kamali, 2008).

challenges experienced by refugees and voluntary migrants, as there is in the role of the trust in supporting each participant's growth within Islam and integration into the host society. Both refugees and voluntary migrants emphasised considerable gratitude and their positive experiences of resettlement in Aotearoa NZ, as well as daily dilemmas and the need for support to address issues of adjusting to a different culture.

Having an opportunity to visit relatives in Aotearoa NZ led Sumayya (a Bangladeshi) to decide to stay longer, initially to study and then to find a better job which would provide for a better life in this country. Her account reveals a common pathway to residency from a study to a work visa and then residency that is supported by having family members who are already residents in Aotearoa NZ:

I had a visitor visa to visit my older brother, but I changed my mind. I wanted to live here. I love this country. Then he told me, only one option you live here, you become a student. And then I did my diploma in business. Almost 2 years I finished Level 5 and Level 6 of the diploma in business. After that, after I changed my visitor visa into student visa, and then into a work visa. It was a very hard job, and I lived in my brother's house. Me and my husband, we study, study, and part-time jobs. It was very hard. After 2 years, I got my work visa, then I can work for 40 hours (per week), everyday work. So, I was a retail manager, but I started with 20 hours when I was a student. I did whatever, customer service or sometimes cleaning, whatever. Then, work, work, work until 2016, I applied for residence, and I got that at 2017 my residency.

Despite having familial support with housing and the pathway to residency, Sumayya was still presented with challenges in resettling in this country. She experienced financial stress and had to find ways to increase her income while studying. High living costs compelled her not only to intensify her studies but also to exert more effort in her work. These financial pressures are reflected in her account of working toward a better life here. This relentless focus on work highlights the sacrifices many participants were making in their pursuit of stability and success in a foreign environment. It underscores the difficulties faced by many immigrants who must balance multiple responsibilities while adapting to a new life. In this example, *hijrah* manifests in Sumayya's life story as something that she worked consciously towards achieving as the central goal of a lengthy migration journey that did not end upon her arrival in this country (Hassan & Madjid, 2019). Sumayya's description of the conscious effort involved in her *hijrah* reflects her determination to create a better future, illustrating the resilience often required of those who migrate.

Such stories also emphasise how the journey is not just a time-limited physical relocation. Rather, it involves a profound personal transformation that can be open ended, and which reflects contemporary thinking regarding the relationality and situatedness of self, as discussed in Chapter 1. Human self-characterisations are open-ended and shift with changes and developments in a person's everyday life (cf. Gergen, 2009; King et al., 2017). For example, Sarah (a Samoan) shared her story of voluntary migration as not just encompassing a physical migration to a more conducive life context, but also as a journey of inner transformation, spiritual seeking, and reorientation toward faith:

I came here 7 years ago, and I started to look for a job, but it was hard. And people said that if we don't have any qualification, it will be hard. So, I started getting involved in English courses in the university here. After I finished that, in 2017, and I got a job. [Before] That time there was something happened in America and they said Muslims are terrorist. And then after that I started to learn more about Islam, what Islam means to be Muslim. And then, I got the book from a lady and the book is about the translation of the Qur'an. And every surah has their translation, and they just so powerful. And that made me cry. I only had strong feelings that I have to convert to be a Muslim. (Sarah, Samoan)

Sarah's narrative reflects a deeply personal form of *Hijrah*, understood as both a physical relocation and psychological journey toward faith and spiritual awakening in oneself. After arriving in Aotearoa NZ, Sarah initially encountered structural challenges common in migration experiences, including barriers to employment due to a lack of recognised qualifications. Viewed through the lens of *hijrah*, however, her journey took on a more profound dimension in the wake of global events. The aftermath of 9/11, when Muslims were increasingly associated with terrorism in public discourse, became a pivotal moment for her. Rather than accepting hegemonic Western stereotypes of Muslims (Hopner et al., 2023), she was compelled to seek a deeper, more authentic understanding of Islam and herself. This period of inquiry, catalysed by suspicion and misrepresentation, ultimately led to a spiritual turning point and her decision to embrace the Islamic faith. Her conversion can be understood as a *hijrah* in the truest sense: a migration of the heart, shaped by both external circumstances and an internal yearning for truth of self (Ramadan, 2003; Wulandari et al., 2022). Sarah's experience of migration and the challenges she faced provided a context in which spiritual seeking could unfold, illustrating how *hijrah* encompasses both geographic movement and a transformative pursuit of faith and meaning in life.

The final participant in the group, Keysha (a Tanzanian) shared her story of moving to

Aotearoa NZ, again raising issues on migration journeys characterised as *hijrah*. In this instance, Keysha's husband had migrated to this country first and she joined him subsequently. She experienced 3 years of social isolation that, as mentioned previously, she overcame with the help of the trust:

First time coming to NZ, I entered my husband house. It was just different from my imagination, my views, my dreams. I cut it off. I was pregnant and the only person that I knew is only my husband. I never knew anyone. He was working fulltime with extra time because of the mortgage issues and the living expenses. So, I spent 3 years inside the house without going anywhere outside, without meeting anyone, without knowing anything. After I reached into my second born, I realised like really need to go out. But while I was inside for my 3 years, I was taking classes online, joined LinkedIn, which can get more free courses around the world. So, it was good, gave beneficial to me because when I was inside. I was exploring too. Even though I didn't know anyone, taking care of my babies and learning the NZ way of life...And you know, because Allah wanted me to settle here. And NZ become my home and my children's home. Alhamdulillah. (Keysha, Tanzanian)

Keysha's migration journey to Aotearoa NZ was initially marked by profound isolation and emotional dislocation. Upon arrival, she experienced a sense of confinement and disconnection, as she was pregnant and knew no one apart from her husband, and had little access to social contacts or community engagements. However, during this period of isolation, she was not devoid of agency. During these years, Keysha proactively sought knowledge and connection through online platforms, enrolling in free courses and learning about NZ society. Her account illustrates how the experience of being in an unfamiliar and unexpected environment, despite feelings of loneliness, became a catalyst for self-initiated learning. This learning process can be understood as a form of preparation for future integration into the host society, guided by her own psychological readiness. Interpreted through an Islamic lens, Keysha's experience reflects the personal growth of spiritual dimension of *hijrah*, as not merely the act of relocating to a better place, but a deeper process of transformation (A. Hassan & Majid, 2019; Ifraq, 2024). This involves acquiring the values of the new society and gradually aligning one's life with the new societal norms as a meaningful form of participation and contribution.

Briefly, *hijrah* within this group can be articulated as both physical relocation and spiritual transformation. While the participants' motivations for migrating to Aotearoa NZ varied and included escaping persecution and following a spouse to seeking educational and

economic opportunities, their narratives consistently reflect an inward journey toward faith, identity renewal, and integration. Participants including Alifa and Fatima who arrived as refugees, and others like Sumayya, Sarah, and Keysha, who migrated voluntarily, all encountered situational and psychological challenges, including language barriers, financial pressures, issues of cultural adaptation, and feelings of isolation and loneliness. However, their experiences also included a deepening of Islamic faith, often catalysed by displacement and supported by the Azura Trust. Through language classes, opportunities for social engagement, and faith-based supports, the trust functioned as a key site of spiritual and social resettlement for the women. To recap, these women's stories exemplify *hijrah* not merely as a geographic transition but as an ongoing, relational process of self-reconstruction, resilience, and religious empowerment within a secular context.

As evidenced in the sections below, the integrative activities of these women were not restricted to the group or the broader Muslim community. Like the participants in Group 1, the participants in Group 2 also engaged with non-Muslim migrant women and various local communities (including Māori and Pākehā). Building such connections was central to their adoption of various prosocial practices and a community-oriented way of life as Muslim women engaged with others in Aotearoa NZ. These migration narratives can be understood through the Islamic concept of *hijrah*, not only as a physical migration but also as an ongoing process of seeking a more peaceful, meaningful, and spiritually grounded life. For these women, *hijrah* encompasses the ethical and emotional transitions involved in becoming better Muslims who understand, accept, and can work with and through cultural and faith-based differences and similarities with others. As documented below, participants' contributions to Group 2 reflect collective efforts to create safe spaces together; to share their experiences, feelings, and challenges; and to learn together as the participants navigated various stages of resettlement in Aotearoa NZ and grew their interconnected selves (Gergen, 2009) to fit the new societal context. Through the collectively constructed *madrassa*-like enclave of care that the group constitutes, these women could upskill themselves and others and share in and contribute meaningfully to society.

Group 2 as a *Madrassa*-Like Enclave of Care

As proposed in the previous chapter, *madrassa* is often conceptualised narrowly to describe an Islamic institution of learning. *Madrassa* can encompass this and much more. Referring to one of the primary sources for adherents of Islam, the Hadith, *madrassa* can also be contextualised, with the mother conceptualised as the first *madrassa*, the first educational institution for children (Al-Bukhari, n.d., Hadith 5971; Muslim, n.d., Hadith 2548). In this

section, I delve deeper into the role of women, specifically mothers, within the community and how the group functions as a *madrasa*-like enclave of education and care. My focus is on how the women cooperate to create an enclave that aids women in learning new skills, by creating a safe and supportive space that empowers participants to grow as people and integrate into the host society. As such, the group serves practical purposes in aiding refugee and migrant resettlement. I also consider how participants have adapted the *madrasa*-like structure to the local context by applying core Islamic values to build productive and rewarding lives within the local community. This includes following Islamic *sunnah* about the importance of respecting all human beings regardless of faith, race, ethnic origin, gender, or social status (Qur'an, 17:70). This *sunnah* is foundational to the participants' understandings of their own and other people's migrant and refugee integration experiences and associated processes.

Alongside their accounts of how the trust serves as a learning centre for Muslim women in the community, participants also emphasised the role of mothers as the first *madrasa* or educators for their children. These participants spoke of their efforts to teach the Qur'an to their children and their strong desires to learn the Qur'an for themselves first, and how to teach the Qur'an. This is discussed below by Fatima (a Somali) and then Vitkaa (a Russian). As Fatima recounted:

When I finish my work, I straight away go home and start cooking, washing, and then my husband picked up the kids, and we have food and then the kids go to madrasa. So, it's not like send kids to madrasa and let them Qur'an with the teacher, but I have to teach them first. So, after lunch, we give them 10 to 15 minutes to relax, after that about one and a half hours, I and my husband, we teach them Qur'an until 5 before they go to madrasa. Alhamdulillah, for me, women have to learn everything, not just about earning money, but life. Because in Islam, al umm madrasatul ula, the mother is the first madrasa for their kids, back to your kids.

Fatima articulated the idea of needing to preserve the original notion of a *madrasa* as a religious institution that children attend to deepen their knowledge of the Qur'an. Fatima upheld the tradition of sending her children to a religious school or *madrasa*, as is customary in Muslim-majority countries. It is also crucial to emphasise that she managed her *madrasa* with male involvement. Fatima and her husband collaborated to provide nourishment for the children, following Islamic principles. Central here is how Muslim parents play a crucial role in instilling moral values based on the Qur'an and supporting their children's education, even when living in a new country. Scholars Franceschelli and O'Brien (2014) have discussed the intergenerational transmission of Islamic values from parents to children. *Madrasas* frequently

serve as a conduit for the transmission of these values. In addition, Fatima underlined how the essential function of women as mothers requires them to constantly gain new knowledge stay up-to-date, and bridge generational gaps in children's education.

My use of the term “*madrassa*-like” refers to a strategy for the cultivation of an enclave for re-familiarising Muslim women with the values and teachings of Islam. Teaching in this enclave is about more than prayers and reciting the Qur'an, and also includes the application of Muslim values regarding service to others in everyday life and the adaptation by participants to engage with diversity in Aotearoa NZ. Support provided by various other community groups, government agencies, and diverse cultural and religious groups empowers these women to establish their own secure enclave within which they can enhance their skills, adapt to life and make valuable contributions to somewhere new.

The process of relocating to a new culture has always posed challenges for migrants, including the participants in this research. Living in their home countries with cultural values that have been imprinted and encoded in their habitus since childhood, and they are already familiar and comfortable with, enables them to engage in the mundanity of life in their countries of origin. However, migrants are compelled to adjust their lifestyles to align with the customs and practices of new and diverse cultural settings. So, a sense of loss of culture, traditional customs, and possibly religious beliefs motivates individuals to reconstruct, reimagine, and adjust to unfamiliar cultures. Through this *madrassa*-like enclave at the trust, this diverse group of Muslim women have demonstrated their abilities to assert themselves, become more resilient, and perpetuate their cultural identities who have not only adapted to a new culture but have also been instrumental in the adaptation by other Muslim women to life in Aotearoa NZ.

Together, a “collective adaptability” is expressed through the creation of the group as an enclave of care (Carmeli et al., 2016) which offers many classes and programmes to facilitate the adaptation of participating women to new ways of life in this country. A particularly important and popular entry programme for newcomers is the English class which, combined with the additional class options of sewing and parenting, offers various opportunities for the women to express themselves and build their confidence to interact with others in society. The account by Fatima (a Somali) supports a multifaceted understanding of *madrassa* in terms of her participation in these classes enabling her to engage with others outside the home: this, while juggling her role as the primary educator for her children who she also takes “here and there” for various educative activities (including the trust's play group discussed later in this section; see Figure 13). Fatima stated:

I had a chance to go to English classes... and you know my dream a little bit come true, but I still need to learn something. But it wasn't easy because when your husband's working and you have children, you have to look after your kids. But I said, okay, this blessing belongs to me. I used to come because I don't want to lock inside the house. Otherwise, I will be stressed or depression [laughs]. So, I always go there [to the English class] until I got another child. Alhamdulillah 4 of my kids were born here, but I sacrifice my dream like this [thumbs down] because I have to look after them, bring them here and there, teach them our language, teach them our religion as well.

This quote speaks to issues around building a life somewhere new and acculturating, in part, through learning the local language and supporting the education of one's children; while ensuring they also retain their own language and Muslim teachings. Fatima described the opportunity to attend a free language class as a *barakah* brought to her by the group.

Participation in these classes was about more than language competency for these women. It also provided an opportunity for these Muslim women with children to be able to get out of the house and to gain skills needed to participate in the community in the new society.

Attending English classes affords the chance to go out to relieve the stress of being lonely in a new country with a different culture. Here, Fatima has increased opportunities to familiarise herself with navigating the host society, develop her understanding of the ways of life in Aotearoa NZ, and expand her social network. In this context, the trust class offers a safe space for migrant women to engage in society and be independent, to take time for self-development, and to learn to express themselves and their thoughts with other local women. In reference to the opportunities to learn in this class, Fatima positioned the English class as akin to a *madrassa* which provides opportunities to reflect upon one's life and values. This personal reflective work extended to Fatima, realising the need to converse with her children in both English and their language of origin so that they can integrate into society without losing themselves as enculturated beings.

A key regular event that was also repeatedly raised by participants was the sewing class, which is a core programme within the Azura Trust. This is a particularly supportive space that is inclusive of both Muslim and non-Muslim women who come together to both share and learn about each other's cultures. Feli (the Thai sewing programme coordinator) reflected on how this encounter space enables migrant and refugee women to reflect on their resettlement experiences and to cultivate a sense of collective adaptability and connection in their new home country. This occurred through women working as a team to communicate across

languages:

I manage classes here in Mount Roskill and another one in Mangere. This is a very interesting class because women, not only Muslim will bring their friends like their neighbour who might be doing nothing at home during the day or just waiting for the kids from school. And I told them that we now need someone advanced in sewing, we will learn from the beginning but if you can sew it before then you can upskill it. Like me, I couldn't sew the first time I joined the class. So, many of the women in this area [Mount Roskill] came, learn to sew, talk, you know, different ages and languages. Sometimes I don't understand what they say, but I am trying to capture what they want by, you know, like when you see someone in their face, although you didn't understand the language, but you can use your empathy. Something like that. And, we also have an interpreter, but there is no interpreter always in my class, I usually ask my students who understand the language to help. (Feli, Thai)

Feli's account illustrates how community-based sewing classes can function as important psychosocial spaces that support the inclusive emotional and social adjustment of migrant women. While centred on a practical skill, these classes fulfil deeper psychological needs by offering opportunities for social interaction, emotional safety, engagement, and belonging. Such spaces can play a crucial role in alleviating acculturative stress and promoting psychological well-being (Childress et al., 2024). By welcoming women with no prior sewing experience, these spaces foster self-efficacy and personal agency, particularly among those whose confidence might be undermined by language barriers, disrupted social roles, or limited access to formal employment (Crawford et al., 2022). Feli emphasised how communication within the linguistically diverse group is often sustained through empathy, facial expressions, and other nonverbal cues, highlighting the importance of emotional intelligence and cooperation in cross-cultural interactions. In this context, the trust's sewing class functions as a *madrassa*-like enclave: a protected, familiar space that nurtures learning, empowerment, and skill development. It offers a supportive environment where women are encouraged to grow personally and professionally, many ultimately becoming specialists in the skill.

Another key initiative within the Azura Trust that functions as a supportive space for women is the integrated playgroup and parenting class. These interconnected programmes are designed to create shared spaces where mothers and children can engage in parallel learning experiences. While the children participate in structured play and early childhood education activities, their mothers attend parenting classes that provide knowledge, skills, and culturally relevant support for raising children in the new sociocultural environment. These sessions are

facilitated by teachers who are themselves members of the Azura Trust. This peer-led educational approach not only enhances cultural relevance and trust within the group but also empowers the facilitators, many of whom are former participants, to take on leadership roles and contribute meaningfully to the development of the next generation. The colocation of both programmes in the same physical area (as illustrated in Figures 12 and 13) reflects the Trust's commitment to accessibility and holistic familial support. This arrangement allows mothers to remain present and involved in their children's early development while also investing in their own growth as parents. Figures 12 and 13 further demonstrate the dynamics within this shared space, where mothers and children are simultaneously engaged in educational activities, reinforcing the trust's emphasis on community-based, inclusive learning.

Figure 12
Parenting Class



Figure 13
Playgroup Class



In terms of participant involvement and leadership in this space, Sarah (a Samoan) organises the parenting class, whilst Fatima (a Somali) and Sumayya (a Bangladeshi) help with the playgroup. Again, within the interactive space provided, a diverse group of women is able to share aspects of their cultures and resettlement experiences, learn new skills together, and support each other without having to worry about their little ones, who are engaged in play in the same space. As Sarah stated:

Here, we also have a playgroup where mothers can bring their children, so mothers attend the workshop [parenting class], and the children just play together in the playgroup. So, you know, Muslims are always helping each other like a family. So, I am working here as a project coordinator. This job is fun but also challenging because this is new for me. I learn new things. In running the parenting workshop, I need to evaluate how many people come and how they understand it. And now, in my 4 months working here in this community [Azura Trust], I see that these Muslim women are supporting women from different ethnic groups and not only Muslims. And we are also helping each other like there was a Christian community. So, this is not just about the community that supports Muslims, but it is more about communities working together to help each other in NZ. We are working as a partnership. (Sarah, Samoan)

Sarah's account centralises the importance of family and cooperative parenting within Islam and the essential work with other communities to support each other in assisting migrant resettlement processes. This account reflects the emphasis within the trust on creating spaces that provide for the cultivation of a sense of connection and being as a family. The combination of the parenting classes and the playgroup is experienced as a useful way to create a space where participating women can relax and feel safe in order to be open to engaging and learning, while keeping an eye on their children. Moreover, for Sarah herself, assisting the women brings her a better understanding of the importance of "working together" in partnership with other communities. The diversity among migrant women and their relationships with members of the host community can be embraced and developed in this space as participants work together to support each other, regardless of their communities of origin. This is also a very traditional Muslim way of operating a women's group, whereby core teachings emphasise the importance of tolerance towards difference (Ramadan, 2003; Wadud, 1999). Embracing diversity is particularly important and evident in Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland, where communities are constructed around the diversities of ethnicity, religious faith, place, and economics.

Returning to the *madrasa* concept, this space for care provided Sarah with a deeper understanding of Islam's teachings on community collaboration and the significance of forming community partnerships to enhance societal benefits. As highlighted in the Qur'an (16:90, 30:21), this *madrasa*-like functioning also fosters a family relationship among all its members, fostering love, kindness, dignity, mercy, compassion, sacrifice for others, and tolerance. Briefly, we can also characterise the parenting class and playgroup here as *madrasa*-like, as they educate women in the spirit of Islamic education and provide an environment that fosters open-mindedness and tolerance that can spill over into broader public interactions. The women who work in the playgroup are also creating a space to empower the migrant women to learn with less worry about their little ones.

Participants' accounts, such as Sarah's (the parenting teacher), reflect how the different programmes offered by the trust are also integrated. Accounts such as Fatima's (the playgroup teacher) show how the participants in this research emphasise how the classes contribute to offering and supporting various opportunities for other migrant women. In the example below, Fatima talked about her willingness to extend her work hours to take care of the women's children while they engaged in the English class, networking opportunities, or simply enjoy some respite from their parenting duties:

Because same as me, they don't have family here and they need to learn English, so, I said, you want to learn English, bring your children here. I will look after them, and you go to your class. You know, sometimes the women don't have somebody to encourage them. They feel lonely, and the husband may be tired. So, sometimes I said, if you want to do your job maybe like 2 to 3 hours and don't have somebody to look after your child, just bring them here. Or, if you want just to go out, only you, to get fresh air, I will help you, bring your children here. You know, because if we don't help who else will help them? Even, like there was a lady, she wanted to go to her class, but it was in the evening, started at 6 pm, and she had no one to look after her kids. I said, don't worry bring to my home. And she has 4 kids. So, I have like 9 kids [laughs]. So, one day I was cooking and then I gave them activities and then felt like I can't manage this [laughs]. But, you know, when you help others, you don't remember your problems [laughs]. The thing is those people in this country been through a lot, depressed, anxiety, so if you don't help it can be worse. (Fatima, Somali)

This extract highlights how the playgroup functions not only as a shared learning space for children and mothers but also as a flexible support system that can extend informally as an organic mechanism for familial care. In this socially inclusive space, with intentionally

porous boundaries, the Azura Trust enables children to engage in play, learning, and social interaction within a nurturing environment. Simultaneously, mothers are not only offered educational opportunities such as English language and parenting classes, they are also encouraged to build new relationships and create social connections in their host community. This informal extension of care, where participants themselves offer child-minding and emotional support to mothers, reflects a communal ethic rooted in Islamic values. Central to this organic function is the principle of *ukhuwwah* (sisterhood in faith), which emphasises the collective responsibility to support one another, especially mothers, children, and those who are vulnerable (Ramadan, 2003).

The participant's willingness to provide evening care for other women's children so they can attend classes, or to offer respite to overwhelmed mothers, illustrates the enactment of Islamic teachings that prioritise helping others, particularly women, children, and the elderly (Kamali, 2008) who are seen as deserving of special attention: children and the elderly due to their dependency, and women because they are often regarded in Islam as foundational to the moral and educational development of society and symbolically referred to as the heart of the *madrassa* (Wadud, 1999). In this context, care work becomes both a spiritual and practical commitment to building community resilience and upholding shared values of compassion, service, and mutual uplift.

Besides the playgroup and the parenting course, the participants talked about additional activities where they learned a lot about how to help themselves and other women overcome problems associated with resettlement, particularly those faced by refugees. Within this space, they learn how to organise support projects, courses, and activities, including how to facilitate inclusive and caring spaces of support for women, not only Muslim women, through interfaith and interethnic collaborations, as Sarah (a Samoan) described:

They [other communities] asked for help during the COVID- 19 pandemic, they asked for collaboration some programmes that can facilitate people. And then we have another people from Ministry of Education, they asked us, "What programmes are you running? We have the number of children they have staying home because of COVID, do you have any programme to support these children?" And then we work on it [assisting online school for children] and also other support programmes like the food bank, during COVID- 19. Yes, we do that. The food coming from everywhere, other communities, and food banks, and then we packed them together [with other community agencies] and distributed them to the families. (Sarah, Samoan)

This interview extract illustrates how the Azura Trust actively collaborated with both government agencies and other community organisations during the COVID-19 pandemic to respond to the urgent needs of families, particularly children. The group's ability to quickly mobilise and adapt underscores its role as a trusted community hub and agile grassroots service provider in times of crisis. In addition to supporting children's education through online learning initiatives, the group also coordinated food relief efforts in partnership with other community groups. Sarah also reflected that food donations arrived from a variety of sources, which means that the cooperative response not only provided essential material support but also embodied a model of mutual aid, intercultural solidarity, and collective responsibility (Alshabani et al., 2023; de Souza, 2009).

Importantly, such actions reflect the group's deeper ethos of community as *madrasa*, a learning space where women, as members, grow through shared experiences, practical engagement, and service. Within this informal yet purposeful space, women are not only recipients of support but also active learners, organisers, and caregivers who develop leadership, strengthen communal ties, and embody Islamic values of compassion, education, and social responsibility (Farid, 1997; Kamali, 2008). The group's ability to engage across diverse networks while remaining grounded in this community-based ethic further demonstrates its strength as a site of both learning and transformative action during public health emergencies.

Again, as a *madrasa*-like enclave, the trust provides a setting for opportunities to learn, work, and reflect on this prosocial action and why they do it. Sumayya (a Bangladeshi) described how her willingness to help others and contribute to the group with a range of tasks is central to her and the other participants' involvement in this space. Sumayya reported gaining experience in addressing a variety of issues, such as health promotion and coordinating the distribution of food parcels, primarily to refugee households:

I look after the project and make a report every 10 days, something like that. I also did the open market, a health promotion programme, all together... Then and now, I am also still doing that community job, you know, packing food, collecting names to send the food for families, still doing it. I still manage these things. I know many people. So, it started with the emergency for COVID-19, mostly for Muslims, but then it is for everybody. Yeah, our group is mostly to help the refugees. (Sumayya, Bangladeshi)

Such accounts highlight the importance to participants of their collaborations as they draw on their skills to address various challenges. The group's collective efforts enhance community support and foster a sense of shared responsibility and contribution to society. Sumayya works

as part of a diverse team on a diverse range of tasks, allowing her to engage with and get to know various local people. Such engagements allow team members to build meaningful relationships and understand the unique needs of the community. Such interactions contribute to more effective and responsive approaches to support and assistance. Juggling multiple responsibilities is central to participants' integration into Aotearoa NZ society (Peace & Spoonley, 2019), and sense of participation. This ability to manage various tasks simultaneously fosters personal growth and enhances one's adaptability within the community. Ultimately, it promotes a deeper connection to the social fabric of this increasingly diverse society.

The support provide by such trust initiatives extends not only to fellow Muslims but also to people of other faiths and persuasions (Berry, 1997; Ward & Masgoret, 2008). The participants' accounts reflect a generosity of spirit in the women sharing their knowledge with others within this *madrassa*-like enclave, while also being able to upskill themselves in managing community work and building their professional and social networks. Keysha (a Tanzanian) focused account on groups members such as herself who had skills to contribute but needed an outlet for their contributions which the trust provided through collective acts of community service and support. In such accounts we also see how skilled participants are enabled to also grow as people within the new society by sharing their skills with the Trust:

Before joining Azura Trust, I had three parts of business: I did my website, I called it "Queen," I created African stuff for home decoration and clothing, and all together under one space. For home decoration, I was making lamp shades, cushions, and a lot of things, and then for clothing, I have my own brand, and then website for the technicians where I help only woman who doesn't know how to set [up] their business. Because I know people have to pay a lot of money [to set up website] while they can pay only a small money here. Then because I was pregnant and I couldn't do anything, like sick, so I couldn't do it. So, I can say from hundreds I dropped up to zero. So, I decided to go to her [the Azura leader] told her, if you're looking for someone to do the website, advertisement, doing social media, please let me know. I was telling her, I am talented, I have skills, use me, employ me, instead of sitting in my house with my knowledge doing nothing just sitting, cleaning, washing, my knowledge and skills are washed away. You know, the more I use skills the more I will learn... So, I want to reboot. And then I came to the Azura office, we had an agreement that I will work from home and then she started calling me to come to the office to do this and that. And then she told me, "Oh you are good you have reputation you can do this and that, you

can be a leader here.” And then she gave me human resource position. And I do the work, she is happy, I ended up like human resource and marketing manager. (Keysha, Tanzanian)

For Keysha, engaging with the Azura Trust gave her opportunities to share her skills with fellow members, assist with the operation of the trust and to exercise leadership regarding the website and human resources. The trust and the women the group serve benefit from Keysha’s back - office expertise in business and website management, specifically in assisting women-owned enterprises. Keysha’s account serves as a reminder of how *madrastas* have evolved from being solely religious schools to provide both religious and secular education. What is co-constructed by such research participants is a practical educational environment within which women can actively apply their skills and, in doing so, also cultivate Islamic principles in their everyday lives in their new communities. They apply their knowledge in various ways that are beneficial to others, as the Qur’an mandates, while upskilling themselves and integrating further into the local community.

Participants also included women with less experience and limited English, who are also willing to be involved and contribute to the shared effort, often in volunteer capacities. Alifa (a Somali) is a genuinely humble woman who contributes to the community through tasks such as cleaning, helping with the play group and to cooking at community events. This participant expressed her appreciation for becoming a member of the Azura Trust and her experiences of joy in her selfless service to others as a form of service to Allah:

Now I am a volunteer here for 2 days in a week to clean the clothes machines [sewing machines] and the office, no study anymore [English course], inshaaAllah when I have a chance...Help Fatima [in the playgroup] to clean there. So, I help not only cleaning. I never say no for people who needs my help. So, I have big friends... You know, I am always looking everywhere for cooking, mashallah some people help me, Somalia. Like, when they will go hajj, they say come cooking. Asking me to help, call me to help them cook. And then baby shower, I go there to cook. Alhamdulillah, Allah give it to me. (Alifa, Somali)

For Alifa, the trust is akin to a second home, a place where she feels accepted and trusted as someone who contributes to the functioning of the shared space. Further, being trustworthy offers Alifa a greater sense of psychological safety, enabling her to expand her contributions beyond housekeeping. She has developed a wider network, allowing her to showcase her culinary skills in various settings and occasions, thereby further enhancing her expertise and integration into the community. This account also adds further layers to the analysis of

experiences of the functioning of the trust as a *madrasa* which serves not just as an educational and cultural hub, but also as a homemaking space where underprivileged people can feel included. As Groot and colleagues (2015) have proposed, homemaking extends beyond building or obtaining a physical home-space to emplacing and maintaining one's cultural identity, spiritual connection, and relationships in space and time. People create a sense of *home* through everyday practices of inclusion that are evident in participants' accounts of their time at the Trust.

To conclude this section, Azura Trust participants' accounts illustrate a powerful rearticulation of the *madrasa*, not as a formal religious school, but as a dynamic, community-based learning and care space rooted in Islamic values of care, inclusion, and support. In this context, the *madrasa* is reimagined as a plural, inclusive, and responsive environment where women engage in spiritual, emotional, and practical education that supports their resettlement and integration into Aotearoa NZ. Whether through English and sewing classes, parenting programmes, mutual aid during crises, or everyday acts of care and service, the Trust enables women to express faith through action, cultivate leadership skills, and foster belonging. Transcending traditional religious instruction to embody a holistic model of Islamic education, this *madrasa*-like space nurtures *barakah* and shared responsibility in the fabric of everyday life. It affirms that learning, care, and community-building are interwoven, gendered practices of faith and resilience, resituated in the lived realities of migrants in a multicultural society.

Moreover, this rearticulation of the *madrasa* as a relational and nurturing community space signals a significant shift from conventional, classroom-based instruction toward a more embodied and practice-oriented expression of *da'wah* or "inviting people into Islam" (Al-Faruqi, 1976). Rather than being confined to proselytisation or formal religious education, *da'wah* in this context is manifested through everyday acts of care, mutual support, and ethical engagement within the community (cf. Malik, 2018; Syarifudin et al., 2024). This educative space of care becomes a living site of *da'wah*, where Islamic values are not only taught but also enacted through interpersonal relationships and shared experiences. Faith, in this setting, is transmitted not solely through textual knowledge, but through relational practices that cultivate belonging, compassion, and collective growth (Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2012). A more detailed exploration of *da'wah* as a lived and evolving practice is provided in the following section.

Emplacing *Da'wah* Locally

Like other faith-based belief systems, Islam employs strategies to teach people about the values behind the faith, that inform the Qur'an. Within the Islamic teaching tradition, *da'wah* can be defined as a method to convey or deliver the message of the Qur'an to humanity (Al-Faruqi, 1976). There are three fundamental aspects of the *da'wah* to deliver Islam to human beings: cultivating wisdom, promoting intellectual abilities, and fostering effective communication. These principles reflect the flexibility in the practice of *da'wah*, as *da'wah* can be delivered in various ways, not only by teaching classes, preaching, giving lectures, engaging in dialogues, discussions, debates, writing books and articles, or distributing pamphlets, but also in practical ways within Muslim and non-Muslim community settings by introducing and cultivating values of care and respect and through helping other people, as emphasised in the activities of the trust.

My analysis below reflects how, for Muslims, by engaging in the group's programmes and activities that enact *da'wah*, they have a chance to embrace Islam and become closer to Allah. For non-Muslims, engaging with the group may create opportunities to encounter and understand the benevolent aspects of Islam. Such encounters between groups have been associated with diminishing prejudice and discrimination, and fostering collaboration between members of different groups (Hodgetts et al., 2020). These encounters can also lead to increased recognition of commonalities between the values of groups and increased respect for differences between human beings from different communities.

As documented in this chapter and similarly to Group 1, the Azura Trust classes function as mediums through which *da'wah* is articulated as a process of practicing prosocial Islamic values towards Muslims and non-Muslims. Within these classes, participating women of various faiths and ethnicities can become more familiar with each other, share their feelings, thoughts, and experiences; collaborate; and find common points and values of faith and, in doing so, take care of each other in the resettlement process. Below, I first consider *da'wah* within designated classes (e.g., sewing and English) and then within the open spaces for dialogue that are created through various trust activities that involve members of diverse groups of women collaborating in efforts to support vulnerable community members with various everyday challenges, including food insecurity and social isolation through the community garden.

Sewing classes equip women with the skills to operate industrial sewing machines, enabling them to pursue further training or employment opportunities. These classes were first offered in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill, where the trust office was established, and have now

expanded into a Māngere South Auckland site, where many refugees and migrants have also resettled. As evident in the quote below, many of the women attending the South Auckland classes are from Pasifika, Māori, and non-Muslim backgrounds. The diverse composition of these classes also makes them ideal encounter spaces and a physical and social place where people can meet and have dialogue (De Stefani & Mondada, 2018; see Figures 14 & 15), and women can form friendships that span diversity and foster mutual understandings of different cultures and faiths, as discussed by Feli (Thai):

We have one [sewing class] in Mangere but that one is more like for households like with small machines not like here [the trust] with the industrial machines. In Māngere most of the ladies are Pasifika and non-Muslim. Oh, they were very happy with us. Like, they came with “I want to fix the clothes.” So, it’s not just sewing. We come together, talk, and share, and then they bring clothes to fix, and then they asked me [to help]. And what I love is we mixed, different people and not only Muslim. People from everywhere and not only women, there are men as well. Uhm...the thing is I never said that I am the teacher. I am just a friend, you know. Like. for example, they are Māori they have their own teacher, I am just a friend. (Feli, Thai)

Figure 14

Participants in the Sewing Class in South Auckland



This extract foregrounds the relational and intercultural significance of a sewing class that functions as more than a site for technical skill development. While the class centres on practical tasks such as sewing and mending garments, its deeper meaning lies in the social interactions and sense of community it cultivates (Wang & Lamb, 2024). Within this participatory adult education space, migrant and Indigenous people engage in shared practices that nourish intergroup relationships (Cui et al., 2023; Olcese et al., 2024). To facilitate these

interactions, Feli consciously adopts a non-hierarchical and relational approach to teaching. She does not introduce herself as a teacher but rather as a friend and helper, seeking to create an informal and supportive atmosphere. This stance illustrates values of humility, reciprocity, and collective learning, which align with both Islamic ethics of service and wider community-based pedagogical traditions (Mohamed, 2014).

The sewing class thus becomes a site of everyday inclusion and relational homemaking, where learning unfolds through shared presence, conversation, and mutual respect. Feli's facilitative style reflects her commitment to the Islamic principle of humility, particularly in service to others. By positioning herself as a peer rather than an authority figure, she avoids imposing a hierarchical relationship within the group. Feli enacts a quiet form of *da'wah*, inviting others to engage with Islamic values such as kindness, humility, and care through her conduct, without proselytising.

Engaging in conversations and discovering the cultural significance of various fabrics is part of the process of learning to sew in this space. Many students bring fabrics from their own cultural backgrounds, symbolising their pride in their heritage. This is exemplified by the Māori woman proudly showing off her culturally patterned fabric and shirt symbolising Māori identity that she sewed in the class (Figure 15). In this context, fabrics and clothes can serve as a medium for expressions of one's sense of cultural identity that reach out beyond the confines of the sewing class. This multicultural community encounter space encourages everyone to be proud of who they are and assists individuals to cultivate meaningful connections. Furthermore, it serves as a "bridge" for Feli and other refugees and migrants to integrate proactively into Aotearoa NZ by helping local community members with their projects (Cassim et al., 2023).

Figure 15

Māori Woman Wearing an Ethnically Patterned Shirt



The sewing class has also provided an opportunity for non-Muslim class members to gain some familiarity with Islam, as well as enabling Muslim sisters from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds to explore their cultural differences and similarities. For non-Muslim women, this space is important for gaining a better understanding of the different manifestations of Islam and diversity of Muslims. The resulting cultivation of greater levels of empathy and comprehension in such spaces can assist society by revealing commonalities rather than disparities and promoting a more harmonious society (Peace & Spoonley, 2019; Stone et al., 2021). Correspondingly, such classes encompass aspects of *sunnah* (the Muslim lifestyle) or acts of uplifting and supporting humanity, by offering assistance to those in need, and making valuable contributions to society (Demirel & Sahib, 2015; Ishaque, 2025).

Another medium for *da'wah* offered by the trust is the gardening class in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill. The Azura Trust manages a community garden space and extends invitations to locals to share in this activity. One of the members took the picture in Figure 16 below showing the cultivation of various plants. This garden is experienced by participants as offering a locale for people to come together to learn how to grow food in the local climate. It encompasses opportunities for Muslim refugee and migrant women to be guided by a Māori man who emphasises the skills needed for these women to become proficient in what he refers to as the “NZ way of gardening” with seasonal planting and harvesting practices indigenous to this place. This gardening activity is both exciting and essential for the women, as it serves the needs of migrants, primarily from tropical countries, to learn how to produce food to subsidise their household budgets.

Figure 16
Gardening



As Feli proposes, by engaging in gardening here, participants gain valuable knowledge that aids in their successful resettlement and helps them adapt to the ways of growing food in Aotearoa and NZ:

And this one [Figure 16] we do the gardening with the community. So, we are planting. A Māori man taught us. You know, planting in NZ is different, because back then we lived in tropical country, and then later on we do not just plant, harvest, and use them but also donate it for the gold coins then we can buy the new plants. (Feli, Thai)

This gardening endeavour is significant and undertaken with the aim of not only growing food for oneself or one's family, but for contributing to society, as is reflected in the sustainability of the garden through the gold coin system. When the crops are ready for harvest, the surplus is gathered and sold, and the profits are used to purchase new plants to maintain the continuity and expand the gardening activities. As an enactment of *da'wah*, the garden allows neighbourhoods that may be unfamiliar with the Islamic values of care and cooperation that materialise in this place to become familiar with how the women of the trust value inclusion, mutual understanding, cooperation and sharing. As Feli added:

So, we do gardening together with other women. Not only our group [members] but the women who work with us from other communities, you know, not only Muslims. So, we have Muslims, non-Muslims, and again our Māori neighbours teach us, and it's fun because we talk, we laugh, and yeah I don't find difficult to talk with them. They are kind and generous, sharing [in teaching how to plant].

This shared community activity also normalises the presence of Muslims in the local community in an inclusive manner, demonstrating that Muslims and non-Muslims can have overlapping interests and, in many respects, are similar to other people in the geographical neighbourhood. Shared values and understandings can literally be cultivated in the garden. Again, the focus is on engaging in *da'wah* in practical ways, rather than through lectures.

Another activity that demonstrates inclusivity and fosters trust between communities and can also be seen as an engagement in *da'wah* is the Trust's "visiting neighbours" outreach programme. This activity encourages participating women to engage with certain families who need help. Below, Fatima recounts her efforts to care for and support people in need in her role as a community visitor:

So, I work with this community with a lot of roles. Sometimes I have to go to places where people are sick, to help them, bring food and medicine. So, these people, I got the information from our Azura Trust. It's immigrant and not only Muslim. Usually by email, and then the leader will ask like can you do something to help. And then I also

go shopping and then package, and sometimes we deliver it. And then, we also visit, talking to them and they were not just refugees, but can be everyone. Like, I used to take care of students. You know, sometimes people who are sick and can't go out and need help to provide foods. So, actually not just deliver the foods but also talk to them.
(Fatima, Somali)

As I previously elucidated, Fatima's position in the initial phase primarily involved being a playgroup teacher. However, her responsibilities with the trust have extended beyond merely instruction and engagement with the children and their mothers. In the extract above Fatima describes a substantial amount of work in unpredictable circumstances where she must be prepared and confident to carrying it out. She does not have to be an expert in every problem that the people she visits are facing. She just has to have a strong desire to assist others and be open to acquiring new knowledge and skills, often through helping people navigate local systems of support. In addition, Fatima also emphasised the significance of responding efficiently and promptly and adhering to instructions. This is exemplified by her mention of promptly addressing email requests. Through such storying of her work, Fatima exemplifies the practice of *da'wah* in daily life. While she might be not delivering formal lectures to a class on the principles and practices of Islam, she does convey her beliefs about the importance of caring for others that extends beyond the Muslim community. According to Islamic teachings, Islam must serve as *rahmatan lil alamin*, meaning a source of blessings for the entire universe.

Being inclusive and playing a part in the larger society as ways of applying *da'wah* were also articulated by Keysha. As previously introduced in the *madrasa* section, Keysha has her own businesses on an online platform. One of her businesses is creating garments and household items from African textiles that reflect her ethnic identity. Her professionalism in sewing enables her to produce masks and clothes for people in Aotearoa NZ. As is evident below, Keysha's actions extended beyond simple sewing and tailoring, to also playing a vital role in building trust between migrants and local people, including politicians such as Jacinda Ardern:

And I was making clothes for the MP, you know, Alhamdulillah. When Corona came, I was making masks for Jacinda. You know, when someone comes to you like, "Can you make something for me?", it means that someone trusts you because you make everything inside the house, nobody can see. (Keysha, Tanzanian)

Keysha's account illustrates how Islamic principles, particularly the concept of *amanah* (trustworthiness), are enacted through everyday practices of care and service. For Keysha, the

act of being asked to create something personal, “something inside the house, nobody can see”, signified a deep level of trust. Within an Islamic framework, her response to this request reflects a strong sense of moral responsibility and integrity. Through this seemingly ordinary act of sewing masks, Keysha contributes to public health efforts while simultaneously affirming the presence and values of Islam within Aotearoa NZ. Rather than asserting her faith overtly, she embodies it through action, demonstrating care, reliability, and community service. In this way, her work becomes a subtle form of *da'wah*, not in the sense of proselytising, but through the lived expression of Islamic ethics in the service of others. Her narrative offers insight into how Muslim women’s domestic and community-based labour during times of crisis can function as both a practical intervention and a quiet but powerful expression of faith and belonging.

In essence, as storied above, *da'wah*, or inviting people to gain a comprehensive understanding of Islam, is enacted in practical ways through the everyday inclusive and caring practices of the Azura Trust as outlined above. The focus in enacting *da'wah* is primarily on providing resources that enable people to see these women and the faith in Islam that they embody as a positive addition to this society. Their good works help cultivate a local sense of familiarity, acceptance, and hospitality towards migrants. The Azura Trust establishes homemaking spaces that enable these women to learn skills which enable them to integrate meaningfully and practically into the local community and contribute to the enrichment of everyday life here. In recounting their efforts to resettle and integrate into local everyday life and to care for others and be helpful, these participants demonstrated a strong commitment to diversity and inclusion as well as prioritising human compassion towards others as a central aspect of the Islamic faith. These women have adapted the value of *da'wah* from the prayer room into caring practice spaces that bring them into contact with local people in meaningful and materially helpful ways. Central here is the creation of warm and inclusive situations that resemble positive aspects of family and community life. In many respects, the prosocial practices of the Trust also extend to bringing *barakah* to others, as described below.

***Barakah* in Puketāpapa Mount Roskill**

This section focuses on *barakah*, or expressions of continuous blessings, and participants’ contributions to the distributions of these gifts to others by creating “easiness” of integration and mutual care between people in society. Altruistic selfless efforts to help others without expectation of personal reward are evident across the stories of Group 2 members. As was the case with Group 1 members, helping was understood by Group 2 members as engaging in acts of reciprocity and paying it forward to the community that ensured that the

blessings that came with the opportunity to live in this country are shared and grown. These women continued these practices of giving as expressions of gratitude, which they considered a moral obligation, for the “easiness” of engagement and inclusion in civic life, which they experienced as a form of *barakah*. They considered themselves to be chosen ones to receive *barakah* through migrating here and being able to integrate and contribute to life in Aotearoa NZ and they felt obligated to pass on this gift to others. They also recognised that *barakah* can involve the capacity to transcend challenging circumstances and viewed these challenges positively as offering opportunities to acquire and share blessings.

Conversations with participants revealed the central importance they placed in their personal migration and resettlement narratives on sharing one’s blessings with others. From this perspective, their resettlement is seen as having positive impacts on the lives of other human beings, whether or not they are Muslim. For example, Sumayya (Bangladeshi) and Keysha (Tanzanian) reported experiencing an ‘easiness’ in their integration and adjustment into everyday life in Aotearoa NZ during their initial resettlement period because of the blessings of inclusion that they were afforded by the people around them. As is evident in the extract below from Sumayya, these participants emphasised the importance of helping others to allow them to also experience such easiness in their own resettlement journeys. The support they practised with others was storied as a way of realising their own happiness by giving back to the community by supporting newcomers:

I am happy. I am pleased with my job because it is helping families in our community and if we don't help them, who will help them? I know my community, that is why I help. For me, since the first time I came here [to Aotearoa NZ], I have been finding it easy because I was with my brother's family, we cooked and ate and everything together; it was a very big support, Alhamdulillah, Allah made it easy. (Sumayya, Bangladeshi)

Sumayya articulated her engagement with the community through helping others and responding to the local community’s needs, as a way of expressing gratitude, and easing the burdens of people less fortunate than herself. Here, *barakah* can be seen as a form of providing “easiness” to others who need help. Creating ease is an important aspect of Islamic moral obligations for Muslims to be involved in supporting the less fortunate. The more involved Muslims become in such processes, the more *barakah* it is thought to accrue to the community.

Spreading *barakah* as expressions of gratitude or reciprocity to particular people and the larger community for the *barakah* from having opportunities to grow and achieve changes in life can be seen in the following account by Keysha. In the extract below, *barakah* emerges

from an adverse work experience that challenged this participant's inner peace:

So, when I was joining my first job [previous job, before joining the Azura Trust], my boss was always pulling and pushing me down for no reason. It was too much. It was kind of killing your inner peace. So, too much bullying in workspace, I couldn't work proper. And it's enough for me. If I have to work in NZ that will be another chance. So, from now on I won't work again, what I heard is enough. It was killing my reputation. So, my first job took me for only 9 months, horrible work which was I never like that. Then I knew sister Kanaya, she is an Indonesian. I knew her from my previous workplace, and she was the person who opened my eyes. I went to her house, we sat together... She is having the tours, she is having her business, the cleaning one and everything. So, she taught me. So, her website is the one that I make it. I made that and she taught me, "Do you want to have the business? I'll teach you how," and she was the one who paid for my business. And that's why I have the confidence. I was doing her website, she was teaching me with everything, and I was crying like a baby. And Alhamdulillah, I did her website, and she asked me, "how much I have to pay?" I said, "No." Because if someone shows you a way, you have to cherish them, you are not after something. You know, somebody from nowhere valued you, then why you have to start negotiating a price. I wasn't like that. (Keysha, Tanzania)

Keysha's narrative highlights the emotional and professional challenges she encountered while navigating the employment landscape in Aotearoa NZ. Despite her extensive qualifications, her first job proved to be a deeply distressing experience. However, this difficult period became a turning point that led to an unexpected and transformative friendship. Through the blessing of this relationship, Keysha was introduced to new pathways of learning, entrepreneurship, and empowerment. This moment of connection can be articulated as a form of *barakah*, a divine blessing, manifested through mutual trust, generosity, and relational support. From an Islamic perspective, the encounter also exemplifies *muamalah*, the ethical framework governing interpersonal relationships, where values such as sincerity, trustworthiness, and mutual care are foundational. Further, rather than framing success as a solitary achievement, Keysha located her personal growth within a relational journey grounded in gratitude and collective uplift. She perceived the opportunity she received not as a transactional exchange, but as a gift, one that compels her to give back. Her story not only illustrates the spiritual and emotional significance of being recognised and supported, but also her commitment to extending that sense of empowerment to others. In this way, she embodies *barakah* not as personal gain, but as a shared blessing, deeply rooted in

her faith and a broader ethic of communal responsibility.

Barakah was also articulated as the ability to think beyond particularly challenging situations in the resettlement process. For example, Fatima recounted how due to difficulties with resettlement she was about to give up on her ambitions. However, she later realised that this challenging journey would bring her not only personal blessings but also benefits for her children and family. Thereby she was able to transform a situation of adversity into a source of learning and growth:

Alhamdulillah, I was always going out with my daughter, just walking; I learned the road, you know. I went with the bus, with my 4-year-old daughter. People say, "Oh you did it great," but people don't know it was hard for me. You know, the blessing looked like did not come for me when I first came. I know, I have my husband, I know I have another relative of him, but for me I cannot do anything. I did not know the money. I did not know where to go, but Alhamdulillah I did not have difficulty financially, but I missed the possibilities...you know, looked like empty. (Fatima, Somali)

Fatima's account offers nuanced insights into the everyday challenges of resettlement and the ways in which *barakah* is experienced through persistence and self-empowerment. She reflects on the initial difficulties she encountered upon arriving in Aotearoa NZ, particularly navigating unfamiliar systems and public spaces with limited English proficiency. Despite these barriers, Fatima made a conscious decision to step outside her comfort zone. However, she revealed the deep emotional strain as this move was accompanied by feelings of isolation and disorientation. Yet, Fatima framed these efforts as an expression of faith, affirming that *barakah* is present even in times of hardship. Her story illustrates how *barakah* is not necessarily immediate or material, but can also unfold gradually through perseverance, learning, and adaptation. In this sense, *barakah* is realised through an ongoing commitment to remain hopeful, resilient, and spiritually grounded.

From an Islamic perspective, Fatima's narrative can also be articulated as spiritual adaptation, the process of maintaining one's faith while embracing uncertainty. Her belief that *barakah* exists even amid struggle reflects a resilience grounded in faith, where divine grace is not assumed to arrive instantaneously. Here, *barakah* is not experienced as a fixed endpoint but rather a relational and dynamic process. Fatima's experience underscores how *spiritual adaptation* can serve as a compass in navigating resettlement, transforming uncertainty into growth, and enabling migrants to reclaim a sense of agency in unfamiliar terrain.

Fatima's experience of finding a way to deal with the challenges of resettlement, is also similar to that experienced by her Somali friend Alifa. The two often shared their concerns

and helped each other navigate life in this country. In talking with me about similar concerns regarding the trials of resettlement and their efforts to realise *barakah*, Alifa also revealed her understanding of the dilemmas faced by refugees and migrants from different countries and her empathy for them. However, Alifa's experiences of these processes of overcoming adversity to realise *barakah* through resettling in Aotearoa NZ were storied as a longer process that began when she left her homeland and spent time in Malaysia prior to coming to this country. The extract below is a variation and extension on her story of this journey as related in an earlier section of this chapter:

In Malaysia people coming, from Indonesia, Singapore, and they gave me hijab, and we make friends. They helped me to work at canteen. People gave me everything to wear, they [were] kind. But then moved to NZ, English is a problem. I did not understand what people say, but then I met people, Muslim and non-Muslim. They always say hi and greet me. They don't judge my face [appearance as African and hijabi]. And I never say no for people who needs my help. So, I have big friends who help me go outside. (Alifa, Somali)

Alifa's account reflects how *barakah* can emerge through acts of kindness, resilience, and human connection, even amid the everyday challenges of migration. Despite facing limitations in English and lacking formal employment skills upon arrival in Aotearoa NZ, Alifa experienced support from both Muslim and non-Muslim communities. The gestures of generosity when people greeted her warmly despite visible markers of difference such as skin colour and religious dress, became moments of grace that affirmed her sense of belonging. Rather than focusing on potential discrimination, Alifa chose to centre the blessings of empathy and inclusion. Her commitment to never refusing to help others in need reflects an ethic of reciprocal care rooted in Islamic values, where *barakah* is not simply received but is also paid forward. In this sense, *barakah* becomes relational and embodied, manifested in everyday exchanges of compassion, mutual support, and the quiet affirmation of dignity in a new home country.

While many scholars have defined *barakah* as a blessing (Dorairajoo, 2024; Talmon-Heller, 2009), in this research I also explore *barakah* as an aid to participants' resettlement and as the help they gift to others. Such gifting can cultivate greater *barakah* within the community in the form of everyday reciprocal and caring relational practices. Participants' accounts also suggested that they found comfort in the belief that Allah provided guidance and support to them during their resettlement processes. They believed that people should share and pass on blessings to make the lives of other people easier. This belief is in keeping

with core Islamic teachings regarding the need to share and ease the suffering of others as a means of coming closer to Allah. Accordingly, participants reported prioritising the successful sharing of *barakah* by seeking out individuals who required assistance, regardless of their religious affiliations. In these migration stories *barakah* also manifested with reference to gratitude, a sense of sufficiency, and a willingness to bring comfort to others by helping alleviate their burdens in life. This starts with keeping the faith and trusting that Allah has the best plan, followed by activating faith, which is accepting every problematic situation and moving forward by thinking how to improve it. From a different perspective, one might assert that having faith in Allah's plan and accepting a challenging situation can also be seen as externalising the personal locus of control. This externalisation helped these women cope with, respond proactively to, and overcome adversity for themselves, and assist others to do likewise. This acceptance of situations of adversity and then working to help people cope and overcome these also allowed the women to foster harmony as people transitioned into a new phase of life in this country.

Case Discussion

Central to the lives of Group 2 participants was their active engagement with the Azura Trust. As a women-led space, the Azura Trust operates as more than a service provider; it offers a culturally affirming enclave of care, education, and empowerment. Through a range of practical programmes, such as English language classes, sewing workshops, parenting support, playgroups, and community gardening, the trust not only addresses the immediate resettlement needs of women, but also promotes psychosocial well-being, cultural expression, and spiritual resilience.

Like the women of Group 1, participants in Group 2 worked to integrate into Aotearoa NZ society while maintaining a strong sense of religious identity. This was supported by the trust through collectivist practices of mutual care, knowledge sharing, and community building. Many participants transitioned within Group 2 from attendees to volunteers or staff, illustrating a dynamic trajectory of personal growth and community leadership. For example, Feli, once a sewing student, now mentors others in the same programme, embodying the ethos of reciprocal learning and empowerment. Others like Sumayya and Keysha acquired roles through community trust networks rooted in shared ethnic and religious experiences. These relationships often facilitated smoother communication, shared understanding, and a sense of belonging. Sarah, who brought in professional qualifications, highlighted how migrant identities and skill sets converge to enhance community-based education. Meanwhile, volunteers such as Fatima and Alifa valued the Trust as a social and spiritual

enclave, a space for connection and language practice, and a place of emotional safety rather than economic gain.

To understand the deeper meanings of the participating women's journeys, the Islamic concept of *hijrah*, spiritual migration, offered a useful interpretive lens. Traditionally referring to the migration by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), *hijrah* now holds broader significance as a process of ethical and spiritual transition (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2019; Dawson & Amarasingam, 2017; Demichelis, 2019; Ifraq, 2024). Relatedly, for the participants, migration to Aotearoa was not merely a geographic relocation but a transformative journey encompassing faith, survival, and redefinition of identity in a secular society. Some, like Alifa and Fatima, had fled conflict and persecution, their journeys marked by trauma and instability. Others, like Sumayya and Keysha, voluntarily migrated in search of better lives, facing challenges such as loneliness and financial hardship. In the stories of these participants, the Azura Trust emerged as a critical support structure, facilitating smoother transitions and offering a sanctuary for rebuilding lives with dignity. This relational process of *hijrah* enabled participants to renegotiate their identities and contribute meaningfully to their communities in Aotearoa.

Informing my understanding of these women's migration experiences and associated processes of transformation, the concept of *madrassa* offers another lens for understanding the trust's significance. The Qur'an describes mothers as the "first *madrassa*," and in this sense, the Azura Trust functions as a community *madrassa*: a space of collective learning, the preservation of culture, and faith-based personal growth (Al-Jayyousi & Myers-Bowman, 2019). Through programmes such as English classes, playgroups, and sewing classes, women not only acquire new skills but also share their faith-based values with their children and peers. The trust supports intergenerational knowledge transfer, helping women adapt to life in Aotearoa without abandoning core Islamic teachings. In doing so, it fosters a sense of purpose and empowerment, particularly among mothers who feel responsible for guiding their families through the complexities of resettlement. Islamic values of mutual respect, patience, and compassion are woven into trust activities, creating a space of spiritually grounded education and self-betterment.

Moreover, this *madrassa*-like function extends to the concept of *da'wah*, often translated as the invitation into Islam through peaceful, exemplary conduct. At the Azura Trust, *da'wah* manifests not in proselytising but in the enactment of Islamic principles through everyday actions (Ibrahim, 2022; Malik, 2018). For instance, sewing classes become interfaith and intercultural encounter spaces where women from various backgrounds can exchange stories,

skills, and cultivate solidarities. Facilitators like Feli exemplify humility and generosity, reflecting Islamic ethics of care. Likewise, community gardening projects allow migrants and more established Aotearoa NZers to share agricultural knowledge while learning local practices, building bridges between communities. These shared experiences foster empathy and trust across cultural divides, fulfilling the Qur'anic imperative to be a mercy to all creation (*rahmatan lil alamin*).

In parallel, the concept of *barakah*, divine blessings, emerged as central to participants' motivations and reflections (Demirel & Sahib, 2015; Moufahim, 2013). For these women, the trust was not merely a service centre but a source of *barakah* in their lives. Many, like Sumayya and Keysha, recounted how the support they received from the trust during initial settlement phases became a moral impetus to help others. This notion of paying it forward by supporting newcomers through mentoring and care is deeply embedded in their understanding of gratitude and community responsibility. Faith in *barakah* enables participants to reframe hardships as spiritually meaningful and character-building experiences. For example, despite language barriers and discrimination, both Fatima and Alifa drew strength from their belief in Allah's plan and committed themselves to fostering inclusive environments for others.

While this case focused on the trust's strengths, it is important to acknowledge internal group dynamics and challenges. As with any diverse community group, tensions can arise from time-to-time, particularly across generations, due to language barriers and cultural and personal differences. These tensions are typically resolved through respectful dialogue, with senior members encouraging open communication and reminding others of shared values and collective purpose. Mentorship also plays a significant role in maintaining group cohesion, with older women guiding younger members through the complexities of integration, often without exerting dominance. This delicate balance of support and autonomy reinforces the Trust's function as a *madrassa*-like space of ethical learning, socialisation, and blessings.

More specifically, while ethnic and cultural diversities can enrich groups, differences can present moments of misunderstanding. Knowing this, participants actively work to learn about each other's cultures, often discovering points of similarity between Islamic values and Indigenous Māori principles of respect, community, and reciprocity. These insights foster cross-cultural awareness and inclusive forms of belonging. Collaborations with Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika, and other faith communities further extend the trust's mission to support social harmony. The women are acutely aware of Islamic teachings that uphold the equality of all people (Qur'an, 17:70) and consciously strive to embody these values in their interactions across differences.

Briefly, the Azura Trust exemplifies a community-driven, faith-based approach to migrant integration that enables Muslim newcomers and refugee women to rebuild their lives in Aotearoa NZ with dignity, purpose, and solidarity. Through culturally affirming programmes and shared Islamic values, the Trust cultivates a space where women support one another in navigating resettlement, preserving faith, and contributing to wider society. The concepts of *hijrah*, *madrassa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah* offer rich insights into how we can understand the participating women's experiences of migration as spiritual journeys marked by resilience, learning, and service. Their collective efforts demonstrate how integration need not come at the cost of personal and social identities, but can instead be a process of mutual enrichment, in which migrant Muslim women are not only recipients of support but also agents of social harmony, empathy, and transformation in Aotearoa NZ.

Chapter 5: Thesis Discussion

In opening this thesis, I described how people have migrated to different places for numerous reasons and engaged in various interactions with different cultures, groups, and traditions through resettlement processes (Park, 1928; Manning & Trimmer, 2020; McNeill, 1984; Schlebusch & Jakobsson, 2018). Regardless of the reasons for voluntary or forced migration, migrant groups often collaborate to navigate the various complexities that come with leaving home, transiting, arriving, and resettling somewhere new (Erdal & Oeppen, 2020). As is also attested to in my research, adapting to new cultures can be a continuous, multigenerational process, requiring adjustment to the society's new cultural practices (Al-deen & Mansouri, 2024; Norris & Inglehart, 2012; Sam & Berry, 2010). In this process, migrants often preserve aspects of their original cultures and ways of being while simultaneously learning new ways to adapt and conduct their daily lives in new environments (Hodgetts et al., 2020).

Numerous migrants, including Islamic adherents from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, have made their way to Western countries, including Aotearoa NZ (UNHCR, 2020). More recently, the Muslim population in Aotearoa NZ has experienced rapid growth (stats.govt.nz, 2023). For these newcomers, transitions to life in this country can be abrupt and confronting (Ayallo & Rasheed, 2024; Childress et al., 2024; Cicek-Okay et al., 2024; C. Kim, 2019; Wachter & Gulbas, 2018). In terms of ethnoreligious minorities, such as Muslim migrants, many also benefit from self-help or organic community support (Atteraya et al., 2016; Badejo et al., 2017; Brody et al., 2017; Due et al., 2021; García-Cid et al., 2020; Lieberman & Snowden, 1993; Nawaz, 2017; Oke et al., 2018) that have been established by earlier migrants who understand what it is like to move to Aotearoa and build a life here.

I explored how two related groups of Muslim women worked to assist newcomers with ongoing adjustments to life within this new host country to ensure smoother resettlement transitions. The resulting group support also enables newcomers to maintain a sense of continuity with their home country through enactments of their Islamic faith and ethnic cultures (e.g., food traditions) somewhere new. These processes of mutual aid are particularly important for Muslims who migrate to Western nations, which comprise symbolic contexts where news and entertainment media regularly associate Muslims with terrorism and portray them as risks to receiving societies (Hopner et al., 2023). Symbolically, points of tension between Muslims and non-Muslims are often foregrounded, with some receiving nations being less receptive to these newcomers than others (Akbarzadeh, 2016; Ali & Sonn, 2017; Kabir & Hamid, 2015; Kabir & Bourk, 2012; Spier, 2020; Varisco, 2009).

Contrary to dominant Western media depictions, Muslim migrant women are more than passive recipients of cultural constraints (Ahmed, 2021; Nisa, 2021). Drawing on personal engagement with Muslim women's groups, it is evident that many of us play central roles in community development, social advocacy, and intercultural dialogues. Participants in this research challenged limiting stereotypes and revealed their resilience and leadership as they navigated migration and resettlement processes themselves, and then assisted others (Amatullah, 2024; Moohin, 2022). These women navigated complex sociocultural landscapes while creating meaningful spaces of belonging, defying public prejudices (Au et al., 2023; Bibi, 2022; Lubit, 2024), and extending their practices of care to other groups in the broader society. In doing so, they have empowered themselves, inspired future generations to embrace their identities as Muslims and ethnically enculturated beings, and advocated for their rights to belong and contribute prosocially to this society. It is crucial to amplify these narratives, ensuring these participants' voices and experiences are acknowledged within broader discussions on migration and integration. Understanding the formation of both participating groups is crucial for understanding the modes of inclusion and care among these women. In the context of these groups, participants' personal journeys towards leadership roles were not merely quests for positions of power but articulations of prosocial values and Islamic faith, which again challenge over-simplifying stereotypes in media and academic discourse of Muslim women in countries such as Aotearoa NZ (Ahmed, 2021; Ali et al., 2023; Amatullah, 2024; Hossain, 2025; Moohin, 2022; Nisa, 2021; Ramadan, 2021). Navigating the complex sociocultural landscapes associated with migration, these women work together to create meaningful spaces that foster belonging and inclusivity. Through their commitment to contributing prosocially to this society, the participants' accounts can illuminate pathways for others, ensuring that the legacies they have forged through these groups will resonate far beyond their individual achievements.

In the sociopolitical context of Aotearoa NZ, I investigated participating Muslim women's prosocial contributions to these groups as central to their adaptation to these new surroundings. Significantly, their shared efforts created ethnically diverse mutual aid groups. A key focus in this thesis was on how these groups have cultivated enclaves of care that emphasise mutual support, not only in the settlement process for members but also in enabling members to help others in the community and develop businesses that contribute economically to this society. As documented in the two case study chapters, the participating women engaged in various forms of cooperation to assist one another in achieving successful resettlement, and refining their academic and practical abilities to strengthen their capabilities

in community service and business (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Ferrero, 2018; Huertas-Bailén, 2018; Longhurst et al., 2009; Miled, 2020; Moufakkir, 2020; Pearce et al., 2017; Ray et al., 2008; Shaw et al., 2019; Spencer, 2006; Ward et al., 2019; Zoellner et al., 2018).

Drawing insights from previous research (Hirji, 2021; Jeffery & Qureshi, 2022; Nikjoo et al., 2023), my study also demonstrates the value of drawing on Islamic values and principles to inform the analysis of the motivations and meanings of participating women's prosocial strategies and actions. The women's participation and engagement in community and commercial projects can be read as central to their practice of *hijrah* within the *madrassa* which they have created to practice *da'wah* as a means of realising *barakah*. Their *hijrah* encompasses not only relocation and migration; it includes their adaptation and contribution to the new nation, Aotearoa NZ. Furthermore, the two Muslim women's enclaves comprised spaces where the participants could experience fellowship, solidarity, support, safety, and acceptance in ways that fostered their personal growth and collaborative learning. These enclaves comprised rearticulations of *madrassa*-like spaces for shared learning that also reproduced core Islamic values and practices that contributed to the resourcing of broader community works. From within these enclaves, participating women collaborated not only with each other but also with other non-Muslim groups and organisations to assist people in realising more secure lives featuring acceptance and support. The women's community-building efforts can also be read as rearticulations of practices of *da'wah* somewhere new. Typically, *da'wah* is characterised as preaching. However, in this context, *da'wah* is also practised in a more pragmatic manner, as the women exemplify Islamic ideals through their daily collective activities to benefit collectives. Ultimately, everything they do within the community aims to attain *barakah*, fostering and disseminating a life filled with blessings that provides greater benefit to others.

In the following sections of this final chapter, I first pivot to key reflections regarding my methodological approach to engaging with the two groups and my broader fieldwork experiences. Here, I consider the key strategies employed in this research to engage with both groups, shedding light on the complexities of my fieldwork. The next section returns to relevant migration and intergroup settlement literature first discussed in the introduction chapter to deepen my engagement with key insights from the present study. My task here is to consider how my research informs current knowledge regarding migrant Muslim women's groups and their communal actions. I argue that my investigation of the lived experiences and social dynamics within these groups contribute to a deeper understanding of their contributions to the community, whilst making lives somewhere new. Our attention then turns in the third

section to key findings and insights generated from my use of the four Islamic values noted above, which provided the central heuristics for my analysis. Here, I am interested in how these values facilitated a deeper exploration of the lived experiences and perspectives of participants. This synthesis offers a more nuanced understanding of the intersections between culture, identity, and community engagement, emphasising the complexities of the participants' lived journeys to resettlement in Aotearoa NZ. The chapter is completed with a concluding section featuring my final reflections, future research recommendations, and notes on policy implications from this research that have been discussed with representatives of MSD with a view to informing their work to support migrant Muslim women.

Methodological Reflections on Research with the Two Groups

My autoethnographic, case-based, and faith-informed approach to this research reflects my participative orientation to working with and befriending group members despite our ethnic and cultural differences. I approached this research as a sister in Islam engaging with other sisters in a shared exploration of our migration to Aotearoa NZ. Embracing my insider positioning within Islam led me to the use of four key Islamic concepts (*hijrah*, *madrassa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*) as the core heuristics informing our discussions and analysis of the resulting empirical materials regarding the participants' migration experiences. These concepts and values enabled me to integrate an Islam-informed perspective into the analysis process, and to preserve my own sense of being and ethics as a Muslim woman working with others for mutual aid. These concepts also enabled me to interpret participants' accounts of their migration journeys from a perspective that made sense to the participants as well. With reference to these constructs, we were better able to discuss and grasp key motivations for migration and the work in which participants subsequently engaged in Aotearoa NZ. Participants all expressed these four concepts in a variety of ways, reflecting the dynamics of being a migrant, leaving one's home country, starting a new life with a different way of life, and aspiring to contribute positively to the new society. More broadly, similarities and differences in participants' articulations of these values revealed some diversity among migrant Muslim women from different cultural backgrounds as they negotiated intercultural cooperation within the Islamic faith and in the production of two enclaves of care (Jones-Gailani, 2019; C. Killian, 2007).

In working with these two groups, I employed an immersive case-based approach which emphasised the need for me to conduct my research in a participative and culturally informed manner that was necessarily malleable and adaptive to particular community settings (Cornish et al., 2023; Hodgetts et al., 2010; King et al., 2015). This meant taking the time to

get to know the community members and to understand the ethnic cultures they brought with them into these groups. Spending considerable time with them was crucial, not only for getting to know the women and coming to understand our similarities as sisters within Islam, but also for engaging with the ethnic differences that shape how we conducted ourselves as women of faith somewhere new. Featured in our interactions were deep conversations that enabled me to understand each woman's migration journey and related experiences in the context of their societies and cultures of origin, as well as their contributions to the two culturally hybridized groups in Aotearoa NZ. Moreover, conducting this research as a faith insider and ethnic outsider in relation to the participants also forced me to go slowly and gently, and to tread lightly with the participants to cultivate mutual understanding, so we were able to share our stories. In doing so, my decision to draw on the four Islamic constructs was reinforced because, despite our ethnic differences, we all shared a practical understanding of, and common ground in, these concepts in the context of reflecting on our migration experiences.

This careful, caring auto-ethnographic approach enhanced my ability to create nuanced, complex, and comprehensive accounts of the experiences of the group members in their migrations to Aotearoa NZ (cf. Jones et al., 2013). I gained insights from working with and talking casually with participants, my direct observations of the groups, and my subsequent interpretations of more formal interviews that were informed by the previous fieldwork with the groups conducted over almost 2 years. This thesis interweaves my own and the participants' personal experiences and positionings as women of faith and migrants to understand the broader situations and general trends in the everyday socioeconomic settings of our interactions (Adams et al., 2015; Garance, 2010; Poulos, 2021; Van Maanen, 2011).

It was crucial that I adopted a participative perspective as evident in previous community-based migration research to build a trusted relationship (Sonn & Baker, 2016). For me, this involved engaging in collaborative projects with the women within the groups so as not to disrupt the flow of their work and to build trusting and mutually supportive relationships with the participants. Culturally, I am not a person who is comfortable with watching others work without lending a hand and getting my own hands dirty. This led me to also employ the go-along interview technique (Berg et al., 2023; Garcia et al., 2012; Kusenbach, 2003) as a flexible and responsive interviewing technique that involved engaging participants in research conversations as we went about the daily activities of the groups. I sewed, gardened, drove the van, and delivered food packages to people alongside the participants. I also brought participants together into what could be termed focus groups (Geampana & Perrotta, 2024; Morgan, 2018), although we understood them as lunch chats so

that we could deepen our dialogues from the go-alongs. These discussions often turned to our ethnic differences and faith-based similarities as well as the functions of the groups in the context of commonalities and differences in the motivations informing participants' personal sense-making regarding their migration experiences. From inside the groups, I was able to witness and narrate what I hope reads as a rich interpretation of the values, motivations, practices, meanings, and self-interpretations that shape the migration journeys and resettlement practices of these participants.

Working with women from two multicultural groups, the Annisa Trust and the Azura Trust, impressed on me that although we all came together as women of Islamic faith, we also brought considerable ethnic diversity with us. In a sense, this research featured at least two, possibly more, forms of culture that came into play in dynamic ways. The first was from the Islamic faith, which in many respects constitutes a faith-based culture. The second was from the participants' ethnic cultures and differing societal backgrounds. A third was the societal level culture and nexus of elements from Pākehā, Māori, Pacific, and the various other migrant cultures that make up the receiving society in Aotearoa NZ. All these cultures shaped the participants' senses of their hyphenated selves (Cassim, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2019; Sirin & Fine, 2014) and how core Islamic values shaped the conduct of their everyday lives somewhere new. This cultural nexus also shapes the ways in which Islam manifests within the composition and work of the two groups. There are consistencies in the underlying core values of both groups, but there are also differences in their missions and activities. I am raising these issues of cultural hybridity (Acheraiou, 2011; Cassim, Stolte & Hodgetts, 2020; Fine & Sirin, 2007) to remind readers that Islam is a diverse faith that carries many perspectives and practices that are also articulated in similar and different ways across the contexts in which adherents reside.

I also had varying relationships with both groups in that I affiliated more with Group 1 and their community prosocial mission than I did with Group 2, which retained a prosocial ethos but were more concerned with commercial issues. Correspondingly and practically, working with the Annisa Trust was easier for me. I already knew several members, and as such, they were more receptive and trusting in the initial stages of the fieldwork. Group 1 was also smaller and more manageable, whereas Group 2 was larger in scale, with government contracts for managing several education classes, playgroups, garden activities, shops, restaurants, and local social services. Many members were also in paid employment with the second group. As a consequence, I often engaged with Group 2 members outside of their working hours and at social events. I also became involved in running several events with

Group 2, particularly those addressing issues of diversity and inclusion.

Methodologically, I immersed myself in the life worlds of both groups while refining the focus and implementation plan for my thesis. Along the way, I engaged in numerous conversations with group members; we shared stories while cooking lunch, enjoying coffee, and during excursions between Tāmaki Makaurau Auckland and Kirikiriroa Hamilton for Islamic events. I also spent time preparing for sewing classes, distributing groceries to elderly migrant women, and participating in fortnightly meetings. It is important to note that I was not the only person from my family to engage with the groups. As is common practice in relationship building within Islam, my husband and daughter also accompanied me on several occasions. Involving family in this way reminded me of the importance of being friendly, engaged, helpful, and open with potential participants when setting the foundations for community-based research (cf. Sonn & Baker, 2016). Involving my family in the establishment of a community research project was a new experience for me. Through this methodological experience, I have learned the benefits of taking the time to build rapport and trust with participants and of sharing a little of myself along the way. I consider this approach to be an enactment of relational ethics (Hodgetts et al., 2010; Kayikci, 2019) that requires openness and the establishment of dialogue and partnerships with community participants and the organisations they populate.

Engaging with these women was often a fun and rewarding experience; for example, we shared the “flavour” of our home country traditions in the food we shared (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Longhurst et al, 2009). Eating together was valued as bonding moments that were accompanied by dialogue about our own ethnic traditions and stories. This methodological practice of sharing food reminded me of a verse in the Qur’an that says, “Within Islam, we are family, no matter which ethnicities and skin colour” (Qur’an, 49:10). Coming from different countries and ethnic cultures, with associated differences, we were able to build trust and friendships, not only because we shared the faith-based culture of Islam, but also because we ate together and shared valued recipes. Sharing in faith and collectivist- value-based acts that featured food with the other Muslim women was instrumental in my establishing common ground for this research and for us coming to know each other as sisters who could share in the group and associated research processes. Immersing myself in this way within these evolving community relationships reminded me that core Islamic values operate within communities beyond formal situations such as the practice of daily prayer. We were informally and organically engaged together in feeding each other and caring for other people through various collaborative projects. This highlights

the importance of community bonds that extend beyond structured religious practices, emphasising a shared commitment to mutual support and care (Bagasra, 2021). Such interactions foster a sense of belonging and reinforced the essence of Islamic values in everyday life and the conduct of this research.

Considering the history and function of women's groups within Islam (Jelle et al., 2006; Oware, 2020; Paz & Kook, 2020), valuing and enacting Islamic teachings within community work enabled me to start reflecting on the values I needed to embody in this project and which were also embodied in these groups. What became very apparent was the importance of "paying forward" the types of support and inclusive practices that participants themselves had benefited from earlier in their lives and resettlement processes. Supported by the groups in which they all now played active roles as organisers and facilitators, these women continued to aid and enrich the resettlement lives of other women and their families through collective efforts to help others, particularly those from "difficult" backgrounds as refugees or asylum seekers, or as survivors of family violence. Foregrounding the importance of these relational processes and experiences is important for understanding my methodological approach, as they contextualised the overall research design, conduct, and purpose. Given the centrality of group membership and collaborations with participants that went beyond "collecting data," this research embraced what I came to understand as the auto-ethnographic in immersive and community-oriented research in psychology (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Watkin, 2017).

As an auto-ethnographer, it was important to consider how I positioned myself in relation to the research topic, setting, participants, and the fundamental question, "Who am I in relation to the research?" King (2019), an auto-ethnographer who simultaneously served as a researcher and a teacher, has offered an account of these fieldwork relations that speaks to my approach as a sister in the Islamic faith, researcher, and new member of the two groups. As I interacted with the women, my perspective and values inevitably shaped my subjectivity during the interpretation and the construction of the research to centralise key values and practices associated with our shared Islamic faith.

Many auto-ethnographers in psychology work hard to bring academic voices into dialogue with the voices of the participants to present their experiences as linked to various theoretical ideas (Adams et al., 2015; Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Watkins, 2022). I would also add that this research is not all about me; it was not just my story that I sought to interrogate. It was about the group members' shared practices and efforts to support others as they continued to forge new lives for themselves and their families in this country. In taking this

orientation, my approach to auto-ethnography is in keeping with the original formulation by the Chicago School of Sociology, whose leading members were initially trained in social psychology (Hodgetts et al., 2020). According to this tradition, it was important that I position myself in relation to the group as I then explored their actions and experiences in the context of the broader cultural and intergroup considerations that were central to their migration and resettlement as Muslim women. Relatedly, I have completed this PhD as a sojourner, a Muslim woman who is in Aotearoa NZ temporarily for educational purposes. The primary purpose of this personal journey, which I have come to understand more fully through my dialogue with the research participants, was to extend my education so that I can work more effectively as a scholar in Indonesia. Following a key requirement within auto-ethnography, in the next section, I reflect on my findings from my iterative engagements as a participant in both groups, linking key findings back to relevant literature and broader issues surrounding Muslim women's migration to Western nations.

Contributions to Knowledge Regarding Muslim Migrant Women's Groups

As discussed in Chapter 1, previous research into Muslim migration to Western nations has suggested that the cultivation of strong community relationships within ethnic groups is important for supporting migrant resettlement, addressing negative stereotypes and discrimination towards minority groups, and for promoting inclusive environments in schools, workplaces, and neighbourhoods (Abdelgadir & Fouka, 2020, Jelle et al., 2006; Paz & Kook, 2020; Pio & Syed, 2018; Torres-Zaragoza & Llorent-Bedmar, 2024). Further, prosocial community supports can enable Muslim women to socialise with others to share their experiences, feelings, and thoughts. These associations are also linked to improved migrant resilience when faced with challenges to successful migration, often within unfamiliar contexts (Huertas-Bailén, 2018; Moufakkir, 2020). The present study contributes further insights into how forming and participating in ethnically diverse community groups can aid Muslim migrants in responding to and coping with cultural and economic transitions and intergroup tensions between newcomers and host communities, and managing stress. Other studies have shown how these functions facilitate adaptation to new home places (Brigham et al., 2018; Ferrero, 2018; Holt, 2013; Jozaghi et al., 2016; Miled, 2020; Pearce et al., 2017; Ray et al., 2008; Shaw et al., 2019).

My research suggests that opportunities to share experiences with other in-group members from the same country of origin or with other migrants from other countries and cultures are significantly enhanced when group members share the same faith, which can provide a sense of connection and continuity of identity. These engagements are associated

with increased feelings of safety and support, which are essential to cultivating a sense of inclusion somewhere new (Chaichian & Sadri, 2019; Longhurst et al., 2009; Spencer, 2006). Despite the exceptions cited here, to my knowledge, previous research has not adequately attended to how mutual support groups for Muslim migrant women that include members from different ethnic groups come together and navigate faith-based similarities and ethnic differences and cultural traditions. The research is space on the ways in which Muslim women from diverse ethnic backgrounds collaborate to actively encourage each other to participate more fully within a new host society (cf. Erdal & Oeppen, 2020; see also Abd Kadir, 2024; Ali et al., 2017; Fawzi El-Solh & Mabro, 2020; Killian, 2024; Norris & Inglehart, 2012; Raja, 2014). My research also offers some insights into the ways women come together to share their ways of being Muslim and enacting the Islamic faith in the secular society of Aotearoa NZ, and how these manifest in shared prosocial activities. Of note was how these two groups provided mutually supportive enclaves of care within which women encouraged each other to engage in prosocial behaviour, education, and personal growth, and to develop business and work- related opportunities (Ahmed, 2014). As attested to in my analysis, the two groups demonstrated strong senses of collective determination to empower members to upskill to enable them to work within diverse settings and communities, and in doing so, contribute positively to the host society.

My analysis also reflects considerable situational awareness among participants of how being a Muslim migrant woman in a non-Muslim- majority country poses considerable challenges that can be navigated more effectively through mutual support. Participating in practices of mutual aid in the two groups also enabled participants to access opportunities for personal growth and contributed to positive resettlement that features socioeconomic inclusion and opportunities to lead (Ripstein, 2008). Reflecting seminal research in social psychology on encounter spaces (Atteraya et al., 2016; Badejo et al., 2017), these two enclaves of care enabled participants to explore their situations and involvements in community and work life with less fear and with a sense of mutual understanding and solidarity with diverse representatives of host society communities. By cultivating trust within each group, the participating women were also more able to engage prosocially with other community groups and organisations, creating wider relationships with other groups with less fear of judgement. By connecting and collaborating with non-Muslim groups in society, participants in this research appeared to have created robust relational foundations from which to more easily develop a sense of inclusion and place in Aotearoa NZ (Johnson & Miles, 2014). Correspondingly, the women in both groups spoke of the importance of promoting

cooperation and interdependency through their various projects and activities to enable them find a sense of place and contribute to the host society.

A key feature of participants' accounts of *hijrah* was the emergence of a strong sense of place in Aotearoa NZ, accompanied by hyphenated identities (Ayallo & Rasheed, 2024; Cassim, Hodgetts, & Stolte, 2019; Kolig & Kabir, 2008), for example, as a Somali-Muslim-Kiwi woman. Participants emphasised this shift in their sense of self as involving the gaining of something new, rather than the loss of what it meant to be the Somali-Muslim woman they were in their country of origin, following a logic of both/and rather than either/ or. In this way, experiences of migration opened up opportunities for participants to cultivate a newfound sense of belonging and safety from which self-discovery and growth could be cultivated. As the participants traversed various cultural nuances, similarities, and differences, they engaged in processes of transcultural hybridisation and integration, where cherished elements of their cultures and selves in their places of origin were rearticulated through the lens of Islam (al- Huraibi, 2017) and the processes of integrating, rather than assimilation, into the host society. Dynamic interplays between the old and the new, the familiar and the unfamiliar, appeared to have given rise to hybrid identities that were neither wholly one nor the other, but comprised syntheses of various traditions and ways of being. As such, my research contributes to previous research that suggests that migration often involves a reworking of migrants' very being and sense of self (Ayallo & Rasheed, 2024; Boland, 2020; Cassim et al.,2020).

As discussed in previous chapters, the concept of *madrassa* is closely associated with women, who are recognised as the first *madrassa* or primary familial teachers (Al-Jayyousi & Myers-Bowman, 2019). Ahmed (2014) has also proposed that in their role as teachers in the family, Muslim women learn and educate themselves regarding Islamic values and other knowledge systems while assisting their children to realise their potentials for growth. Relatedly, emerging from within Islamic education systems is the space known as *halaqah*, wherein Muslim women collaborate in small groups to become effective cultivators of *madrassa* for each other and their families (Ahmed, 2014). Literature regarding the *madrassa* as a space for learning is also beginning to extend its meaning beyond its initial conceptualisation an institution for learning the Islamic faith (Abdul Jaleel et al., 2024; Abubakari, 2021; Nursaid, 2020). New emphasis is being placed on improving the quality through a broader curriculum that includes community service (as seen in Group 1) and commerce (as seen in Group 2) within which Muslim women help one another as teachers and extend their efforts to help others outside the faith.

In analysing the accounts from both cases I was struck with how much participants talked about working together as group members to cultivate safe spaces to learn, share, and empower each other, in ways that resembled rearticulations of the Islamic institution of the *madrasa* (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019; Hefner & Zaman, 2007) and Western notions of enclaves of care (Au et al., 2024; Kahera, 2002; Livezey, 2000). As emergent spaces, the groups contributed to cultivating both trusts as enclaves of care that facilitated the growth of not only the women inhabiting these spaces together, but also their families and neighbours. Here, these Muslim women's spaces moved beyond the group settings to take shape as enclaves or spaces. In these enclaves, participants can engage in shared activities and discussions regarding how their new multicultural society functions, how they can navigate government and private enterprise systems, where they can gain resources, and how they can contribute to the resourcing and flourishing of others (Au, 2023; Lenneis, & Agergaard, 2021). These enclaves serve as focal points for collective agency and empowerment, providing bases for personal and shared exploration and engagement in society. These enclaves offer inclusive home grounds for processes of integration, cultural preservation, and intercultural exploration and adaptation (Mertens, 2021; Zhang et al., 2023). These spaces facilitate participants' adaptations to their host society, whilst allowing these women to maintain and express their Islamic identities and unique ethnic heritages (Jones- Gailani, 2019; Killian, 2007).

Moving beyond what Hefner and Zaman (2007) and others have considered to be the original meaning of the Arabic term *madrasa* as school, which then morphed into meaning an Islamic educational institution (Bashir & Ul-Haq, 2019; Ismail, 2021; McClure & Clink, 2009), my research extends the meaning of the term *madrasa* to include informal friendly enclaves where migrant women can educate each other about Islam and a broader range of topics to enable them to better integrate into life in Aotearoa NZ. Central to this thesis are the ways in which the traditional concept of *madrasa* has been rearticulated and adapted to life in Aotearoa NZ by participants in this research. *Madrasas* have frequently carried extra negative meaning as spaces for radicalisation and fundamentalism that have destructive impacts on community integration and societal cohesion (Masud, 2021; McClure & Clink, 2009). In contrast, I argue that like many educational institutions, *madrasas* can serve multiple purposes. These include those that are more prosocial, which enable people such as the women in my research, to gain a deeper understanding of Islamic principles and how to practice these in their everyday lives. Historical evidence demonstrates that *madrasas* have produced eloquent scholars with spiritual knowledge who have also provided valuable benefits to humanity and actively fostered harmony in various societies (Masud, 2021).

My broad use of the term *madrassa* reflects the elasticity of the construct as it relates to *hijrah* experiences and the need for migrant women to engage in educative practices that help them to learn about the new host society and to adjust the conduct of their everyday lives accordingly. International research is also beginning to adopt this broader understanding of *madrassa* as a space for shared learning shaped by Islamic values alongside secular knowledge regarding the functioning of society (Angeles & Ariazi, 2019; Jones-Gailani, 2019; Killian, 2007). The focus of these spaces is on deepening shared understandings of the faith and applying these teachings and humanistic values to community works and efforts to support the group and other people somewhere new. My research supports findings from previous research that suggest that this migrant *madrassa* can encourage balance between supporting continuity in religious identities and personal and collective adaptations in how members practice Islam in ways that harmonise their daily lives with the requirements of life within the new host society (El-Majzoub et al., 2021; Oman, 2023; Pillai, 2022). Within the two groups who participated in this research we can see aspects of the dynamic interplay between Islamic faith, participants' cultural backgrounds, influences from the host society, and personal situations and aspirations. By exploring these *madrassa*-like groups, I have uncovered the progressive educative functions of these rearticulations of traditional Islamic institutions by Muslim women migrants to Aotearoa NZ. I have done so in a manner that has emphasised the dynamics and positive aspects of the groups' efforts to not only facilitate successful resettlement for group members, but also offer prosocial contributions to society that are in keeping with core values of care for humanity. These processes are mediated through the shared Islamic faith that leads participants to help each other through shared processes of resettlement and the provision of prosocial contributions to society (Saeed & Akbar, 2021; Supriyatno et al., 2021; Tuna, 2024). As touched on in recent research (Ağılkaya-Şahin, 2024; Hijeat & Al-Bazzaz, 2024), these interconnected processes highlight the capacity for individuals to navigate complex situations of migration and respond to diverse influences in their experiences of *hijrah*, whilst maintaining a coherent senses of self as Muslim women within a multicultural and secular society.

The rearticulation of *madrassa* by the participating groups extends beyond the traditional settings in religious centres typically found in Muslim-majority nations (Kabba, 2024; Mohiuddin, 2023). For Group 1, what has emerged is inclusive and welcoming for people of all ages and backgrounds, including young children and teenagers who benefit from the educational and social activities. Both groups also support young women by providing resources for self-exploration, leadership development, and confidence-building. Under the

mentorship of elder women, or “the aunties,” younger women are mentored to manage programmes like the Muslim Youth Development initiative, to gain skills to support the community, whilst preparing them for their roles as future educators for their families. By fostering a supportive enclave that embodies Islamic values of care and empathy, the organisation helps participants feel accepted and empowered (Suryani & Muslim, 2024). Initially focused on aiding Muslim migrant women, the *madrassa* now extends its support to women and families from diverse faiths and cultures, broadening its scope to create an inclusive and collaborative community within the host society.

There were also differences in the educational and inclusive functions of both groups. Group 2 places more emphasis on commerce than Group 1 and supports Muslim and non-Muslim migrant women to set up their own businesses. For many, this started through the sewing classes that serve as a platform for skill-building and community development. These classes bring together participants to acquire specific skills while fostering solidarity and a sense of shared purpose. Beyond sewing, the classes encouraged participants to enhance their entrepreneurial skills, establish small businesses to attain economic stability, and integrate into the host society. By blending practical skills with business training, the Azura Trust empowers women to build sustainable livelihoods while promoting personal and community development. Additionally, the Azura Trust addresses the needs of children by offering playgroups that facilitate lessons in cultural adaptation. These playgroups help children adjust to their new environment while giving their mothers the time necessary to focus on skill-building activities and other personal endeavours. The Azura Trust enacts the principles of inclusivity, education, and mutual support, and by integrating cultural exchange and skill enhancement into community-building activities, this group provides a dynamic platform for learning and growth. Participants benefit from the personal development opportunities that can enhance the economic sustainability of their families, while this holistic approach fosters a sense of belonging and empowerment in these families and ultimately contributes to strengthening community ties. As individuals grow and acquire new skills, in part through these groups, they are better equipped to support themselves and each other, reinforcing the group’s foundational values.

Group 2 is a pivotal force in driving positive change within communities by seamlessly integrating cultural exchange, skill development, and entrepreneurial initiatives, creating a dynamic ecosystem of support and progress. Through sewing classes that also enhance financial literacy, deliver vocational training, and support small business development, this group empowers migrant women with the tools needed to achieve

economic independence and long-term stability. The activities are led by a group of women who support, guide, coach, and mentor other women to empower them to be more independent and help them in acquiring skills and setting up their own businesses (Maxheimer & Nicholls-Nixon, 2022; Zaidi, 2024). Ultimately, the group's impact extends beyond individual empowerment, weaving a powerful narrative of economic resilience and communal solidarity that has the potential to transform entire communities.

During my time with both groups, I also noted both similarities and differences in how the core Islamic concepts discussed in the previous section were articulated. Here, it is useful to foreground how these groups both created enclaves of care that reflected the dynamism of being a Muslim woman somewhere new and practising the faith in ways that are of benefit to self and others. Both nonprofit trusts catered to Muslim migrant women from diverse cultural backgrounds and strived to assist women in their resettlement journeys in Aotearoa NZ. They did so by providing enclaves of care wherein members are empowered to express their, at times, divergent views. Relatedly, I employed the concept of enclaves of care representing spaces where women can foster belonging, support, safety, and enhanced wellness (Nurein & Iqbal, 2021; Marques et al., 2020; Salusky et al., 2021) as a central concept in this study.

These enclave spaces were significant for the participating minority Muslim migrant women for addressing broader societal challenges regarding inclusion and solidarity, as these enclaves prioritise the well-being of migrant women by supporting their faith- and ethnic-based identities and cultivating collective resilience. The women in this community led the creation and maintenance of supportive environments that promote solidarity and adaptation. As noted in Chapter 1, discussions of enclaves for ethnic minority migrants in Western nations have often focused on “urban enclaves,” such as “Chinatown,” “Little Korea,” or “Little India,” which are associated with specific cuisines, music, arts, religious practices, and educational traditions (Anderson & Johnson, 2020; Chang, 2000; McAuliffe et al., 2019; White, 2016). I have extended previous research by applying the concept of migrant enclaves of care to small-scale interethnic networks of Muslim women who view one another as sisters and support each other during their resettlement journeys. The enclaves in this research have not materialised as a formalised “Muslim town,” but instead as interactive spaces grounded in compassion and inclusivity which include the trust buildings, the various locales of the projects embarked on by the participants as they engage in their work together, and the social interactions in which the women connect, share religious and cultural values, and offer mutual support in their everyday lives. These two enclaves are not defined in terms of the

physical spaces and manifest as the mobile sense of welcome, respect, and belonging that these women take with them beyond the walls of the trust and its neighbourhood setting.

A significant similarity between both groups is their proactive engagements not only with Muslim women but also with non-Muslim communities and government agencies. Both actively pursue strategies for effective social integration within the host society and to foster or contribute to the cultivation of a cohesive social fabric that is inclusive of all. Their collaborations reflect an inclusive and humanistic approach to mutual care that is foundational to the operations of many not-for-profit community groups and centres (Hodgetts et al., 2020). While both groups share notable similarities, they also exhibit additional distinct orientations and practices that complement each other and underscore the complex ways in which the core Islamic values discussed earlier are adapted and expressed in a new environment. These differences are not simply variations in the articulations of Islamic values but rather demonstrate how the core principles of the Islamic faith and community have been uniquely interpreted and applied within the specific trust contexts. For instance, the Annisa Trust emphasises a more prosocial orientation, focusing on fostering community well-being and providing social support to people facing various hardships. This includes one-on-one counselling, support groups, social events, and community outreach programmes. In contrast, Azura Trust has adopted a more vocational or commercial orientation that involves prioritising skills development, developing business opportunities, and enabling entrepreneurial endeavours. The emphasis is on cultivating economic empowerment and self-sufficiency among members through the provision of vocational training programmes, business development assistance, and opportunities to gain marketable and business administration skills. These differing approaches address key aspects of participant migration experiences, highlighting the multifaceted needs of migrant communities. Both orientations are useful in addressing different needs and aspects of successful resettlement because migration is a complex process that encompasses not only social and emotional needs but also economic and practical considerations.

The Annisa Trust's prosocial emphasis has translated into a predominantly volunteer-driven organisational structure, where members dedicate their time and efforts to community-building and mutual support without financial compensation. Meanwhile, the Azura Trust integrates both volunteers and paid staff, reflecting its vocational focus and the need to sustain a more commercial organisational structure. Despite this key distinction, by working together, the two groups offer a wider range of services to the migrant community, addressing their diverse needs and providing a more comprehensive support system. Further, these

complementary orientations demonstrate the adaptability and resilience of Muslim migrants in finding innovative ways to navigate and thrive in their new environment.

Regardless of the different orientations of the two groups, these trusts frequently collaborate in providing joint workshops, events, and initiatives. Looking back to when the Azura Trust was established, the leader of the Annisa Trust and some of its members actively assisted the leader of the Azura Trust in setting up the new group. These two groups have coexisted in the same area for decades, mutually supporting and complementing one another in communal activities. Here, they enact Islamic principles by offering various forms of spiritual support to their peers and enhancing the autonomy of women, especially those struggling to navigate life in Aotearoa, including refugees who have experienced trauma, survivors of domestic violence, single parents, and those living with social isolation.

The academic research on Muslim migrants to Western nations, particularly studies focused on women, continues to focus predominantly on the negative aspects of resettlement and the perceived oppression of women within Islam (Ellermann, 2020; Jeffery & Qureshi, 2022; Paz & Kook, 2021; Ruysen & Salomone, 2018). This orientation is also reflected in news and social media analyses of representations of Islam within Western contexts (Akbarzadeh, 2016; Ali & Sonn, 2017; Kabir & Hamid, 2015; Kabir & Bourk, 2012; Spier, 2020; Varisco, 2009). My analysis in this research aligns with the perspective of Hopner, Hodgetts, Nelson and Battersby (2023), who found fewer recent negative stereotypical representations of Muslims in locally produced news items compared to imported news items from other Western nations as documented in similar analyses in these other nations. In Aotearoa NZ, Islam is represented in a more positive light, which includes the positive contributions by newcomers to society. This is reflected in my own experiences of living in Aotearoa and discussions with the research participants and other Muslims. All participants recounted experiences of discrimination but also expressed feelings of general acceptance from members of the receiving society. Participants could provide a wealth of examples of mutual aid and experiences of affiliation within these communities. Further, previous studies focused on Muslim migration to Western countries have primarily attended to the challenges migrants face when assimilating into a new society. These challenges include migrants' experiences of discrimination related to language and employment and barriers to inclusion associated with concerns about radical Islam held by members of the host society (Abdulaev, 2019; Ali & Sonn, 2017; Baranik, 2021; Brodard, 2019; Collins, 2020; Črnič, 2020; Elliott & Yusuf, 2014; Estrada et al., 2019; Fritzsche & Nelson, 2020; Loftsdóttir, 2018; Randeria & Karagianis, 2020; Siddiq et al., 2023; Sulaiman-Hill & Thompson, 2012). In these studies,

migrants reported feelings of social alienation and a belief that they would never “fit in” due to their perceived status as dangerous “internal others” (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Triandafyllidou, 2001). The groups in this study focused on ensuring that members could fit in and thrive within the host society, whilst maintaining a strong sense of self as hyphenated Muslims; all participants in this study expressed a profound sense of belonging in Aotearoa NZ.

Brief Final Words on my use of the Four Islamic Principles

As noted above, researchers into Muslim migration are starting to employ Islamic concepts to inform their analyses of experiences of migration and resettlement (Abdulsalam & Adeogun, 2019; al-Huraibi, 2017; Elmadmad, 2008; Gest, 2012; Karpat, 1996; Mrahorović, 2017). In this section, I reflect on my use of the four Islamic principles to understand the migration experiences of participating women in the context of their involvements in the two groups.

Through the conduct of this research, I came to understand *hijrah* as a continuing process of adaptation to life that extends from first-generation migrants to their children as families build their lives somewhere new. Likewise, the participants in this research articulated *hijrah* as the act of reproducing Islamic values in a new context, and in ways that contribute positively and inclusively to their crafting of a positive life in the host society. Migrating to Aotearoa NZ was presented as the beginning of a new and positive chapter of their lives that has enabled them to find new meaning in being Muslims. Central to the resettlement process were their efforts to reciprocate the kindness and inclusion that established members of this society had extended to them. In a sense, their stories were framed as tales of both continuity and change in that they brought their Islamic values with them but, as my analysis shows, rearticulated these in ways that fitted with life in this country. Participants’ articulations of *hijrah* were personalised and associated with finding opportunities for growth and deepening their sense of faith and belonging in this new place. Their accounts often reflected on synergies between Islamic imperatives towards the care and inclusion of human beings and similar Indigenous Māori and Christian inclusive values (Cassim et al., 2023). These stories of migration included instances of inclusion and intergroup cooperation that offer a newer dimension to dominant narratives in migrant research, particularly those focused on Islamophobic media and public discourse that foregrounds or even fixates on exclusion and intergroup conflicts rather than cooperation between groups in society (Hopner et al., 2023).

The adversarial focus in migrant research on tensions between groups is important. Participants in this research were well aware of points of conflict and Islamophobia but also felt the need to engage positively with life in this new place and wanted to focus on positive experiences of inclusion within their journeys to a settled new life in this country. I have read their narratives as positive articulations of *hijrah* as a process of mutual benefit to both Muslim migrants and the host society. Accordingly, participants also voiced the importance of efforts to collectively cultivate safe spaces for newcomers to congregate, get to know one another, work in harmony, and grow.

My research also offers further insights into the organic self-regulated group processes through which the two groups of Muslim women facilitated migrant resettlement and adaptation as part of *hijrah*. As Berry (1997) asserted, migrant resettlement and reintegration are often dynamic processes that can span years, lifetimes, and generations. Central is how migrants navigate continuities and discontinuities between their cultural practices and ways of being in their countries of origin and within the receiving society, with migrants adapting to varying degrees to the new ways of being and conducting their lives. For the participants in this research, *hijrah* included a spiritual process that was facilitated by participation in the two groups. This personal and mutually assisting group process is important in understanding the rearticulation of Muslim values as newcomers learn to live and contribute meaningfully as Muslims within this secular society (Masud, 2021). *Hijrah* here is not merely about finding a safe place to avoid war and civil conflict, but also about developing oneself and contributing positively to the development of other people and society more generally. Here, *hijrah* is about actively shaping their new communities and enriching the host nation through prosocial and ethical contributions to inclusion and mutual aid. This broader interpretation of *Hijrah* highlights the role that self-regulating groups can have in aiding women and others in navigating their complex and transformative migration journeys.

My documenting of these processes foregrounds the value in both groups as *madrasas* that are self-governed collectively by participating women as spaces for shared learning through community service that reflects Islamic teachings. Relatedly, *da'wah* is a useful construct for understanding how the women shared positive messages from the Qur'an in these shared spaces whilst also respecting the beliefs of non-Muslim groups, and emphasising interfaith dialogue (Chen & Dorairajoo, 2020; Wong & Levitt, 2014). Participants storied *da'wah* as a faith-based "calling" that orientates them to assist in the resettlement of other migrant Muslim women (Smith, 2005). They enacted *da'wah* by applying Islamic values of care towards humanity to other women regardless of their religious or secular backgrounds.

This “calling” involved providing practical assistance to others, whilst respecting diversities, promoting community solidarities, and demonstrating the utility of Islamic teachings regarding mutual aid to each other’s children (Dalhatu et al., 2024). Their commitment to *da’wah* in the form of faith-based service is also an example of the influence of their primary socialisation within families that modelled prosocial behaviour and secondary socialisation within the two groups and broader community engagements (Maliepaard & Lubbers, 2012). Likewise, many participants attributed their own dedication to this form of *da’wah* to formative childhood experiences, during which they observed their parents engage in acts of community service. They emphasised that the internalisation of prosocial Islamic values is a gradual process, nurtured in childhood and reinforced through mentorship as adulthood in the two groups.

The programmes of both Trusts served as key platforms for *da’wah* that foster further community-oriented socialisation. Initiatives such as sewing and English classes, community gardening, and visiting vulnerable members of the community provide opportunities for dialogue, collaboration, and mutual support, bringing together women from diverse faiths and ethnicities. Participants noted that these activities not only deepen their understanding of Islam but also encourage them to impart these lessons to their children by involving them in community initiatives. Through such activities, we can also witness how their efforts to care extend beyond their immediate families and ethnic groups, influencing and enhancing broader community networks and relations. By fostering intergroup relationships, collaborating with diverse organisations, and challenging misconceptions of Islam, these women uphold the essence of *da’wah* while contributing meaningfully to social cohesion in Aotearoa NZ.

The women also proposed that such communal activities of inclusion bring *barakah* (divine blessing) to their families and foster solidarity and mutual care within broader community relations. By collaborating with other Muslim women, engaging with non-Muslim groups, and fostering relationships with progressive Muslim men, participants sought to share *barakah* with others as part of their integration into Aotearoa NZ. Beyond personal gain, *barakah* is viewed as a communal responsibility and resource. Participants saw it as a catalyst for personal growth, interfaith solidarity, and social cohesion, helping them develop hyphenated identities as Muslim-ethnic Aotearoa NZers who belong in this place. Participants emphasised the importance of transmitting and preserving these values to future generations, ensuring that *barakah* remains a guiding principle in their new lives. *Barakah* was also considered by participants to support their capacity to promote others’ well-being and successful resettlement, allowing others to explore their own identities and contribute

meaningfully to this society. Recognising their limited resources, participants collaborated with other organisations and non-Muslim allies to expand their outreach and potential for cultivating *barakah*.

Briefly, *barakah* serves as a holistic framework through which Muslim women in Aotearoa NZ navigate faith, identity, and social integration. It manifests in a sense of spiritual fulfilment for participants, is exercised in their efforts to promote communal solidarity, and motivates them to make active contributions to and integrate into society in ways that make sense to them as Muslims. In these ways, participants demonstrated that *barakah* is not just a personal blessing but a shared responsibility to uplift others through the blessings of care. Through gratitude, resilience, and reciprocal care, these women reinforced *barakah* as a guiding principle that fosters harmony, belonging, and mutual support, ultimately contributing to their place within more cohesive community relations.

Overall, these four concepts, *hijrah*, *madrasa*, *da'wah*, and *barakah*, were particularly useful for informing my analysis by providing the basis for a more comprehensive interpretation of participants' experiences in which they can recognise themselves as Muslim migrant women who belong here. *Hijrah* represents both the experiences of physical migration to a new land and the spiritual journey of contributing to the host nation. *Madrasa* embodies the creation of enabling spaces where women acquire knowledge, skills, and spiritual growth. *Da'wah* is reimagined as a demonstration of Islamic values through acts of prosocial inclusion that enabled participants to foster interfaith understanding and dispel misconceptions about Islam. While *barakah* underscores the pursuit of divine blessings in all aspects of life, it emphasises spiritual fulfilment and community care. Combined as a core interpretive lens for this thesis, these concepts enable us to better understand Muslim women's migration experiences and integrative motivations when navigating the complexities that come with growing as people in a new secular country. Engaging with these principles offered more than a way for me to interpret their accounts. This research has shown that these principles have accompanied these women's migration and resettlement journeys and provide spiritual touchstones, senses of continuity of self and faith, and practical strategies for harmonising Islamic ways of being within their everyday lives in Aotearoa NZ.

Conclusions

To conclude, I set out to examine women's migration experiences and sense of integration into life in Aotearoa NZ. Relatedly, I wanted to understand the capacity of participants to engage with various other groups through various prosocial projects and their efforts to contribute positively to communal life in a new environment. The resulting positive

focus of this research comes from the participants who appreciated that Aotearoa NZ is, overall, a welcoming country that is accommodating of Muslims and ethnic differences. As such, I have also taken a capacity orientation focusing on why and how participating Muslim women act as good citizens, making positive contributions to communal life in this society, while cultivating their hyphenated senses of self as people enacting an Islamic-inspired duty of care towards others. Such strength-based approaches are based in community and applied social psychologies and contribute to the capacities of well-functioning communities to support themselves and others (Collins et al., 2018; Hodgetts et al., 2020). This orientation offers useful insights into the role of women's groups in supporting successful migration and resettlement for Muslim women and those around them. We are oriented to how participating women employ various relational practices that can enhance resettlement journeys and newcomer contributions to societal well-being. It is important that psychological research continues to engage with such positive and proactive experiences and to consider the motivations of such migrant groups to help foster constructive solidarities that make for more harmonious relations featuring benevolence in Aotearoa NZ.

A favoured finding of mine is how the participating women placed considerable emphasis on the contributions they were collectively making to the host nation and how this was associated with a growing sense of inclusion, belonging, and being at home. Initially, their efforts were focused on accessing opportunities and achieving equality in workplaces. Over time, these women not only gained independence and self-confidence but also played pivotal roles in empowering other Muslim migrant women and women from various cultural and faith backgrounds. As highlighted by the leader of the Annisa Trust in Chapter 3, many of these women started “from scratch”, arriving in this country with limited English proficiency, lacking professional credentials, and facing the added challenges of being visibly Muslim. Despite these barriers, they navigated their struggles by leveraging their strengths, ultimately enabling them to uplift themselves while supporting others.

As detailed in Chapter 3, this positive orientation does not imply that the participants' journeys towards increased resilience and empowerment were not disrupted on occasion by experiences of discrimination. It is worth noting that despite such challenging incidents, participants proved to be resilient and self-confident in asserting their rights and responding with agency and self-reliance. They also choose to focus on their strengths and the experiences of acceptance that were far more common in their interactions with members of the host society. This tension between negative and positive interactions foregrounds how Muslim migrants, like other migrant groups, must often navigate the complexities of adaptation

while simultaneously facing unique challenges, including discrimination and cultural difference and adjustment. These groups helped through the sense of inclusion and social support provided, and the women having space to identify their own strengths, agency, and confidence. By demonstrating their agency and contributions to their new communities, these women offer powerful counter-narratives to hegemonic Western narratives that often portray Muslim migrants as passive recipients of aid or as threats to social cohesion and the safety of receiving communities in Western nations (Ahmad et al., 2024; Ali, 2020; Barkdull et al., 2011; Ghaffar-Kucher et al., 2022). The collective actions and agentive responses recounted by the research participants also showcase how Islamic values like positivity, kindness, and humility can be put into practice in Western secular contexts to counter negative stereotypes.

By working together as groups within wider community relations and with support from government agencies, these women found their confidence by creating spaces to empower each other. They did this through collaborations in nonthreatening practical tasks, such as sewing, English lessons, gardening, and parenting classes where some group members came to function as both students and teachers. Within these spaces, the women felt safe to share their talents, and express their feelings and thoughts while learning new skills.

Central to this thesis is the observation that the women's actions documented in this research reflect the Islamic values of humility and gratitude, manifested through their efforts to spread *barakah* (blessings) within community and commercial settings. I hope my thesis highlights the importance of recognising and leveraging existing faith-based strengths and values for successful migration and integration. Participants' migration journeys reflect deep commitments to not only adapting to new environments but also to enriching the receiving society through enactments of shared prosocial values and collective strengths. By strategically leveraging government programmes and fostering partnerships with local organisations, these two groups have been able to create supportive enclaves that facilitate smoother transitions for newcomers. Their approach to integration into this new country not only reflects the Islamic principles of humility and gratitude but also emphasises the importance of leveraging existing collective capacities by transforming challenges into opportunities for growth and resilience.

This research identified three key findings. The first relates to how participating women demonstrated remarkable resilience and agency in navigating complex life trajectories. They successfully balanced demanding roles, including pursuing education, advancing their careers, fulfilling family responsibilities, and navigating societal expectations and systems. This resilience can be understood through the lens of *hijrah*, the Islamic concept of migration,

which emphasises inner transformation and adaptations to new environments whilst maintaining and exercising one's faith and prosocial values.

Second, the accounts of participating women document how newcomers can and do make significant contributions to society. While existing literature has explored the adaptation of Muslim women to new cultural environments (al-Huraibi, 2017; Gest, 2012; Lubit, 2024; Mrahorović, 2017; Paz & Kook, 2020; Rashid, 2024), this research also features their substantial contributions to community life in Aotearoa NZ. I highlight participants' active engagements in local communities, their efforts in fostering interfaith and intergroup dialogues, and their efforts to promote harmony within the sociocultural fabric of this country. Their efforts reflect the Islamic principle of *da'wah* through the sharing of their knowledge, skills, and community values.

Third, this research resonates with the historical significance of women within the Islamic tradition, where women have traditionally played pivotal roles in education and community building (Hirji, 2021; Jeffery & Qureshi, 2022; Kolig, 2009; Nikjoo et al., 2023; Syarifudin et al., 2024; Wadud, 1999). My use of the concept of *madrasa*, traditionally associated with religious education, foregrounds the historical and contemporary roles of women as educators and knowledge keepers. Their formation of new kinds of *madrasa* further underscores the importance of recognising and valuing the unique perspectives and contributions of Muslim women in contemporary Aotearoa NZ society. Here, the concept of articulation (Counihan, 1986; Crehan, 2002; Giroux, 1999; Mohamed, 2020) proved useful for informing my understanding of how participating women adjusted their own ways of being and conducting their lives to adapt to life in the new setting without compromising their sense of self or faith. For example, participants rearticulated their enactments of the Islamic faith by cooperating with non-Muslim communities including other migrant groups, Pākehā, and Māori.

In terms of research limitations, focusing on two groups may appear overly narrow or nonrepresentative to some readers (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Hodgetts & Stolte, 2012). Conversely, I assert that the focus on two cases enabled me to add depth to this inquiry and provide detailed examples of how the women come together to aid in migrant and refugee resettlement. However, future research should consider the benefits of looking at a larger number of groups across additional geographical locations. A larger scale focus was central to my initial plan but proved impractical for the purposes of a doctorate featuring auto-ethnographic fieldwork. The travel time and financial costs of doing fieldwork with the groups I had recruited in Kirikiriroa Hamilton and Ōtautahi Christchurch proved prohibitive. I also decided that working with two groups more intensely provided a more practical path for the fieldwork and

interpretive work that underpins this thesis. A larger-scale study is warranted to further substantiate the robustness of my core findings in smaller centres nationally. Future research should also explore findings raised by this research regarding how Muslim migrants navigate ethnic differences within organic groups such as the two explored in this thesis, and across different societal settings. Despite the localised scope of this research, below I offer brief recommendations that emerge from this research and my preliminary conversations with representatives from MSD.

Implications and Recommendations

The findings of this thesis have theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, they demonstrate the utility of developing analytic frameworks for understanding Muslim migration that are anchored in Islamic concepts and traditions of mutual aid. Practically, the findings suggest that self-regulated women's groups can be very effective in creating opportunities for inclusion and mutual support for Muslim migrant women. This study also underscores the critical role of community support and cultural resources in facilitating successful migration and integration. By leveraging their existing cultural strengths and values, these women not only navigated the challenges of resettlement but also contributed to the social and cultural fabric of their new home. These findings have important implications for the development of culturally sensitive and trauma-informed interventions aimed at supporting the mental health and well-being of Muslim migrant communities (Kumar & Huang, 2024). We can see how with better resourcing these groups may also be able to amplify their prosocial efforts to facilitate the organic integration of newcomers.

Below, I consider how government agencies might better support the inclusion and empowerment of Muslim women in Aotearoa NZ. In doing so, I highlight key challenges faced by Muslim women settling in this country, while also identifying opportunities for enhancing their participation and visibility in society. These are the foundational points for a policy brief for the MSD and related government organisations:

It is important to promote the full and equitable participation of Muslim women in Aotearoa NZ. There is a pressing need to develop targeted strategies that, like those for Māori and Pasifika communities, adopt a strengths-based and culturally responsive approach (MSD, 2019, 2022). These policies should recognise the diverse cultural, spiritual, and social identities of Muslim women and actively support their self-determination and leadership in civic, economic, and social spheres of community life. Drawing on frameworks such as those *by Māori, for Māori*, these policies should take a *by Muslim women, for Muslim women* approach, prioritising community-led initiatives, intergenerational knowledge transfer, and

holistic well-being. Investment should be directed toward capacity-building programmes, leadership development, and safe community spaces that allow Muslim women to express agency, challenge systemic barriers, and contribute to nation-building in ways that align with their values and lived realities.

To foster a more inclusive and equitable society, government and community agencies should implement targeted, culturally responsive strategies that recognise and celebrate the unique contributions of Muslim women. This includes supporting community-led intergroup dialogue initiatives facilitated by Muslim women, providing dedicated funding similar to that offered to Māori and Pasifika-led programmes, and incorporating anti-discrimination education into schools, workplaces, and public services. Service providers should receive training on religious literacy and culturally safe practices when working with Muslim communities. Additionally, integrating the Islamic value of *barakah*, which emphasises purpose, contribution, and collective well-being, into community development frameworks can enhance social cohesion, much like the use of *whanaungatanga* in Māori contexts. Such actions enable Muslim women to act as bridge-builders and changemakers in Aotearoa NZ, advancing equity, mutual respect, and national well-being.

Developing and implementing culturally sensitive policies that address the specific needs and aspirations of Muslim women in Aotearoa NZ requires further consideration. These policies should not only acknowledge the unique challenges faced by Muslim women but also empower them to thrive within their communities. By actively listening to their voices and experiences, government agencies can work towards building a more inclusive and equitable society for all. To foster meaningful engagements between Muslim women and government agencies, educational institutions, and civil society organisations should establish formal partnership frameworks that actively involve Muslim women in policy development, programme design, and community decision-making. This can include creating advisory panels composed of Muslim women leaders, embedding consultation processes in government agencies, and allocating funding for Muslim women-led community engagement projects. School and university programmes in disciplines such as social policy, social work, and psychology should develop inclusive curricula and outreach programmes that invite Muslim women as guest speakers, mentors, or co-creators of diversity education. Such teaching developments should be accompanied by investment in research that accurately reflects the experiences and perspectives of Muslim communities, enabling a deeper understanding of their needs and challenges. Relatedly, civil society groups can facilitate regular forums and cohost interfaith and intercultural events that centre Muslim women's

voices and lived experiences. All initiatives should be underpinned by culturally safe practices and supported by training for staff on anti-Islamophobia, religious literacy, and intersectionality. Such structured engagements would not only address the unique needs of Muslim women but could also contribute to strengthening social cohesion and democratic participation across Aotearoa NZ.

Government agencies, such as MSD should support initiatives to further empower Muslim women by enhancing their leadership skills, economic opportunities, and access to education and resources. By prioritising these efforts, we can create a more inclusive society that recognises and values the contributions Muslim women can make to community and economic life. These efforts will not only address the unique challenges of Muslim women but also enrich the broader Muslim community by promoting diverse perspectives. Also, given the shared values between the Muslim and Māori communities, such as collective responsibilities towards others, it is essential to strengthen collaborations between Muslim groups and Māori as tangata whenua. Such efforts also align with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (partnership, participation, and protection) and support mutual learning and respect. Additionally, recognising the diversity within the Muslim community, including Māori Muslims in such initiatives enhances opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue, again, contributing to a more cohesive and unified society.

Finally, research such as mine can contribute to promoting the inclusion of the voices and experiences of Muslim women in the future development of Aotearoa NZ as a more inclusive, equitable, and harmonious place to live. It is crucial that groups who are often marginalised, such as migrant and refugee women, are afforded opportunities to fully participate and contribute to the well-being of this nation. This inclusivity not only benefits Muslim women but, as my research suggests, can also enrich the broader society, fostering acceptance of diversity, intercultural understanding, cooperation, and opportunities for diverse peoples to thrive in harmony.

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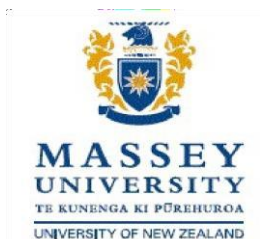
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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval



26/10/2021

Dear: Nuke Martiarini

Re: Ethics Application - NOR 21/54 - CREATING ENCLAVES OF CARE AND SUPPORTS WITHIN MUSLIM MIGRANT WOMEN GROUPS IN AOTEAROA/NEW ZEALAND

Thank you for the above application that was considered by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee:

Human Ethics Northern Committee at their meeting held on **Thursday, 26 August 2021**

On behalf of the Committee I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are approved.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Professor Craig Johnson
Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and Director (Research Ethics)

Research Ethics Office, Research and Enterprise
Massey University, Private Bag 11 222, Palmerston North, 4442, New Zealand T 06 951 6841; 06 95106840
E humanethics@massey.ac.nz; animaletics@massey.ac.nz; gtc@massey.ac.nz

Appendix B: Participant Information Sheet



School of
Psychology
Massey
University
Level 3, North Shore
Library Building 229
Dairy Flat Highway
Albany
Auckland
0632

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET **Muslim Migrant Women's Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand**

Researcher Introduction: My name is Nuke Martiarini. I am a PhD student at the School of Psychology at Massey University. I am also a lecturer in the Psychology Department at the Universitas Negeri Semarang in Indonesia. I am contacting you regarding possible participation in my research entitled: "Creating Enclaves of Care and Supports Within Muslim Migrant Women Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand". This research is being conducted under the supervision of Professor Darrin Hodgetts, Dr Veronica Hopner and Dr Pita King.

Project Description and Invitation: You are invited to take part in this research and share your experiences of migrating to Aotearoa New Zealand. Your insights will help us to understand some of the complexities that come with Muslim migration to a non-majority Muslim country. This research aims to document Muslim migrant women's experiences within culturally diverse groups, such as the one to which you belong.

As part of the research, I will be attending group meetings for 6 months, members social interactions, and am happy to discuss any aspects of this project further.

You are being asked to take part in two individual interviews with me. Each interview will take approximately 1 to 1.5 hours of your time (3 hours in total). During the interactions we will discuss the reasons for your migration to New Zealand and experiences of the migration process.

At the completion of interview one you will be briefed on a photo-elicitation project. This will involve you taking photographs relating to your migration experiences over a period of one week. We will then meet in the second interview to discuss these photographs.

You are also being asked to take part in one focus group discussion with the other members of your women's group. The focus group will take approximately 2 hours of your time. We will discuss the groups experiences of migration and the role of the women's group in these processes.

You will be provided with refreshments during each of the two interviews and the focus group discussion.

Information Management: Each interview and the focus group discussion will take approximately 5 hours of your time over a month period. The interviews and group discussion will be audio-recorded and later transcribed into a written text. Your identity will remain confidential, and any identifying information will be removed during transcription. These texts will be securely stored and password protected. These texts will be retained for five years after the study is completed, and then destroyed.

Confidentiality and privacy: Information you provide will be kept anonymous in any reports or publications from this research. All interview and focus group information will be transferred into electronic data files that will be backed up and stored on a secure University computer. All physical copies of interview transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet in Professor Hodgetts office in the School of Psychology, Massey University. Only my supervisors and I will have access to any of the research documents.

Rights as a participant: Your participation in this study is voluntary. The information will be shared between yourself, myself and my PhD supervisors. We will ensure that the principles of confidentiality are maintained. We will not share any information about what we discuss in the interviews in any way that would identify you to anyone else.

If you decide to participate, you have the right to:

- Ask questions about the project at any time during participation.
- Not answer any questions you are not comfortable with answering.
- Withdraw from the interviews or focus group at any time and choose to turn off the recording during our discussions.
- You have the right to withdraw your interview data up until 21 days after the interviews have taken place and have the right to choose what information you have provided will be deleted after withdrawal.
- Have time to review, read, consider, discuss and edit the transcripts prior to analysis.
- Be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.
- Once the interviews and focus group have been completed, I will send you the transcripts to review (you may add or delete any information at this point). If you are happy with the transcripts, you will be asked to sign the transcript release form. After that, I will analyse the transcripts, and only I and my supervisors will have access to the transcripts and the consent forms.
- In appreciation of your time, I will give you a small koha in the form of souvenir and shopping voucher.

Risks and Benefits: Participation in this research carries few direct risks to you. Participating in this research will help me to better understand Muslim women's experiences of migration to Aotearoa New Zealand and the role of women's groups in these processes. Insights from the research in general will also be shared with your group and representatives from the Ministry of Social Development.

If you wish to participate: Please sign the attached consent form and return it to the research team member with whom you are discussing this form.

Yours sincerely,

Nuke Martiarini

Project Contacts

Researcher: Nuke Martiarini

Phone: + [REDACTED]

Email: Nuke.Martiarini.1@uni.masse.ac.nz

Prof. Darrin Hodgetts (Primary supervisor)

Phone: +6492136758

Email: D.J.Hodgetts@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Veronica Hopner (Co-supervisor)

supervisor) Phone: +6492136101

Email: V.Hopner@massey.ac.nz

Dr. Pita King (Co-

Phone: +6492136439

Email: P.R.W.King@massey.ac.nz

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, Application NOR 21/54. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact A/Prof Fiona Te Momo, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Northern, telephone 09 414 0800, x 43347, email humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz.

Ngā mihinui! Thank you in advance for your time and consideration of this project

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ZEALAND

School of
Psychology
Massey
University
Level 3, North Shore
Library Building 229
Dairy Flat Highway
Albany
Auckland
0632

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM **Muslim Migrant Women's Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand**

I have read and understand the Information Sheet provided. I have had the details of the study explained to me. Any questions I had have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I may ask further questions at any time. I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from the interview at any time. I also understand that I can withdraw my interview data up until 21 days after the final interview or focus group.

- I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.
- I agree to the two interviews and focus group discussion being sound recorded.
- I understand that my participation in the two interviews is confidential, will be anonymous and no identifying information can be linked to my individual responses.
- I understand that I can choose not to answer any particular questions and that I can request the audio recorder to be turned off during an interview or focus group, and any information I have provided to that point can be withdrawn from the research.
- I understand that my participation in the focus group is confidential to the group participants and researcher (Nuke).
- I am aware the information I provide will be used in the PhD report and publications.

I confirm that:

- I agree to take part in this research.
- I understand that anonymised data will be used in published research outputs.
- I understand that information will be stored securely for six years and then deleted.
- As a group member I agree to participate in the focus group discussion, and keep confidential all information concerning the project

We encourage you to consider your participation in this study and raise any concern about the study with the research team. Please get in touch with the researchers listed at the bottom of this page if you have any further questions.

Declaration by Participant:

I _____ hereby consent to take part in this study.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix D: Confidentiality Agreement for Focus Group



School of
Psychology
Massey
University
Level 3, North Shore
Library Building 229
Dairy Flat Highway
Albany
Auckland
0632

Creating Enclaves of Care and Supports Within Muslim Migrant Women Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

Focus Group

I _____ as a member of the Muslim women's group agree to participate in the focus group discussion. I will keep this discussion confidential to the group.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Appendix E: Interview Schedule

Creating Enclaves of Care and Supports Within Muslim Migrant Women Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

The interview will cover the topics below but will not be administered like a survey. The closing part of the interview will summarise the main topics discussed during the interview. The interview will be administered across two interactions with each participant. Between sessions one and two the participants will take one week to photograph their everyday life and issues of central importance to them.

Here is below the schedule of the interview sessions:

Session	Theme of Interview	Details
1 st session	Prior to the first interview conduct informed consent process and collect background demographic information	<p><u>Preliminary:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Go over the project focus and information sheet and gain consent • Collecting basic demographic information, including self and family pre-migration experiences • Focused on life before migrating to New Zealand • Situation in original country, everyday life (work, family and other activities) • Why decided to move to New Zealand
2 nd session	Pre-migration experiences and resettlement Process (from early years until now)	<p><u>Experiences on arriving in New Zealand</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you feel after arriving in New Zealand? • How was your experience? Explain • Timelining early years in New Zealand, with highs and lows, coping strategies • Housing and health • Discuss support from government and community • Family situation in early years of migration and challenges • Current family situation • Relationship with relatives who live in New Zealand • Relationship with family in the original country <p><u>Cultural Life</u></p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion of original culture (ethnic) values • Cultural challenges in New Zealand and adapted everyday practices (i.e. food) <p><u>Islamic Life</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding Islamic values and how these are practiced in New Zealand • Experiences of being Muslim in New Zealand <p>Benefits and challenges of being a Muslim woman and family in New Zealand</p>
3 rd session	Community and Support	<p><u>Community life in general</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community engagement, activities and relationships <p><u>Experience within Muslim Migrant Women Group</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involvement in the group, how and why • Activities and challenges • How relationships are managed • Balances between personal (including work), familial and community life <p><u>Future</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hope for Muslim people in general and women in particular in NZ • Important factors to support newcomers, Muslim women • Particularly positive and negative experiences <p><u>Additional topic for the group leader</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Managing programs • Managing differences background of the members • Vision of the group • Relationship with other groups • Relationship with government agent
4 th session	Photo elicitation Activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lay out participant photographs on the table • Asked how participant went about the task and what they wanted to show • Sequence photographs and talk about each one • Link back where possible to points raised in interviews one and two

Appendix F: Focus Group Schedule

Creating Enclaves of Care and Supports Within Muslim Migrant Women Groups in Aotearoa New Zealand

FOCUS GROUP SCHEDULE

Focus group discussions will be held to understand how the community works and how the groups manage their programs for themselves. Within the group discussion, members can help each other to add meaning and understanding to elaborate on ‘why’ and ‘how’ of the topic.

One focus group will be held with each group for 90 minutes to 2 hours with refreshments.

Focus Group Discussion	Questions
1 st Focus Group Discussion	<p>This session will cover activities within the group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Confirmation of the focus and purpose of the group and how this was reached• History of the group• Role of the group members• Activities for the members within a group• Programs for newcomers• Programs for youth• Maintaining the group members’ relationships• Collaborations with other Islamic groups• Collaborations with non-Islamic groups• Collaborations with government agencies

Positioning myself within a focus group discussion

I will be positioning myself as a moderator during the discussion. To ensure that participants are comfortable and engaged with the discussion, I will:

1. Remain neutral to ensure that everyone feels relaxed and comfortable while expressing their opinions.
2. Elicit further information from passive participants with suggestions such as “Could you please tell me more about that?” or “Would you like to give an example?”

Other things to note

- I will use an audio recorder.
- I will take notes during the discussions.
- Food and other stuff will be provided by me.
- I will transcribe the focus group discussion as soon as the conversation is completed, so the nuances of the dialogue are not lost in time.